



CITY 3 MODI WILL BE PM IN 2029 TOO: RAJNATH

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BATTLEGROUND UTTAR PRADESH



RAEBARELI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who has been canvassing continuously every day in Amethi and Rae Bareilly simultaneously, is highlighting the strong bond the Gandhi family has with both constituencies since the days of former Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi. This effort comes as her sibling Rahul Gandhi contests in Amethi, having taken over from his mother, Sonia Gandhi. Priyanka said the grand old party follows the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi who uttered "Hey Ram" before dying and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is wrong in accusing it of being anti-religion. She alleged that while the saffron party claims to be a "champion of Hindu religion," the condition of the State-run cowsheds in Uttar Pradesh remains pitiable. She accused the Modi Government of trying to take credit for the free ration scheme by putting his photograph on the papers related to the scheme, saying it was the Congress-led UPA Government that brought the Right to Food Act. The Congress leader also lambasted the BJP over frequent question papers leak in UP and promised stringent laws to stop such leaks. She promised to do away with GST on education and scrap the Agni-veer scheme for recruitment in the armed forces if her party comes to power at the Centre.

Continued on Page 8

JAUNPUR/AZAMGARH

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday that the Samajwadi Party and the Congress want to adopt the "Trinamool politics," terming it a strategy of appeasement and harassment of Dalits and women. While addressing an election rally in Bhadohi, where the Opposition has fielded a TMC candidate, Modi attacked the INDIA Bloc partners, accusing them of attempting to replicate West Bengal's "TMC politics" in Uttar Pradesh. Modi said the TMC's politics includes calling Ram temple "impure", banning Ramnavami celebrations, sheltering Bangladeshis intruders, "poisonous arrow of appeasement" and calling for "vote jihad". Referring to the alliance between the SP and the BSP in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, Modi said, "The previous bua

(hinting at Mayawati) identified the SP people and left them. They have now brought a bua (aunt) from Bengal (hinting at Mamata Banerjee)." In another rally in Jaunpur, Moid said this Lok Sabha election is an opportunity for the country to choose a leader who can run a strong Government which "makes the world aware of India's strength". Amid slogans of 'Jai Shri Ram' and 'Har Har Modi', the Prime Minister said, "Your enthusiasm shows that you have made it difficult for the INDI alliance to win even a single seat in Uttar Pradesh." Attacking SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, Modi said, "SP's shehzade also makes fun of Kashi. They are crossing every limit to please their vote bank. I am surprised that it is the 21st century and they are roaming around with the flag of triple talaq."

Continued on Page 8

LUCKNOW

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

On a day when AAP leader and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal made his presence known in the INDIA Bloc alliance, partnering with the Samajwadi Party (SP), which is contesting the Lok Sabha polls in Uttar Pradesh alongside the Congress coalition, he faced criticism from the grand old party's former Chief Minister of Punjab, Charanjit Singh Channi, who termed Kejriwal as untrustworthy. Released on bail to campaign for the Lok Sabha polls, Kejriwal embarked on a whirlwind tour, reaching Lucknow on Thursday to express solidarity with SP chief and former Uttar Pradesh CM Akhilesh Yadav, before moving on to campaign in Punjab. Congress candidate from Jalandhar Parliamentary seat, Charanjit Singh Channi, said Kejriwal can't be trusted and that he should be opposed. Congress and AAP are alliance partners under INDIA Bloc elsewhere, including Delhi except for Punjab where the current Government is of AAP. "Kejriwal, who is involved in a liquor scam and is out of jail for only 15 days, can't be trusted. A big liquor scam happened in Delhi and the same happened in Punjab as well. We demand an inquiry into it. He should be opposed," Channi said. At a joint Press conference with Yadav, Kejriwal reiterated his claim that Home Minister Amit Shah will be made the next Prime Minister and Yogi Adityanath will be removed as Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister if the BJP returns to power.

Continued on Page 8

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Interim bail to Delhi CM justified: SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday steered clear of the political talk about it having made an exception for Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in granting him interim bail for campaigning in the Lok Sabha polls but said "critical analysis of the judgement is welcome". A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta refused to consider claims and counter claims by advocates for the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Kejriwal on statements related to grant of interim bail to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convenor. "We have not made any exception for anybody. We said in our order what we felt was justified," the bench said. Appearing for the ED, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta objected to Kejriwal's speeches in poll rallies that if people voted for AAP, he would not have to go back to prison on June 2. "It is his assumption, we cannot say anything," the bench told Mehta. It added, "Our order is very clear about when he has to surrender. It is the order of the Supreme Court. The rule of law shall be governed by this order." Mehta alleged that Kejriwal had violated the bail

condition by his assertion. "What is he trying to imply? It is like a slap on the institution," the Solicitor General said. Justice Khanna said the court's order is clear that he has to surrender on June 2. "We have not said anything in the order that he cannot speak about the case," the bench said. Without naming Home Minister Amit Shah, senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, who was appearing for Kejriwal, referred to an interview where he said many believe the court accorded "special treatment" to the AAP leader. The bench told Singhvi it will not go into that. The senior lawyer denied that Kejriwal had made any statement about having to go back to jail if people did not vote for his party. Singhvi said he can swear an affidavit to that effect. The top court was hearing Kejriwal's plea against his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate in a money laundering case stemming from the alleged excise scam. On May 10, the apex court had granted Kejriwal interim bail till June 1, the last day of the seven-phase Lok Sabha elections, and directed him to surrender and go back to jail on June 2.

Continued on Page 8

Mercury rising: Delhi, north plains may hit 45°C

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

If you're residing in northwest India, brace yourself for intense heatwaves ahead. Days after predicting thunderstorms and rain spells in the region, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Thursday issued warnings of impending heatwave conditions, notably in Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Delhi. By Saturday, in fact, temperatures in the national Capital could soar to 45 degrees Celsius, exacerbating the already intense heat conditions. For the next five days, the Northwest region is expected to bear the brunt of heatwaves, owing to westerly and northwesterly winds, said the IMD, flagging heightened health concerns, particularly for vulnerable populations such as infants, the elderly, and those with underlying



People use scarves to shield themselves from the hot summer Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

health conditions. The IMD has also cautioned about the increased risk of heat-related illnesses for individuals exposed to prolonged sunlight or engaging in heavy work. In contrast, a wet spell with isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall is expected to persist over south Peninsular India

until May 22, 2024, according to the IMD, with Tamil Nadu and Kerala likely to experience the maximum impact at isolated places. The forecast for the Northwest region indicates a fresh heatwave spell extending to east and central India from May 18.

Continued on Page 8

Research confirms Covishield maladies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Coinciding with AstraZeneca's acknowledgment of rare side effects of its vaccine, which was sold as Covishield in India, in UK courts earlier this year, a study by BHU researchers has suggested that those who have received the Covaxin vaccine may not find relief, as its side effects are also concerning. They found that nearly one-third of Covaxin recipients reported 'adverse events of special interest'. Published in the journal Springer Nature, the study, which is a one-year follow up, said nearly 50 per cent of 926 study participants in the study complained of infections during the follow-up period, predominated by viral upper respiratory tract

infections. According to the study, adolescent girls were the most affected by it. Some side effects were quite serious. The study involved 635 adolescents and 291 adults, who received the BBV152 vaccine. The participants were interviewed telephonically about long-term adverse events of special interest after 1 year of vaccination. Meanwhile, AstraZeneca's vaccine has been linked to yet another rare blood clotting disorder called Vaccine-Induced Immune Thrombocytopenia and Thrombosis (VITT). A majority of the population in India took Covishield and Covaxin developed by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech. It was said to be India's first indigenous jab against Covid-19 during the pandemic.

Continued on Page 8



Maliwal spills the beans to cops, NCW calls Kejriwal's PA

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police recorded the controversial AAP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal at her house on Thursday, days after she claimed to have been assaulted by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide, Bibhav Kumar, at the AAP chief's residence. Breaking her silence on the issue for the first time since the incident happened, Maliwal wrote on X (formerly Twitter), "What happened to me was very bad. I have given my statement to the police on the incident that happened to me. I hope that appropriate action will be taken."

Continued on Page 8

Sachin, IPL legends bat for higher polling



Despite the EC's best efforts to engage the elderly and specially-abled, along with all other eligible voters, the polling so far has not seen a significant increase in voter turnout

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Don't be surprised if you receive a call from cricket legend and Election Commission's National Icon, Sachin Tendulkar, along with top cricketers from all 10 IPL teams, appealing to voters to cast their votes in large numbers in the upcoming phases. Sources in the EC have expressed concern over voters' apathy and heatwave in the Gangetic plains during the

next three phases of polls. A fresh heatwave spell will also commence over east and central India from May 18. Highlighting the various voter awareness drives and campaigns being carried out by stakeholders to reach out to voters, the poll body has enlisted IPL, PhonePe, and telecom service providers such as Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd., Bharti Airtel Limited, Jio Telecommunication, and Vodafone-Idea Ltd. Additionally, they have

partnered with Facebook, Google, WhatsApp, YouTube, Google Pay, and other platforms, as well as the Ministry of Railways, Civil Aviation, Department of Posts, banking networks, cinema theaters across the country, AMUL, Mother Dairy, and other milk cooperatives, music app Spotify, bike app Rapido, grocery app Blinkit, BookMyShow, food delivery platforms such as Zomato and

Swiggy, Tata Neu app, and Truecaller to encourage people in large numbers to cast their votes. The EC said on Thursday the cumulative turnout in the first four phases of the Lok Sabha elections has been recorded at 66.95 per cent. Over 45.10 crore of the nearly 97 crore electors have voted so far in the ongoing electoral exercise, it said. The poll body said the updated

voter turnout in the fourth phase of polling held on May 13 was 69.16 per cent, 3.65 percentage points higher than the corresponding phase in the 2019 parliamentary polls. The updated voter turnout figures for the third phase of polling in the Lok Sabha election stood at 65.68 per cent. In the third phase of the 2019 general election, the turnout was 68.4 per cent. In the second phase of the election held on April 26, the turnout was recorded at 66.71

per cent as against the 69.64 per cent in the second phase of the 2019 polls. In the first phase of the ongoing general elections, a 66.14-per cent turnout was recorded. In the 2019 polls, the turnout in the first phase was 69.43 per cent. As a part of its outreach to increase the voter turnout, the EC has introduced an array of various interventions, to appeal and motivate voters to cast their vote, during the ongoing Lok Sabha elections.

Continued on Page 8

'Modi will be PM in 2029 too'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday accused the opposition of making baseless statements that Prime Minister Narendra Modi would not continue as the prime minister and Yogi Adityanath would be removed as the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh.

"PM Modi will be the prime minister in 2024 and 2029 too. This is what the country wants. Making these baseless statements for PM Modi is unfortunate. Politics cannot be done by uttering lies," Rajnath Singh in response to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's remarks. Addressing a 'jan sabha' in Rajajipuram with Yogi Adityanath on Thursday, Rajnath said: "The country, which was ranked 11th, has now jumped to the fifth position. Financial firms have stated that if any country is moving with great strides, it is India. By 2027, our country will be amongst the top three countries of the world."



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at a 'jan sabha' in Rajajipuram on Thursday

"You would be happy to know that a minister from Pakistan has said that while India is becoming a superpower, Pakistan was begging from other countries because of its needs," he pointed out. Singh mentioned the changing global perception of India, saying: "Most of the countries are admitting that if the 21st century belongs to any country, it is India."

In his appeal to people, Yogi emphasised the significance of the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, with four phases already completed and three remaining. He urged every voter to exercise their franchise diligently. "Do not treat the voting day as a holiday or picnic. While you have five years for leisure activities, you have only one day to vote for the country. It is the responsibility of every citizen to vote for a modern, self-reliant, and developed India and to safeguard democracy."

Yogi said a unified sentiment prevails across the nation, echoing the slogan, "Abki bar 400 paar, phir ek bar Modi Sarkar."

Sarwar Malik holds roadshow

Lucknow (PNS): Bahujan Samaj Party candidate for the Lucknow 35 Lok Sabha seat Mohammed Sarwar Malik conducted a roadshow with his wife and party's former mayoral candidate Shaheen Bano on Thursday.

The roadshow began at Shia PG College in Khadra and traversed through Pakka Pul, Bada Imambara, Chhota Imambara, Hussainabad, Tahseenganj, Koneshwar Chauraha, Charak Chauraha, Nakhas, Haiderganj, Aishbagh, Hussainganj, Burlington, Hazratganj crossing, Janpat market, covering almost all the assembly constituencies, and concluded at Parivartan Chowk.

During the roadshow, notable BSP leaders included Naushad Ali (former MLC and Lucknow Mandal incharge), Shailendra Gautam (Lucknow district president), and Durgesh Balmiki (Lucknow metropolitan general secretary) along with many other leaders officials, and workers. Malik stated that if elected as the Lucknow MP, his primary focus would be on addressing the city's fundamental issues such as health services, waterlogging, roads, electricity, cleanliness, and employment. He emphasised his commitment to the development and service of Lucknow.

Youth leaders resolve to back SP candidate Mehrotra



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A meeting of student and youth leaders, including former leaders of Lucknow University Students' Union (LUSU), was organised at the Samajwadi Party office on Thursday to rally support for INDIA bloc candidates contesting for the Lok Sabha seat, particularly Ravidas Mehrotra who is contesting from Lucknow. The meeting was chaired by SP national secretary and former cabinet minister Rajendra Chaudhary. Appealing to the voters, the student leaders emphasised that Mehrotra is a well-known figure in Lucknow, deeply connected with its citizens. They described Mehrotra as a grassroots leader with strong mass appeal and emotional ties to the people.

The leaders coined a phrase, "Hum fida-e-Lucknow aur Lucknow fida hai Ravidas Mehrotra par" (We are devoted to Lucknow, and Lucknow is devoted to Ravidas Mehrotra). They emphasised that the upcoming parliamentary election is crucial, following a "do or die" principle, and warned against the "divisive tactics" of the current government that threaten social harmony and the Ganga-Jamuni culture. The leaders also discussed the distribution of over 18 lakh laptops to students and youth during Akhilesh Yadav's tenure as chief minister, along with other initiatives aimed at creating job opportunities. A two-minute silence was observed in memory of the late CPI leader Atul Kumar Anjan. Among the attendees were former LUSU presidents Shyam and Fazal Khan, former vice-president Awadh Kumar Singh Bagi, Ramesh Kumar Srivastava, Neeraj Jain, Anoop Srivastav, and Manoj Tiwari. Student leaders from KKC and other colleges also took part in the meeting.

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NOTICE

I HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM AMANDEEP SINGH ARORA TO AMANDEEP SINGH. AMANDEEP SINGH S/O DAVINDER PAL SINGH R/O 120/309, LAJPAT NAGAR, KANPUR

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I, KANCHAN KUMARI W/O LATE ANIL KUMAR RESIDING AT H/NO-128/50-A, BLOCK-N, KIDWAI NAGAR, KANPUR NAGAR- 208011 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM KANCHAN KUMARI TO SEEMA SAHNI VIDE AFFIDAVIT NO-93AE350477 DATED 29/01/2024 AT KANPUR NAGAR.

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I, GURVINDER SINGH S/O SUKHDEV SINGH RESIDING AT H/NO.-202/2, HARIHARNATH SHASTRI NAGAR, KANPUR NAGAR- 208005 HAVE CHANGED MY SON'S NAME FROM TARANVEER SINGH TO HARMEEK SINGH VIDE AFFIDAVIT NO-94AE646377 DATED 08/05/2024 AT KANPUR NAGAR.

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I, VIRENDRA KUMAR MISRA S/O LATE GUPTESHWAR MISHRA RESIDING AT H/NO-14/6, NLC, BABU PURVA, KIDWAI NAGAR, KANPUR NAGAR-208023 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM VIRENDRA KUMAR MISRA TO VIRENDRA KUMAR MISHRA VIDE AFFIDAVIT NO-94AE111800 DATED 28/02/2024 AT KANPUR NAGAR.

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I Dharmendra Chauhan Army No 15806117H Rank L/NK Unit 157 Lt AD Regt (Comp) my army document in my mother name and dob SANMATI CHAUHAN and dob 27/04/1975 in the wrong but right name dob SANMATI DEVI AND dob 02/04/1978 in adhar

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WANTED Sri Bachchu Ram Ram swaroop Singh P. G. Collage Adhauili Dhata Fatehpur (U.P.) Collage Code 2006. One Lecturer/Asst. Professor for Hindi Litt. Ancient Indian History U. G. and sanskrit P. G. Classes. Qualification and payment as per U.G.C. Rules. Last Date- 10 June 2024 Main Trusty/Manager Mo.6306376276, 9935306738

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In accordance with the provisions laid down by the regulatory authorities, Seefar Ethical Recruitment Pvt Ltd (CIN: U74910DL2019FTC355546), registered on 25.09.2019, with PAN number ABCSC6900K, hereby announces the cessation of its recruitment agency operations. Having obtained Recruitment Agency License on 18.07.2020 under certificate number B-1434/UP/COM/100/5/9734/2020, valid until 14.10.2025, Seefar Ethical Recruitment Pvt Ltd has made the decision to surrender its recruitment agency license. We express our gratitude to all our clients, partners, and stakeholders for their trust and collaboration throughout our journey.

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My name in my Aadhar card and high school certificate is Ku. Bandna which is correct. After my marriage my name has been changed to Bandna Devi. Both names are mine. Ku. Bandna wife of Abhinash Kumar Gautam, Village- Barahara, Post- Turna, Police Station- Nandganj, District- Ghazipur

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I, Vidyawati w/o Late Ram Padarth R/O Nanmau, Lucknow UP My Nick name was Aarti, but Aadhar card & other Documents in my name is written Vidya wati. Both name are the one & Same Person. In Future Known As vidyawati For All Purposes.

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Mohd. Sameer to Mohammad Sameer S/o Mohd. Shamim Akhtar R/O- 201 Moti Nagar, Jajmau, Kanpur. In future I would be known & recognized by this name only.

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NOTICE

I Dharmendra Chauhan Army No 15806117H Rank L/NK Unit 157 Lt AD Regt (Comp) my army document in my mother name and dob SANMATI CHAUHAN and dob 27/04/1975 in the wrong but right name dob SANMATI DEVI AND dob 02/04/1978 in adhar

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सूचना

मैं अपना नाम Mohammad Aamin से बदलकर Mohd Ameen रख लिया है, Mohd Ameen S/o Afaq R/O 132/445, Babu Purwa, Kanpur

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सूचना

मैं कमलेश देवी पत्नी पूर्व सैनिक नं० 6377323एम नायक स्व० इन्द्र गोपाल सिंह ग्राम बहरोली पो० खजुहा तह० बिन्दकी जिला फतेहपुर की निवासिनी हूँ। सैन्य रिकार्ड्स एन्वर्सन्सी (एन्टी०) में त्रुटिवाश मेरा नाम कमलेश एवं जन्मतिथि 10 जुलाई, 1969 अंकित हो गया है, मेरा वास्तविक नाम कमलेश देवी व जन्मतिथि 10 सितम्बर, 1969 है। इसी नाम व जन्मतिथि से मुझे जाना व पहचाना जाय।

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I Ashok Kumar of PRO Defence Lucknow hereby declare that the Name and Date of Birth of my daughter have erroneously recorded as Neelma Kumari and 19.05.1992 in my service documents. The correct Name and date of birth of my daughter is Komal and 19.05.1993 as per Affidavit No 92 AE 113268 dt 14 May 2024.

Refreshments to beat the heat at model booths

SHARMILA KRISHNA ■ LUCKNOW

Voters in Lucknow district who cast their ballots at model booths on May 20 will be treated to complimentary cool sherbet and biscuits. A district administration official said that this initiative is to help voters cope with the hot weather conditions prevailing in the city. He mentioned that preparations for the model booths began on Thursday and are expected to be completed by late evening. "These booths will be equipped with voter assistance stations, medical facilities, wheelchairs, proper shading, decorations, themed areas, water coolers, seating arrangements, air-conditioning, and volunteer assistance," he said. He also noted that each Vidhan Sabha constituency in Lucknow district will have more than eight model booths.

The official further explained that some private organisations have contributed to the creation of these model booths. "Lucknow Nagar Nigam is also setting up a model booth in each ward," he added. The polling booths selected for the model setup are those with lower voting percentages and urban populations to attract. There will be one pink booth in each Vidhan Sabha constituency, which will be managed entirely by women. "At these booths, the polling party, the police officers, and all other staff will be women," he said. Municipal Commissioner Inderjit Singh stated that the model booths would feature sweep messages and carpets covering the maximum area. "There will be sofas and chairs

School offers 10 marks to students whose parents get finger inked

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Managing director of St Joseph Group of Institutions Anil Agarwal announced an initiative to increase voter turnout. Children will receive an extra 10 marks if their parents cast their vote. "On May 21, 2024, the day after the general elections, a parent-teacher meeting will be held. Both parents must attend the meeting and show their inked index fingers to earn the extra 10 marks for their child," he said. He also mentioned that staff members of St Joseph Group would receive one extra day's salary if they vote with their family in the Lok Sabha elections. Meanwhile, students from St Joseph College, Ruchikhand, Sharda Nagar, organised a rally to raise voter awareness. Holding small tricolour flags and voting awareness slogans, they appealed to the residents



of Ruchi Khand in Ashiyana to go out and vote. Flagger off the rally, Agarwal emphasised that a healthy democracy's responsibility lies with the children, who are the future's makers. The rally covered the surrounding areas, urging citizens to fulfill their civic duty by voting on election day. Director Namrata Agarwal,

principal Charu Kharbanda, administrative officer Pallavi Upadhyay, and all the teachers participated in the rally. In a similar effort to encourage voter turnout, Maharaja Agrasen Public School in Gomti Nagar organised a rally to educate people about their voting rights. School secretary Rajiv Agarwal started the rally, reminding students that voting is a fundamental right and crucial for democracy. "Everyone has the right to vote, which means all Indians can choose their government," he stated. The rally began from the school premises and proceeded through Virat Khand and surrounding areas. The enthusiasm and determination of the students and teachers was evident as they chanted slogans and showed an unwavering commitment to raising voter awareness, despite the scorching heat.

Woman alleges torture, wife-swapping with husband's friends

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A woman has accused her husband of forcing her into wife-swapping with his friends, beating and torturing her like an animal, and filming her in obscene positions, in Ashiyana. She filed a complaint on May 13, demanding strict action against her husband, who is said to have strong connections and a good rapport with police officers. The complainant, who married the accused in 2008 and has a daughter from the marriage, was forced to live with her parents due to the inhumane treatment she endured and being alleged compelled to participate in immoral acts. In her complaint, she alleged that she had been subjected to torture since her marriage, but the intensity increased after she gave birth to a girl. She alleged that her husband's moral turpitude was revealed over time. "He habitually talked to women at odd hours, even when I was with him in the

bedroom. I endured torture for dowry but did not complain to police to salvage our marriage. I was starved for days by my husband and in-laws," she alleged. She further alleged that her husband took photos of her while she was sleeping and shared them with his friends. "I also caught him talking to women at night and was beaten black and blue for objecting," she said. The victim stated that her husband's anger towards her grew each day. "His depraved nature was exposed when he forced me into wife-swapping with his friends. It was intolerable, and I decided to leave the house," she alleged. She also said that she was pressured to engage in swapping with unknown couples. "He spent time with other women in my presence to mentally torture me and beat me like an animal for opposing his actions," she alleged. The victim said she left the house after the torture became unbearable. The police have registered a case under relevant sections of the IPC.

Voter awareness by RWAs

Lucknow (PNS): Over 80 office-bearers of Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) gathered at the main auditorium of Indra Gandhi Pratishthan in Gomti Nagar on Thursday to raise awareness about voting rights ahead of the upcoming state capital elections, just four days away. Lucknow Development Authority Vice-Chairman Indramani Tripathi and Municipal Commissioner Inderjeet Singh were actively involved in this initiative, along with Divisional Commissioner Roshan Jacob for the past two weeks. The LDA owns 27 apartments across different locations with an average of 75 flats sold per apartment and 57% occupancy, totalling 5,400 voters. Municipal Commissioner Inderjeet Singh announced the installation of electronic sign boards at 48 key city crossings to raise awareness about voting rights, effective since Thursday evening.

Victim made to marry rapist

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A rape victim was allegedly coerced into marrying her perpetrator, a native of Karnataka, after her religion was forcibly changed, and later deceived into aborting her five-month-old foetus at a hospital in Mumbai. As per reports, the victim, originally from Bahraich district and currently residing in Gudamba, met the accused, identified as Saifuddin from Karnataka, while working in Bahrain over the past 6-7 years. Alongside the accused, his former fiancée named Monika and other family members are also implicated in charges of harassment for dowry and forced religious conversion. In her complaint, she recounted meeting Saifuddin in Bahrain, where they became acquainted and later he allegedly raped her on a particular day. She confronted him and subsequently filed a rape complaint in Bahrain. During the investigation, Saifuddin and his family members reportedly pressured her to withdraw the complaint. By this time, she was five months pregnant due to the sexual assault and was coerced into changing her religion and marrying Saifuddin. Feeling helpless, she agreed to these terms under duress. On February 13 this year, she was married to him according to Muslim law. Over time, Saifuddin convinced her to visit Mumbai for medical consultation, both for herself and the foetus. Once in Mumbai, she was admitted to a hospital where doctors, allegedly in collusion with Saifuddin and his family, clandestinely aborted her foetus. Subsequently, she was taken to Saifuddin's house in Bidar, Karnataka, where she endured mental and physical torture from Saifuddin's former fiancée Monika, his elder brother, and other family members.

door. When I confronted him, he attacked me and attempted to choke me to prevent me from calling for help. He also smashed my mobile phone so I couldn't contact police. I managed to free myself and ran downstairs to save my life. A crowd gathered, and some people called the police control room. Vishal fled via the back staircase of the building," she stated in her complaint. She further alleged that Vishal had been harassing her for a long time, and despite her complaint to the IGRS on April 28, no help came her way. In another incident, a group of men allegedly assaulted their rival and his supporter in Gosainganj police station area on Wednesday evening. According to reports, Harjeet from Laxmanpur had a feud with Chandrakesh and Raju, both from the same village. Around 5 pm on Wednesday, they, along with two unidentified accomplices, allegedly attacked Harjeet outside his house. Wife Chandni said that Harjeet called their acquaintance Manoj from Barabanki, who was in the area, for help. "The attackers also assaulted Manoj, causing him to suffer a leg fracture," she alleged.

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Disaster issues discussed

Lucknow (PNS): The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), in collaboration with the Central Command in Lucknow, organised a symposium and a table-top exercise on disaster management on Thursday. The event brought together Central ministries, disaster management institutes, early warning agencies, and disaster management organisations from Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, UP, and MP. The exercise was a timely initiative, considering India's multifaceted vulnerability to disasters, influenced by changing dynamics, magnitude, types, and frequency of disasters, exacerbated by climate change. Recognising the importance of continuous learning and the exchange of best practices, NDMA, State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs), and the Indian Army facilitated this collaboration. The exercise aimed to simulate emergency situations, define the roles and responsibilities of key disaster managers, and learn from domain experts about the latest trends in disaster relief. It addressed contemporary disaster issues in the four states, including earthquakes, landslides, floods, and avalanches.

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Modi lauds Yogi for infra development, eradicating mafia

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered speeches at public gatherings in Purvanchal (Azamgarh, Jaunpur, Bhadohi, and Pratapgarh), in Uttar Pradesh on Thursday. Throughout his addresses, he lauded the efforts of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in eradicating mafia and carrying out infrastructure development across UP in general, and the Purvanchal region in particular. He also expressed confidence that over the next five years, the collaborative efforts of Modi and Yogi would significantly transform the landscape and prospects of Purvanchal. Prime Minister Modi commended Chief Minister Yogi for his proactive measures in dismantling criminal elements and spearheading infrastructural developments, heralding Purvanchal as the new growth engine of developed India. In Azamgarh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi commended Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's initiative to combat criminal elements and maintain cleanliness. He noted the transformative impact of these efforts, recalling the days when the influence of the alleged Samajwadi Party's hooligans stifled daily life of people, restricted market hours and hindered mobility, especially of women and girls pursuing education. "Presently, under the governance of the Bharatiya Janata Party, Uttar Pradesh is witnessing rapid development with the establishment of airports and universities," he stated. Prime Minister Modi underscored Chief Minister Yogi's vigorous campaign to purge the



state of mafia, rioters and extortionists, marking a significant stride towards a cleaner and safer Uttar Pradesh. Likewise, in Bhadohi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi took a dig at the SP governance and said, "The successful crackdown on mafia operations is a reality in UP today, whereas under the SP administration, the unsettling reality of 'One District, One Mafia' prevailed, with distinct mafia strongholds entrenched across every district." Prime Minister Modi continued: "These criminal syndicates operated with impunity, posing threats to the safety of businessmen, women, and youth, leaving a bleak outlook for the future. However, a palpable shift has occurred with the advent of Yogi's leadership. The prevailing atmosphere has transformed, instilling a sense of security among the public while eliciting fear among the once dominant

mafia entities." Modi also addressed a public gathering in Jaunpur, where he emphasised the rapid development of world-class infrastructure in Purvanchal. He reiterated his commitment to realising the vision of a developed India, with Purvanchal serving as the pivotal engine of growth. Prime Minister Modi said, "The tangible benefits brought by infrastructural projects such as expressways and airport upgrades are directly impacting the lives of residents in Jaunpur and beyond." Highlighting the region's burgeoning status as a hub for healthcare and education, he said, "Our collective efforts will reshape the landscape and future trajectory of Purvanchal over the next five years." During his address in Pratapgarh, Prime Minister Modi lamented the adverse impact of Samajwadi Party-Congress politics on Uttar Pradesh, characterising it as a

"culture of lawlessness, corruption, appeasement and nepotism". He highlighted the transformative initiatives underway and said, "Infrastructure projects such as the Purvanchal Expressway and the upcoming Ganga Expressway will serve as catalysts for developing logistics parks, industrial centres and agricultural hubs along their corridors." Emphasising the 'One District One Product' initiative, Prime Minister Modi underscored the promotion of Amla products to benefit local farmers and growers. He contrasted the previous regime's stifling environment for industry, marked by extortion and lack of investment, with the proactive measures undertaken by the current government to reclaim land and foster new opportunities for growth under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's leadership.

Yogi cautions people against SP, Cong

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath embarked on an extensive campaign trail in support of party candidates on Thursday. He joined Prime Minister Narendra Modi during campaign stops in Azamgarh and Lalganj Lok Sabha constituencies. Subsequently, taking charge of the campaign in Kaushambi, Hamirpur-Mahoba, and Fatehpur, Yogi directed sharp criticisms towards the Congress, Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party and Aam Aadmi Party. Addressing a gathering in Azamgarh, Yogi said that all those responsible for defaming the district a decade ago, stood completely exposed today. Similarly, in Kaushambi, cautioning people against the SP and the Congress, he remarked that the two parties epitomised sin and were hell-bound. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal became the focal point of Chief Minister Yogi's criticism during the Hamirpur-Mahoba rally. He remarked that since Kejriwal's release from jail, he had lost his mind. He also accused him of betraying Anna Hazare and aligning with the corrupt. In Fatehpur, Chief Minister Yogi noted the absence of public support for the SP during their public meetings, suggesting they were resorting to press conferences. He remarked that the public sentiment reflects a sentiment of "you are better off staying at home". Addressing an election rally in

Lalganj, Azamgarh, Chief Minister Yogi said that 10 years ago the country faced an identity crisis while every individual's security was threatened when the Congress-led government ruled at the Centre. Shedding light on the challenges faced by the country during that period, he emphasised that whenever a terrorist incident took place in the country and the world, its links were invariably established with Azamgarh, defaming the district for no fault of its own. "However, those who defamed Azamgarh stand completely exposed today," he remarked. Continuing his attack on the opposition, he added: "Development activities had come to a grinding halt because the Congress-led government was mired in corruption. The poor starved to death while farmers committed suicide as well as daughters and traders were unsafe." He mentioned that the country has witnessed a changing India in the last 10 years, with increased global respect, secure borders and terrorism and Naxalism having been effectively eradicated. Highlighting 'Modi ki Guarantee', Yogi pointed out that a university has been built in Azamgarh in the name of Maharaja Suheldev. Additionally, Azamgarh boasts an airport today and is now connected via the Purvanchal Expressway, he added, pointing out that all this has become possible because of Modi's guarantee. The chief minister was addressing a public meeting in

Lalganj Lok Sabha constituency in Azamgarh in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to seek votes for Azamgarh candidate Dinesh Lal Yadav Nirahua and Lalganj candidate Neelam Sonkar. Speaking at a large public gathering in Manjhanpur within the Kaushambi Lok Sabha constituency, the chief minister urged voters to support Bharatiya Janata Party candidate Vinod Sonkar with maximum votes. During the address, Chief Minister Yogi highlighted the achievements and initiatives of the state government in Kaushambi and launched a scathing attack on the SP and Congress. He emphasised that whenever the SP and Congress formed an alliance, it led to detrimental consequences akin to an epidemic. Describing this coalition as hell-bound and emblematic of sin, Chief Minister Yogi criticised their lack of focus on development and accused them of conspiring against the nation due to their negative mindset. Describing these parties as a threat to the country, Chief Minister Yogi appealed to the voters of the region to transcend party lines and caste affiliations and prioritise development while casting their votes. While addressing the election rally in Banda, Chief Minister Yogi strongly rebutted the remarks of AAP national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, asserting that "Kejriwal has lost his mind after going to jail". "Kejriwal, who shattered Anna Hazare's aspirations and aligned

with the corrupt, is now targeting me. Kejriwal has embraced Congress, against whom Anna protested, like a necklace," he added. "It must be disheartening for Anna to witness the kind of politics that has arisen from his movement," Chief Minister Yogi said, suggesting that Anna Hazare might never forgive Kejriwal for this betrayal. Yogi also noted that since assuming power, the AAP has surrounded itself with corrupt individuals. He appealed to the public to vote for the party candidate Pushpendra Singh Chandel. Speaking at an election rally in Fatehpur, Chief Minister Yogi stated that Fatehpur serves as the entrance to Bundelkhand, where previously the dominance of the SP mafia, mining mafia, food grain mafia, and land mafia prevailed, fostering an atmosphere of anarchy. He highlighted that this prevailing situation has led to the lack of public support for the SP in public gatherings, relegating them to resort to press conferences. Yogi noted that even the people of Congress and SP fail to offer anything new. Additionally, he targeted Kejriwal, affirming his allegiance to personal ambitions. He reiterated his commitment to Sanatan and Hindu religion and pledged to relinquish power for their sake, even after 100 lifetimes. Addressing the public meeting in the Fatehpur Lok Sabha constituency of Bindki, Yogi appealed for support for Lok Sabha candidate Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti.

Mayawati attacks rival parties over electoral bonds

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati on Thursday attacked the Bharatiya Janata Party and Congress and other rival parties on the issue of electoral bonds. She said that while on one hand the rival parties took not crores but billions of rupees from the capitalists and rich people of the country, the BSP was one party that did not take even a single rupee from the rich people through electoral bonds. In a public meeting organised near the Naveen Mandi Sthal in Khaga, Fatehpur, Mayawati put the BJP and Congress governments in the dock on the issues of reservation, inflation, unemployment, corruption and capitalism. Speaking in a public meeting organised in favour of party candidate Manish Sachan from Fatehpur and Shubhnarayan Gautam from Kaushambi, Mayawati said that after independence, most of the time the reins of the country had been in the hands of Congress, but due to wrong deeds and policies, it had to be out of power at the centre. "For the last few years, BJP and its allies are in power at the Centre and in many states but their thinking is casteist, capitalist, narrow minded and communal and due to the difference in their words and actions, it seems that this time Bharatiya Janata Party is not going to come to power easily at the Centre," she said. She said that this time, drama, jumblebaazi and guarantees would not work in the elections because the people of the country had understood that promises of good days were given but not even a quarter of the promises had been fulfilled. She alleged that BJP was engaged in making its favourite capitalists and rich people richer and in giving them concessions at every level and in protecting them. "TAX MONEY PAYS FOR FREE RATION, BJP TRYING TO TAKE CREDIT" Bahujan Samaj Party supremo and former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, Mayawati, on Thursday attacked the Bharatiya Janata Party for its attempt to take credit for providing free rations to the poor people of the country. On Thursday, through the social media platform 'X', Mayawati said that far from freeing the people of the country from the curse of rising

inflation, poverty, unemployment and backwardness, the BJP, is bent on extracting electoral gains for giving little ration to the poor. This is not right as this is not kindness, she added. The BSP president said that this little free ration to the people was not a favour of the BJP or the government, as it comes from the tax money given by the people to the government. She said it was inappropriate to make fun of the poor by asking for votes in return. "I say this in every public meeting, that people should not pay attention to such fake videos promoted by the BJP," she said on social media. It is noteworthy that apart from Mayawati, Congress national president Mallikarjun Kharge had also commented on the ration distributed among the poor under the Central government scheme. Kharge has also said that the ration given to the poor comes from tax money. The BSP president has repeated the same thing which Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav has also endorsed. Meanwhile, Mayawati also attacked the Aam Aadmi Party over attack on their MP Swati Malwani. "In the matter of safety, respect and harassment of women as well as strict action against any leader doing any wrongdoing, whether it is any party or INDIA bloc or any other alliance, they should not adopt double standards, that is, they should definitely take a lesson from the top leadership of BSP," Mayawati said on social media platform 'X' on Thursday. The country's attention is on the serious matter of indecency with an AAP woman Rajya Sabha member in the chief minister's residence against which no action has been taken against the culprit till now, she stated. In such a situation, the chairperson of Rajya Sabha and the Women's Commission also need to take proper cognisance of this incident, the former chief minister of UP advised. On Wednesday, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi had also said that indecency or attack on a woman was not tolerable and strict action should be taken. She, however, said that she hoped that the AAP would resolve the issue within the party by taking appropriate action.

Unlike BJP, Congress will implement all its guarantees, says Shivakumar

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Deputy Chief Minister of Karnataka DK Shivakumar on Thursday attacked the National Democratic Alliance government over promises it made for coming to power and assured that the Congress would implement all their five guarantees which it had made soon after assuming power in Karnataka. Addressing a press conference at the UPCC headquarters here on Thursday, the Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister and state congress committee president DK Shivakumar said that inflation and unemployment had taken the form of crisis today. "Since the formation of the Congress government in Karnataka, it is giving 10 kg food grains to poor families every month, Rs 2,000 per month to 1.20 crore women under Lakshmi Yojana, 200 units of free electricity to 1.50 crore families under Jyoti Yojana and unemployment allowance of Rs 3,000 per month to all the



Deputy Chief Minister of Karnataka DK Shivakumar addressing mediapersons in Lucknow

unemployed youth of the state. 'We had promised Shakti Yojana in which we are providing free bus travel to the women of the entire state,' he said. Kumar said that the people whom Rahul Gandhi met during 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' described unemployment, inflation and growing hatred in the country as the biggest

problems of the country. Besides, he said, farmers also revealed their plight. "During that Bharat Jodo Yatra itself, the Congress had made up its mind to help the people of the country so the party brought a guarantee card which the party will implement across the country after coming to power," he said. Kumar further said that dur-

ing Karnataka polls, Priyanka Gandhi came to Bengaluru and told Siddaramaiah that how the Bharatiya Janata Party was making false promises to the poor, to the farmers, to the youth, due to which apathy was growing among the people towards political parties and she asked him to give a guarantee in the interest of the people of Karnataka.

Nomination withdrawal a matter of prestige

Lucknow (PNS): In Uttar Pradesh, withdrawing nomination papers during elections has become a matter of prestige as over the years, the number of candidates taking back their nominations has steadily decreased. In 2009, 130 candidates withdrew their nominations. By 2014, this number dropped to 122, and in 2019, it further fell to just 35. In the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, around 20 candidates have withdrawn their nomination papers so far. Additionally, Uttar Pradesh leads other states in the number of improperly filled nomination forms. In the last election, 766 candidates from UP had their nominations rejected, the highest in the country. Running for election is no longer feasible for everyone. Previously, there was a significant number of candidates filling out nomination forms. Nomination strategies were often used to pressure opponents or support rebel candidates. Many dummy candidates also filed nominations. However, the number of candidates withdrawing from the

electoral race after filing their papers has decreased significantly in UP, with an 85 per cent reduction over the last 15 years. Election experts cite several reasons for this trend. The nomination fee has increased to Rs 25,000, which gets forfeited. The impact of dummy candidates on voting outcomes has diminished. Public support for independent candidates has also waned. Additionally, withdrawing from the election or silently retracting a nomination sends a negative message and affects future electoral prospects. This has increasingly been associated with personal honour, leading to a decline in the number of such withdrawals. In the last Lok Sabha elections, 35 candidates withdrew their nominations, including 29 men and six women. In 2014, 122 nominations were withdrawn, with 101 men and 21 women among them. In the 2009 elections, 130 nominations were withdrawn - 109 by men and 21 by women. UP candidates also lead in the number of incomplete or incorrectly filled nomination forms.

Girl killed by dad

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a sensational case of 'honour' killing reported from Nai Mandi police station area of Muzaffarnagar district, a father killed his daughter by slitting her throat with his own hands. The incident, which took place on Thursday morning, created panic in the area. Everyone was shocked to see the girl's body soaked in blood. The accused father first fled from the spot after committing the crime and then returned to the scene after some time. The police caught him. Reports said that Shahid, who lives in Kookra village in Nai Mandi Kotwali area, killed his 18-year-old daughter Sahnuma by slitting her throat with a knife on Thursday morning. After killing his daughter, Shahid fled from the spot. When the family members saw Sahnuma's body lying on the floor soaked in blood, there was chaos in the house. People from nearby areas also reached the spot. The police were immediately informed about the incident. Nai Mandi Kotwali in-charge, Inspector Bablu Kumar, also reached the spot. He inspected the spot and also called the forensic team. Police say that Shahid works as a pallerad. He has four sons and three daughters. After prelim-

inary investigation, the police sent the body for post-mortem. Meanwhile, Shahid also reached the spot and the locals surrounded him and asked the reason for killing his daughter. Meanwhile, the police caught the accused and interrogated him. Shahid admitted that he had killed his daughter. Shahid said that he forbade Sahnuma many times but she did not listen and used to talk to some boy. "What respect would I have left in the society? I do not know the name of that boy but he used to call her a lot. I was seeing for three days that she was talking so much on the mobile. She did not listen despite being warned," Shahid said. Meanwhile, in Ballia, a 17-year-old boy drowned in the river Saryu and another teenager was feared dead while they were taking selfies from their mobile phones, police said on Thursday. The incident occurred in the Maharajpur village on Wednesday evening. The victims were identified as Kaushal Ram (17) and Jhunu Ram (16), Superintendent of Police Deo Ranjan Verma said. Kaushal and Jhunu went into the deep waters of the river Saryu and were taking selfies on their mobile phones when they slipped and drowned, the SP said.

PGV campaign sets up Gandhis' virtual 'grudge match' against Irani in Amethi

Amethi: Elections in Amethi are unfolding like a slow-burn Alfred Hitchcock thriller with BJP's high-profile Smriti Irani and the relatively unknown Kishori Lal Sharma of the Congress locked in a fierce contest heading towards a difficult to predict climax. What should be a conventional ending has turned out to be a nail biter with Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's spirited campaign for the Congress scripting possible twists and turns in the absorbing electoral battle. Irani was the quintessential 'outsider', albeit from the BJP powerhouse, in 2019 when she beat former Congress president Rahul Gandhi in the constituency long considered the party's very own. Five years later, Rahul Gandhi has moved to nearby Rae Bareilly and Gandhi family aide Sharma is up against the incumbent BJP MP's star power. It should be an easy contest but it isn't. As people discuss the Ram temple, Modi factor, the Priyanka Gandhi connect and everyday struggles, that's the word on the street in this constituency where no Gandhi family member is contesting for the first time in 25 years. "If Rahul Gandhi would have been here it would have been

different. This is an unusually silent election. Nobody is divulging who they are supporting and for what reasons but this has been a Gandhi family stronghold," said Ahmed Maqsood, who owns a tailoring shop in the Wahabganj market in Jais on the outskirts of Amethi town. "The Ram temple has been constructed after 500 years of struggle. Our vote is for Ram temple and the BJP. Candidate does not matter, this is a national election," added Amarnath Sharma, wearing a scarf with Jai Shri Ram embroidered on it, in the town's main market. Though Irani and Sharma are battling it out at the hustings, the spotlight is on Priyanka Gandhi as she leads her party's charge in her family's electoral fortress breached last time. The Congress general secretary has been targeting Irani for coming to Amethi with the sole intention of defeating Rahul Gandhi and not for the development of the area or for the people. The drama and suspense over the Amethi battle began early on. Though Irani was named in the BJP's first list of candidates for the Lok Sabha polls, the question on everyone's mind was whether or not Rahul Gandhi would contest from

Amethi again. The Congress kept everyone guessing till the last minute and announced Sharma's candidature only hours before nomination filing was to end. That Sharma has been an MP representative for the Gandhis and has worked in the area for over 40 years stands him in good stead. The initial anticlimax soon wore off among the people as Priyanka Gandhi set shop in Rae Bareilly vowing to win that constituency and wrest the family borough from where the party suffered from the 2019 shock loss. It may not be a direct Irani versus Rahul Gandhi 'grudge match' but it is certainly one that is shaping to be a memorable electoral battle. Many are calling it a "silent election" in which the voters would proverbially make themselves heard on result day on June 4. A Gandhi family member may not be contesting but their shadow looms large and Sharma makes it clear in his speeches that he would be a guardian for the constituency on their behalf. "If elected I will work as an MP and will keep Gandhi family's 'amanat' safe... amanat mein khayamat nahi karoonga (there will be no breach of trust)," Sharma has said often.

Attack on Dalit for not voting for BJP flayed

Lucknow (PNS): The Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) has strongly condemned the brutal beating of a Dalit in Bareilly district for not voting for Bharatiya Janata Party. The CPI-ML termed the assault on the Dalit for not voting for the BJP despite taking five kilo ration from government as shameful and demanded strict punishment to the culprits. CPI-ML state secretary Sudhakar Yadav said that the video of the incident had gone viral and it was proof of the assault. In Nawabganj sub-divisional magistrates' office premises, Dalit watchman Virendra was thrown on the ground by two home guards posted there (Rampal Gangwar and Veer Bahadur Gangwar) and beaten badly with boots and rifle butts. According to reports, the Dalit was beaten because he did not vote for the BJP despite getting five kilos of free ration. The CPI-ML leader said this incident was shameful for democracy and the Election Commission of India should take cognisance of it. Sudhakar Yadav said that social humiliation of Dalits had increased under the BJP rule. He said the ruling party's slogan of Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas was a deception.

Modi to address Matrishakti Sammelan in Kashi on May 21

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address a Matrishakti Sammelan at Sampurnanand Sanskrit University (SSU) in his Varanasi parliamentary constituency here on May 21. As thousands of women are expected to attend the event, Modi will also see the women of entire Purvanchal (eastern UP) which will go to the poll in the last two phases.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has given the responsibility of this event to its Mahila Morcha and senior wing leaders. Modi is also communicating directly with the women in it. According to Mahila Morcha, the PM was extremely happy to see the participation and enthusiasm of women in his recent roadshow here and after his nomination, the PM had expressed his desire in this



State BJP secretary Archana Mishra addressing Mahila Morcha meeting in Varanasi on Thursday regarding proposed PM's programme.

direction at BJP's Karyakarta Samvad programme organised at Rudraksh Convention Centre that a similar big conference should be organised with the 'matrishakti' of Kashi. According to the wish of the PM, Matrishakti Sammelan is going to be organised at SSU. The special thing about this proposed conference will be that this time the responsibility of welcoming the PM to conducting the programme has been given to women only. State BJP secretary and Mahila Morcha in charge Archana Mishra, while addressing the meeting of Mahila Morcha organised at the Central

Election Office in Mahmoorganj here on Thursday, said we fulfilled our responsibilities very well in the prime minister's roadshow. "As a result, the prime minister was extremely happy and he also expressed his happiness from the stage", she said, adding that now the PM is coming to Kashi again especially to express gratitude to us. "Therefore, our responsibility increases even more", she said and added that we all have to be concerned about ensuring that more and more women participate in the Matrishakti Sammelan. State BJP secretary Meena Choubey said to make

this unprecedented programme proposed in SSU historic, we all women workers will have to work with full dedication and go to every house of Kashi and invite all the women to participate in this programme. She said we will have to activate the teams of mandals, Shakti Kendras and booths with full preparation because this programme of PM is especially dedicated to us so we also have to take full care that there should be no shortage in welcoming the PM. In the meeting regional president of Mahila Morcha Namrata Chaurasia, Zula Panchayat Chairperson Poonam Maurya, city president Kusum Singh Patel, Nirmala Singh Patel, former Mayor Mridula Jaiswal, Pooja Dixit, Sadhna Vedanti, Vinita Singh, Rekha Chauhan, Rachna Agarwal, Aparajita Sonkar, Geeta Shastri, Pragna Pandey, Yasha Maurya, Sandhya Tiwari, Rekha Chauhan, Pooja Pandey, Laxmi Singh, Sunita Gupta, Savita Singh, Sonia Jain, Varsha Kaushik, Madhulika Raghav, Anisha Shahi etc were present.

Digvijay targets Modi govt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Former Madhya Pradesh chief minister and Rajya Sabha member Digvijay Singh targeted the Modi government here on Thursday. While talking to media at the residence of senior Congress leader Pramod Tiwari in Civil Lines, he alleged that PM Narendra Modi has made a record of lying in the last 10 years. He (PM) tells one lie and before the public understands it, he tells another lie. Till date we have not seen a prime minister who tells so many lies. He wants to rule the country by dividing Hindus and Muslims, Digvijay added.

He claimed that INDI Alliance government is going to be formed. On this question if INDI Alliance government is formed then who will be their Prime Minister he said that once the government is formed, we will sit together and decide.

Digvijay Singh also raised questions on the functioning of EVM. He said this time BJP is giving the slogan of crossing 400, they are making this claim on the basis of EVM. He said that instead of EVM, elections should be conducted through ballot paper and it will be clear whose government will be formed. Regarding Congress candidate Ujjwal Raman Singh contesting from Allahabad seat, he said he is a good candidate. After 1984, Congress could not win in Allahabad but this time Ujjwal Raman Singh is winning the election.

Digvijay alleged in the last 10 years, all the constitutional institutions of the country have been misused under the Modi government. ED, IB and CBI were used as political weapons. Action was also taken against whoever showed courage to speak against him, he claimed.

Digvijay said that India Alliance is contesting the elections with full strength. Tables have always turned in UP and Bihar. This time too these two states are ready to oust BJP from power, he added. He claimed time the Congress is winning many seats in Madhya Pradesh. BJP's dream of a clean sweep will not be fulfilled. He said that if the alliance loses the elections, it will be the fault of EVMs. He said Rahul Gandhi had recently taken out Nyaya Yatra in the country.

BODY FOUND: The body of a 45-year-old man, Lalmani, who had come to his in-laws' house in Chak Sikandar Alaudinpur village under Utraon police station area was spotted by the villagers in a field on Thursday. The police sent it to the mortuary for an autopsy.

Rejection of 33 candidates' papers to have little impact

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Despite a large number of nomination papers being found invalid, little political impact will be seen in the fight for the high-profile Varanasi Lok Sabha seat where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is contesting. The rejection of nomination papers of 33 candidates will have a little impact on the nature of political contest as the three main candidates of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), National Indian Congress (INC) supported by INDIA Bloc and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) are still in

the fray. After scrutiny of nomination papers, only eight candidates, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, are left in the fray. However, the final picture of fight in this parliamentary constituency will be clear on Friday after the withdrawal of candidature.

During the scrutiny on Wednesday, the nomination papers of 33 candidates, including former BJP MLA and party's Varanasi Lok Sabha seat convener Surendra Narayan Singh and wife of Ajay Rai, a Congress candidate, Reena Rai, were found invalid

and nomination papers of only eight candidates were found valid. As many as 41 candidates had filed papers. After the scrutiny, the nomination papers which were found valid were of Narendra Modi (Bharatiya Janata Party), Ajay Rai (National Indian Congress), Ather Jamal Lari (Bahujan Samaj Party), Gagan Prakash (Apna Dal Kameravadi), Paras Nath Keshari (Rashtriya Samajwadi Jan Kranti Party), Koli Shetty Shivkumar (Yug Tuli Party), Sanjay Kumar Tiwari (Independent) and Dinesh Kumar Yadav (Independent).

Kinnar Samaj group extends support to Ajay

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A group of Kinnar Samaj, including some prominent Kinnars (eunuchs) from Varanasi and nearby areas reached the Central Election Office of the Congress candidate and Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee (UPCC) president Ajay Rai and extended its support to the latter in Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency. Ajay Rai is also being supported by INDIA Bloc and left parties. Expressing support of the voters of Kinnar Samaj, the leaders of the delegation gave their blessings and expressed good wishes for victory to Ajay Rai. They said the Kinnar community will give its cooperation and support to Congress candidate. In a meeting with the Congress candidate, the transgender leaders said today the entire society is suffering due to the "wrong" policies of the Modi government and is facing



Kinnar Samaj giving blessings to Congress candidate Ajay Rai in Varanasi on Thursday.

the brunt of severe inflation. Therefore, they said the Kinnar Samaj Sangathan unanimously passed a resolution of its support to Ajay Rai in Varanasi. They said they visited the Congress poll office to convey that resolve.

Expressing his gratitude, Ajay Rai said he is committed to standing with the Kinnar Samaj in its happiness and sorrow. He said his struggle for every section of the society by fighting against government's

selfishness, pressure and oppression is his political asset, capital and credibility and he will continue to fight for the people. On the occasion, along with the women wing office-bearers of Congress and Samajwadi Party (SP), Kinnar community leaders Salman Kinnar (National president of Kinnar Mahasabha), Ranjan Kinnar (Councillor), Vicky Patel (Varanasi Kinnar Samaj in-charge) and Kinnar Samaj priest Jisani were present.

BJP workers intensify poll campaigning

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As the voting date approaches, public representatives, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) office-bearers and workers have intensified their poll campaigning, speeding up contact drives among the beneficiaries and voters. In this direction, UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) Ravindra Jaiswal had a hectic day visiting polling station of Raja Bazar ward under Bageshwari Mandal area, Christian Nursery School, Imlak Nagar Colony, Ananta Nagar Colony, Patel Nagar Colony, PWD Office, Abhilasha Nagar Colony, Mint House Colony, Taj Hotel and Ahirani Gali etc under his City North assembly area here on Thursday and appealed to the voters to make Prime Minister Narendra Modi win with record votes.

Jaiswal said under the leadership of the PM, the respect and honour of Kashi has increased not only in India but in the entire world. He said today Kashi has become a role model of development as the devotees and tourists are coming to the city from all over the world and they are surprised to see the changed Kashi. He said the PM cherished the heritage along with development. On the occasion, mandal president Siddhanath Sharma, corporators Rajendra Yadav and Sushil



BJP MLA Saurabh Srivastava contacting people in Cantt assembly area in Varanasi on Thursday.

Gupta Yogi, Sanjeev Jaiswal, Sumit Jaiswal, Arvind Jaiswal, Amit Jaiswal, Shivnath Gupta, Santosh Jaiswal, Ashok Seth, Ajit Singh, and other BJP workers were also present.

Another UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) Dr Dayashankar Mishra 'Dayalu' contacted traders in Shivdaspur and Manduadih markets during the day. Citing the achievements of the Modi government at the centre, he sought blessings from the public to make Modi victorious with record votes. Dayalu said the Modi government has lifted 25 crore people above the poverty line as every poor per-

son has been given a permanent house and toilets have been built in every house. Under Jal Jeevan Mission, pure drinking water has been supplied to every home and free LPG electricity connections were given to the poor, he said, adding that today Uttar Pradesh has become the number one state of the country. With complete transparency, jobs are being provided in the state without any discrimination, he said. The BJP workers, including Keshav Yadav, were present on the occasion.

In the same sequence, City South MLA Dr Neelkanth Tiwari did door-to-door public relations in various areas of Prahlad Ghat ward. He said the whole world recognises the efficiency and leadership abilities of the PM Narendra Modi as under the leadership of the PM new records of development have been established in the last 10 years. He appealed to the voters to make the PM win with historic votes. Corporator Lucky Bhardwaj, Sudhir Tripathi, Ashok Choubey, Deepak Gupta, Sunny Rastogi, Sanjay Chaurasia, Monu Jaiswal etc were also present. Similarly, Varanasi Cantt MLA Saurabh Srivastava contacted the voters in Sudamapur Bazaar, Sonkar Basti, Chandan Jaiswal Ki Gali, Vikas Sonkar Gali, Manikpur Chaura Mata Mandir etc areas

of Ward number 45 (Jolha Uttari). Appealing to the people to vote in favour of BJP, he said it is the responsibility of all of us to make Varanasi Lok Sabha candidate and Prime Minister of the country Narendra Modi win with a record number of votes in order to further accelerate the pace of development in the entire country, including Kashi. Mandal President Jagannath Ojha, corporator Sharad Pandey Munna, Abhinav Pandey, Sanjay Sonkar, Vikas Keshari etc were mainly present in the public relations.

Meanwhile, in Sewapuri assembly area under the banner of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), a voter awareness rally was organised in Banshanarayan Mahila Mahavidyalaya to make people aware about voting. MLC Dharmendra Rai, the chief guest of the programme, told the girl students about the power of voting and highlighted in detail why voting is important in a democracy. On the occasion, former Student Union president Satyendra Singh, Alok Singh (Manager), Sanjeev Singh Gautam, principal Dr Ashutosh Upadhyay, Yogesh Singh, Aparna Vishwakarma, administrative officer Abhishek Tripathi 'Sumit', Dr Anjana Singh, Gaurav Upadhyay, Mukesh Yadav etc were also present.

Youth axes father to death

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A youth axed his father to death when the latter refused to pay him money for consuming liquor in Patha village under Kharela police area of Mahoba late pm Wednesday night. Assailant immediately escaped from the spot.

ASP Satyam, Circle Officer (CO) Charkhari Ravikant Gaud, Kotwali incharge Ganesh Kumar along with field unit rushed to the spot and carried out investigation. Raids were also on to nail the assailant. According to a report, Indrapal Sahu (52) of Patha was a farmer and used to sleep daily in the cattle house with his elderly mother Kailash Rani. Elder son Akhilesh, younger son Vijay, his wife Kunja and daughter Puja slept in the

house. Due to regular debate with husband, Akhilesh's wife had gone to her parents house eight years ago. Since then, Akhilesh had become mentally upset and became addicted to liquor. He often had altercation with father for money to consume liquor. On Wednesday when father had refused to pay him the money, Akhilesh threatened him with dire consequences. Around 1 am when Indrapal was fast asleep in the cattle house, Akhilesh axed him to death and escaped. Indrapal died on the spot. When his grandmother, sleeping beside Indrapal, woke up, Akhilesh escaped from there. On Thursday morning, police officers rushed to the spot and probed the issue. On the complaint of deceased's wife, police have lodged an FIR against

Akhilesh for murder and launched raids to nail him.

LOOT CASE WORKED OUT: The Unnao police on Thursday worked out a loot case. ASP (North) Akhilesh Singh and CO Bangermu Arvind Chaurasia told media-persons at the Police Lines auditorium that on May 10 night when Mohd Faem of Pesari under Asiwan police station was returning from the Jansewa Kendra, Nangakheda Chauraha, two bike-borne youths tried to snatch his bag near Tikana village turn. On protest they fired at his limb and escaped after looting his bike and bag containing cash, laptop, finger machine etc. Superintendent of Police (SP) Unnao had deputed teams for working out the loot case. Thereafter, the joint team of

Asiwan police station, SOG and Surveillance cell arrested four persons, including Akash Kumar Verma, along with two motorcycles near Chaudharikheda canal bridge on Thursday. The police recovered ₹54,000, laptop, four bank passbooks, keypad mobile phone along with community-made pistol, one live and two empty cartridges from them. The police team comprised inspector Gyanendra Singh, inspector Suresh Chandra Mishra, sub-inspector (S-I) Akhilesh Mishra, constables Mahendra Singh, Saurabh Kumar, Ankit Kumar, Radhey Shyam of Surveillance team, Inspector Sharad Kumar of SOG, HCP Ashish Mishra, Satendra Kumar, Sunil Kumar, Ravi Kumar, Gaurav Kumar and Vikas Kumar.

Coal-laden goods train catches fire

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A coal-laden goods train caught fire near Sarsaul railway station under Maharajpur police station area on Thursday morning. The fire brigade rushed to the spot and controlled the fire. On seeing dense smoke there was panic among the goods train staff. Immediately Sarsaul station master got the train stopped and informed the fire brigade.

The fire fighters worked hard to extinguish the fire. According to reports, when the coal-laden goods train was going to Prayagraj from Kanpur around 6 am on Thursday, it suddenly caught fire. On seeing the fire the train staff informed the station master who, in turn, got the train stopped and informed the fire brigade. Incharge of Jajmau fire station Rahul Nandan said he had received information through the mini control room that a coal-laden goods train parked at New Kanpur Junction Sarsaul caught fire. One fire tender rushed to the spot and extinguished the fire, he said.

TRAINING: The Kanpur District Badminton Association will start special morning training session at the Ragendra Swarup Sports Academy from May 21. During the training, special focus will be laid on the physical fitness of the player. Budding shuttlers from childhood to adolescent age will be imparted training and other intricacies of the game by the ace coaches.

RO to meet candidates tomorrow

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Returning Officer (RO) S Rajalingam will meet all the candidates (agents) immediately after the allotment of symbols in Varanasi Lok Sabha seat in connection with the election expenditure monitoring on May 18 at 1 pm in the New Circuit House Auditorium. In which apart from the RO, assistant expenditure observers or expenditure observers will also participate. Rajalingam has asked all assistant expenditure observers,

AROs and candidates/agents to participate in the said meeting on time.

Meanwhile, the RO of 77-Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency in order to fix the date as per the instructions of the Election Commission of India for the audit of accounts of the candidates, said three meetings will be held during the election period and asked the officers concerned to register the day-to-day election expenditure of the contesting candidates.

The date of inspection of first account reconciliation has

been fixed on May 20, second account reconciliation on May 24 and third account reconciliation has been fixed on May 29 from 10 am to 5 pm.

Rajalingam has expected that all the candidates should submit all the bills, vouchers, bank statements, cash books, income expenditure registers etc related to the election expenditure along with the records related to the election expenditure to the auditorium of New Circuit House for reconciliation of accounts on the scheduled dates.

Awareness programme on National Dengue Day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

On the occasion of National Dengue Day a public awareness programme was organised at Cholapur Community Health Centre (CHC), Chiraigaon Primary Health Centre (PHC), Urban PHC Bajardiha and village level under the direction of Chief Medical Officer Dr Sandeep Chaudhary here on Thursday.

During the programme organised at Cholapur CHC, ACMO and Nodal Officer Dr SS Kanojia said that dengue is spread by the bite of Aedes aegypti female mosquito. These mosquitoes breed in stagnant clean water. Therefore, it is necessary to keep emptying the water collected in the coolers, pots under pots, tyres, roofs and empty sheets of water every week so that mosquito larvae cannot breed. "Dengue can be completely cured by time-

ly diagnosis and treatment. Due to carelessness it can take a serious form", he said, adding that awareness should be created among as many people as possible for prevention and control of dengue and other vector borne diseases. On the occasion, ASHA workers informed the people about 'what to do and what not to do' for prevention and do not allow water stagnation anywhere in the house and surrounding areas. In the seminar, ASHA workers were also told that dengue is a viral and mosquito borne disease. Some symptoms of dengue include fever, headache, skin rash and pain in muscles and joints. Dengue is also characterised by hemorrhagic fever, which causes bleeding or leakage in the blood-carrying vessels, leading to a gradual decline in platelet levels. The second is dengue shock syndrome, due to which the blood pressure starts falling below normal.

FDP on mgmt techniques inaugurated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Institute of Management Studies, Banaras Hindu University (IM-BHU) inaugurated a Faculty Development Programme (FDP) on 'Qualitative Techniques for Management and Social Science Research' on Thursday. The three-day FDP will conclude on May 18. This programme aims to equip the researchers with advanced tools and methodologies to enhance qualitative research and analysis in their respective fields. This FDP will be attended by 60 participants from various reputed institutes in different states of the nation, giving it national representation.

The programme started with the lighting of the lamp, a tribute to Mahamana Malviya and Kulgeet, followed by a welcome address by IM-BHU Director Prof Ashish Bajpai.

One killed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A 35-year-old man was killed in dispute over land in an area under Handia police station. The scuffle between two families ensued late on Wednesday night in Handia area here. A land dispute between two brothers resulted in a fierce fight. Stones were also pelted at each other's families. Many people were injured in the fighting and stone pelting. The Handia police reached the spot. Many seriously injured people were taken to the hospital and Dinesh Bind died during treatment. DCP Ganga Nagar Abhishek Bharti said a brawl between two brothers over a land dispute took place late on Wednesday night. One person died in this incident.

Woman commits suicide

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A woman committed suicide by hanging herself in Unnao on Wednesday afternoon. Her parents accused the in-laws of killing their daughter. On the complaint of her parents, the police have started a probe in the matter.

According to a report received here, Mukesh, son of Ramu of Madarikheda in Unnao Kotwali police area was married to Pratima (27) daughter of Chandra Prakash of Manya village in Dahi police station area, Unnao, about five years ago and had two daughters. Her husband Mukesh is in private job in Haryana while Pratima lived with father-in-law Ramu and mother-in-law Maya Devi in the village.

Youth shot at

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A youth, returning to home from the field, was shot at by unidentified persons in Orailate Wednesday night. On hearing the gunshot, people rushed to the spot and got him admitted to a hospital. In view of his serious condition, the doctors referred him to the Medical College, Jhansi. Farmer Pushpendra alias Sonu (35) of Jargaon under Sarsakal police station, Orailate, was returning from his field around 11 pm on Wednesday. Suddenly some unidentified miscreants fired at him. After sustaining bullet injury on his stomach, Pushpendra fell unconscious on the floor. The assailants escaped from the spot. Kin got him admitted to hospital from where he was referred to Jhansi.

Format C-1

(As per the judgement dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.)

Name and address of candidate: **Rahul Gandhi**, 10 Janpath, New Delhi 110001

Name of political party: **Indian National Congress**

Name of Election: **Lok Sabha General Election- 2024**

Name of Constituency: **36- Rae Bareilly Parliamentary Constituency**

I, **Rahul Gandhi**, a candidate for the above mentioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents:

S. No.	Name of Court	Case No. and dated	Status of case(s)	Section(s) of/Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s)
1	Not Available	FIR No. 240/2021 dated 09.09.2021 Delhi.	The Hon'ble High Court of Delhi in W.P.(C) 8210/2021 its order dated 24.01.2024 referred to the existence of the aforementioned FIR. The FIR per direction of the Hon'ble High Court is in sealed cover. I am therefore, not aware of the details of the FIR. I am also not aware of whether I am arraigned as an accused in this FIR. I am, however, disclosing its existence out of abundant caution.	SS. 228A IPC SS. 23(4) POCSO SS. 74 Juvenile Justice Act Alleged disclosure of identity of parents of minor rape victim girl on the Twitter handle of the candidate.
2	9 th Addl. Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court, Nrupatunga Road, Bangalore City	FIR No. 0362/2022 dated 4.11.2022 Yeshwanthapura Police Station, Bengaluru City, Karnataka	Investigation was stayed in terms of order dated 16.12.2022 in Writ Petition No. 25123/2022 by Hon'ble High Court of Karnataka. On 28.6.2023 the Hon'ble High Court of Karnataka was pleased to dismiss the above writ petition.	Copyright Act u/s 63 IT Act u/s 66 and SS 34, 120B, 403, 465 IPC It is alleged against the accused that they have used song(s) that the Complainant had copyrights over in the social media/Twitter handle of Indian National Congress while covering a video of the Bharat Jodo Yatra.
3	Court of Metropolitan Magistrate 9th Court Bandra, Mumbai, Maharashtra	Complaint Case No. 311/SS/2023	WP/3011/2023 filed before the Hon'ble Bombay High Court challenging order dated 23.11.2019 rejecting the application for dismissal of Complaint on the ground that two separate offences cannot be tried together is pending.	SS. 499, 500 IPC Alleged defamation against RSS with reference to the murder of journalist Gauri Lankesh.
4	Special Court MP/MLA, Ranchi, Jharkhand	Complaint Case No. 1698/2018 (MP/MLA Case No. 16/2021)	The order dated 15.09.2018 passed in Cr. Revision No. 281/2018 by which the Magistrate was directed to take a fresh look on the materials available on record, after he had dismissed the complaint, was challenged in Cr. M.P. No. 4241/2018 before the Hon'ble High Court of Jharkhand at Ranchi and vide order dated 16.02.2024 the WP was dismissed.	SS. 499, 500 IPC Alleged defamation against Bharatiya Janata Party, its leaders, supporters and workers with reference to criminal antecedents of the President of the Party.
5	Court of Chief Judicial Magistrate, Kamrup (Metropolitan), Guwahati, Assam	Complaint Case C.R. 559/2016	Criminal Revision Petition No. 26/2023 was filed before the Additional District and Sessions Judge by Complainant challenging order dated 18.3.2023 passed by the learned Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate, Kamrup in C.R. Case No. 559/2016. The Criminal Revision Petition was allowed vide order dated 22.09.2023. The ACJM, Kamrup, Guwahati was directed to hear both parties afresh and pass fresh order.	SS. 499, 500 IPC Alleged defamation against RSS with reference to persons belonging to RSS not allowing the Accused to visit Barpeta Satra.
6	Court of the 3rd Jt Civil Judge, JD, JMFC, Bhiwandi, Maharashtra	Complaint Case SCC 2425/2014	1. WP ST/14290/2023 filed by the Accused challenging the admissibility of documents is pending before Hon'ble High Court of Bombay. 2. WP/799/2022 filed by the Complainant challenging order rejecting application for issuance of witness summons was rejected on 22.6.2022 by Hon'ble High Court of Bombay. 3. WP/376/2019 filed by the Complainant challenging application rejecting to mark the transcript copy as an Exhibit. Rejected vide Order dated 20/9/2021 by Hon'ble High Court of Bombay. 4. The summoning order dated 11.07.2014 passed by the Ld. J.M.F.C., Bhiwandi was challenged before the Hon'ble High Court of Bombay vide Criminal Writ Petition No. 4960 of 2014. Hon'ble High Court was pleased to dismiss the petition vide order dated 10.03.2015. Against the order dated 15.12.2014 an SLP Cr. No. 3749/2015 was filed before the Hon'ble Supreme Court, which was dismissed as withdrawn vide order dated 01.09.2016.	SS. 499, 500 IPC Alleged defamation against RSS with reference to association of members of RSS with the murder of Mahatma Gandhi.
7	Court of Ms. Taniya Bamniyal, ACMM-III, Rouse Avenue Courts, New Delhi	Complaint Case No. 18/2019	The summoning order dated 26.06.2014 was challenged before the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi vide Cr. M.C. No. 3333 of 2014. The Hon'ble High Court was pleased to dismiss the petition vide order dated 7.12.2015. Against the order dated 07.12.2015 a SLP Cr. No.1024 of 2016 was filed before the Hon'ble Supreme Court, which was disposed off vide order dated 12.02.2016, whereby all inferences and conclusions drawn by the High Court, on the various factual aspects in the matter were expunged and liberty was granted to raise all the issues before the trial court. Moreover, trial court proceedings have been stayed on 22.02.2021 by the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi on a 482 petition (Cr.M.C. No. 578/2021) filed by the Complainant. These is no charge and no conviction.	SS. 403, 406, 420 r/w 120-B IPC Private Complaint by Dr. Subramanian Swamy, former MP Rajya Sabha (former Member of BJP National Executive) regarding alleged conspiracy to criminally misappropriate and cheat the shareholders of M/s The Associated Journals Ltd. by M/s Young Indian and its Directors.

(A) Pending criminal cases

S. No.	Name of Court	Case No. and dated	Status of case(s)	Section(s) of/Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s)
8	Court of Addl. Chief Metropolitan Magistrate 13, Ahmedabad, Gujarat	Criminal Case No. 29989/2019	Trial was stayed by the Hon'ble Gujarat High Court in terms of order dated 10.02.2021 in Special Criminal Application No. 1744/2021 filed by the complainant.	SS. 499, 500 IPC Alleged defamation case against Ahmedabad District Co-operative Bank and its Chairman on deposit of 750 crores during demonetization.
9	Court of Additional District & Sessions Judge 8th, Surat, Gujarat	Criminal Appeal No. 254/2023	A private criminal complaint was filed with regard to an alleged defamatory statement made by the Accused against the so-called Modi Samaj under SS. 499, 500 IPC. Candidate-Accused was convicted and sentenced to Simple Imprisonment for 2 years on 23.03.2023. As it was a 2 year sentence hence sentence was suspended for 30 days by Chief Judicial Magistrate, Surat on 23 March 2023. 8th Additional Sessions Judge, Surat granted bail to the Accused on 3 April 2023 and suspended the sentence of the Accused pending appeal vide order dated 3 April 2023. The order of conviction has been stayed vide order dated 4 August 2023 by Hon'ble Supreme Court in SLP (Cri.) No. 8644/2023 which is pending. Pursuant to the Supreme Court order on 4 August 2023 the Lok Sabha issued a notification dated 7 August 2023 canceling the "disqualification".	SS. 499, 500 IPC Alleged defamatory statement made by the accused against allegedly the so called Modi Samaj.
10	Court of Metropolitan Magistrate 16, Ahmedabad, Gujarat	Criminal Enquiry Case No. 36580/2019	Trial was stayed by the Hon'ble Gujarat High Court in terms of order dated 24.02.2021 in Special Criminal Application No. 2010/2021 filed by the complainant.	SS. 499, 500 IPC Alleged defamation against Bharatiya Janata Party, its leaders, supporters and workers with reference to criminal antecedents of the President of the Party.
11	Special Judicial Magistrate MP/MLA Court, Patna, Bihar	Criminal Case Complaint (P) 1551/2019	Trial was stayed by the Hon'ble Patna High Court in terms of order dated 24.04.2023 in Special Criminal Misc No. 73323/2019.	SS. 499, 500 IPC Alleged defamatory statement made by the accused against allegedly all persons with surname Modi.
12	Special Court MP/MLA, Ranchi, Jharkhand	Complaint Case 1993/2019 (MP/MLA Case No. 17/2021)	1. Cr. M.P. No. 152/2020 u/s 482 of Cr.P.C. against summoning order before Hon'ble Jharkhand High Court. The petition was dismissed vide order dated 5.7.2022. 2. WP Cr. No. 302/2023 was allowed vide order dated 16.08.2023 exempting personal appearance by the Hon'ble High Court at Ranchi.	SS. 499, 500 IPC Alleged defamatory statement made by the accused against so called Modi clan.
13	Court of 40th Metropolitan Magistrate Girgaon, Mumbai, Maharashtra	Complaint Case CC No. 6200/SS/2021	Trial was stayed by the Hon'ble Bombay High Court in terms of order dated 22.11.2021 in Writ Petition No. 4391/2021.	SS. 499, 500 IPC Alleged defamation against Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.
14	Special MP/MLA Court, Chaibasa, Jharkhand	Complaint Case 229/2021	1. Cr.M.P. No. 1368/2022 u/s 482 of Cr.P.C. in Jharkhand High Court against summoning order is pending. 2. W.P. Cr. No. 230/2024 was filed challenging order dated 27.02.2024 passed by learned Magistrate, Chaibasa issuing NBW. Hon'ble High Court vide order dated 20.03.2024 stayed NBW for one month. 3. W.P.(Cr.) No. 276 of 2024 filed before the Hon'ble Jharkhand High Court and vide order dated 25.04.2024 it has been directed that further proceedings shall remain stayed.	SS. 499, 500 IPC Alleged defamation against Bharatiya Janata Party, its leaders, supporters and workers with reference to criminal antecedents of the President of the Party.
15	ACJM (Custom), Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh	Complaint Case No. 628/2018	The Hon'ble Court was pleased to dismiss the aforementioned private complaint vide order dated 26.09.2019. Criminal Revision 283/2022 was filed by the complainant and same is pending before Hon'ble ADJ, Court No. 14, Lucknow.	SS. 499, 500 IPC Alleged defamation of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Bhartiya Janata Party, its leaders and workers.
16	ACJM COURT NO.27, Lucknow Uttar Pradesh	Criminal Misc. Case No. 126818/2022	The Hon'ble Court was pleased to dismiss the aforementioned private complaint vide order dated 14.6.2023 Criminal Revision 547/2023 was filed by the complainant and same is pending before Hon'ble Special Court, MP/MLA Court No. 19, Lucknow.	SS. 499, 500 IPC Alleged defamation of Shri Vinayak Damodar Savarkar.
17	Special Court MP/MLA, Sultanpur Uttar Pradesh	Criminal Misc. Case No. 1943/2018	The matter is currently pending in the Special Court MP/MLA, Sultanpur where process was issued on 08.01.2024 and the accused was admitted to bail on 20.02.2024. A plea is yet to be recorded and the trial is pending.	SS. 499, 500 IPC Alleged defamation against Bharatiya Janata Party, its office bearers with reference to criminal antecedents of the President of the Party.
18	Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Bengaluru, Karnataka	Complaint Case 7399/2024	Matter is currently pending before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Bengaluru for service of other accused parties.	SS. 499, 500 IPC It is alleged that the accused have made false imputations against the ministers and office bearers of the Bhartiya Janta Party for having a rate card for appointment and transfer in important government posts.

(B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences

S.No.	Name of Court & date(s) of order(s)	Description of offence(s) & punishment imposed	Maximum Punishment Imposed
1	Complaint Case No. 18712/2019, Metropolitan Magistrate, Surat Order of conviction dated 23.03.2023	A private criminal complaint was filed with regard to an alleged defamatory statement made by the Accused against the so-called Modi Samaj under SS. 499, 500 IPC. I was convicted and sentenced to Simple Imprisonment for 2 years on 23.03.2023. As it was a 2 years sentence hence sentence was suspended for 30 days by Chief Judicial Magistrate, Surat on 23 March 2023. 8th Additional Sessions Judge, Surat granted bail to me on 3 April 2023 and suspended the sentence to me pending appealvide order dated 3 April 2023. The order of conviction has finally been stayed by Hon'ble Supreme Court in SLP (Cri.) No. 8644/2023 vide order dated 4 August 2023 Pursuant to the Hon'ble Supreme Court order on 4 August 2023, the Lok Sabha issued a notification dated 7 August 2023 canceling the "disqualification". And restored my Membership as Member of Parliament.	2 years



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Unifying Paradise

Pointing to people's anger and civil unrest in PoK, Amit Shah says it will be reclaimed as part of India

As peace and tranquility envelop the sylvan slopes of Kashmir Valley in perfect harmony but civil unrest recoils with its squirming populace across the LoC in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK), India's Home Minister Amit Shah has iterated that the region "belongs to India and we will reclaim it". Nothing new there, but the comment has reignited discussions on the disputed region and its intricate history, fraught as it is with serious ramifications. Following Partition, the princely State of Jammu and Kashmir, like other such States, had the option to accede to either India or Pakistan. Maharaja Hari Singh, then ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, initially sought to remain independent but, amid invasion by tribal militias supported by Pakistan, opted to accede to India in October 1947. It led to the first India-Pakistan War, which saw a United Nations-brokered ceasefire and establishment of the LoC, which divided the region into the Indian J&K and PoK. While India gained control over most of the territory, Pakistan retained approximately its one-third, which it named Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan. Therefore, from an Indian perspective, PoK is an integral part of J&K and its inclusion in India's territorial claims is based on historical, legal and moral grounds. However, the timing and practicality of the Home Minister's claim are debatable: Bringing up such critical matters in public sphere, especially during elections and when they involve a neighbouring nuclear power, is not the best of ideas.



For its part, Pakistan considers PoK as a "liberated territory" pending a plebiscite promised by the UN. In this given situation, the status quo maintained for over seven decades keeps the two countries from going to war. The larger question is, do we want to go to war with Pakistan and can we afford it when we have so much to sort out domestically? Should not the Home Minister be more cautious in raking up such contentious issues during elections? It is true that despite Pakistan's hollow assertions, PoK has witnessed internal dissent and unrest over the years. The region has been marred by allegations of human rights abuses, lack of democratic freedoms and marginalisation of local voices by the Pakistani establishment. Civil society movements, such as the Gilgit-Baltistan Movement, have been advocating for the recognition of their rights and the restoration of genuine autonomy. If Amit Shah's recent declaration reaffirming India's claim over PoK is not a standalone Statement but reflects a broader strategic shift in India's approach, it must be well articulated and a clear roadmap must be laid to approach the matter diplomatically or otherwise. If that is not the case, then it would pass off as another poll rhetoric or 'jumla'. Indeed, diplomatic endeavours are most effectively conducted behind closed doors rather than at public rallies.

For its part, Pakistan considers PoK as a "liberated territory" pending a plebiscite promised by the UN. In this given situation, the status quo maintained for over seven decades keeps the two countries from going to war. The larger question is, do we want to go to war with Pakistan and can we afford it when we have so much to sort out domestically? Should not the Home Minister be more cautious in raking up such contentious issues during elections? It is true that despite Pakistan's hollow assertions, PoK has witnessed internal dissent and unrest over the years. The region has been marred by allegations of human rights abuses, lack of democratic freedoms and marginalisation of local voices by the Pakistani establishment. Civil society movements, such as the Gilgit-Baltistan Movement, have been advocating for the recognition of their rights and the restoration of genuine autonomy. If Amit Shah's recent declaration reaffirming India's claim over PoK is not a standalone Statement but reflects a broader strategic shift in India's approach, it must be well articulated and a clear roadmap must be laid to approach the matter diplomatically or otherwise. If that is not the case, then it would pass off as another poll rhetoric or 'jumla'. Indeed, diplomatic endeavours are most effectively conducted behind closed doors rather than at public rallies.

The rising significance of skills in learning

The new educational landscape must integrate skill-based learning into formal education systems, fostering a holistic approach to learning and livelihood



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

Each generation does make its contribution to the vocabulary of the language it uses. The vocabulary represents its understanding of the current emotions and fancied expressions of sentiments, which are at times as old as the human race. This may be of joy, glee, or sheer 'inaction'.

At times serious sentiments are involved and led by a prominent person of the time; they acquire fancied importance. Many will recall the time when the Department of Education in the Government of India was declared the 'Department of HRD' during the time of the Prime Ministership of Rajiv Gandhi and overnight many departments of personnel of corporate enterprises declared themselves to be the departments of human resource development. Nothing in the content had changed nor had even the approach, but still the fashion had got its new draping.

Each time somebody important in a current scenario projects a concept, there are a lot of people who follow the trail. Nothing wrong with that. The important thing is to understand how human nature moves and what the significance of words is in the larger context of those particular times. It is best to do an analysis without making a value judgement. Having said that, one can come to the present times and notice how the emphasis of the present dispensation in the national arena on 'skill' has brought the word skill to the center of the focus in learning.

There are attempts to offer degrees for certain types of skill formation. Some decades ago, skill was not such a happy word. No vice chancellor of a university would have talked of a degree in 'skills'. Education was supposed to be a grand concept, which indeed it is. The confusion with skill was, albeit, reducing its significance of the grandeur of the process of education. To enter that debate may not be helpful at this stage. The fact of the matter is that times have now changed and skills have acquired the level of an elevated pursuit. As mentioned earlier, there are attempts to offer



degrees in skill formation. Perhaps this is a recognition of the emphasis on doable learning. Anything which can be performed in action is now getting more valued.

By itself, it may or may not be a good thing, but it does show a tendency to reducing action largely to an operational front. The neglect, therefore, of concepts and ideas is proportionate. By itself, the subject matter may be debated, but that remains, as the expression goes, 'another matter'. This is inevitable and leads to some reflections. Skill by itself is important and perhaps far more important than the value attached to it in everyday parleys.

Skill is the foundation of all relationships. If one is attracted towards anyone else, it is only on the basis of that person's skills. That skill may be in singing, cooking, speaking or dancing and the list can be endless. The truth is, nobody was drawn to anybody else, if that other person had no skills. Even a parent is drawn to a child, only at some action of the child, even if it was just a smile. That is how important a skill is. Without a smile, the child would draw no attention. Any adult sees a child seeks to establish some communication with that child and that child's response is the core of the attention it gets from anyone



LIKE ANY OTHER DEGREE, A DEGREE IN SKILLS CAN LEAD TO EARNINGS AND A LIVELIHOOD. THIS IS NEW TO THE LANDSCAPE. THERE IS MORE TO EARN AND MORE WAYS TO EARN WITH IT THAN BEFORE. THIS HAS WIDENED AND DEEPENED THE NATURE OF LEARNING, WHICH BY POPULAR PARLEYS HAS BEEN ADDRESSED AS 'EDUCATION'

around him. Later, that kind of interaction becomes the root of learning communication and more.

This seminal position of skill in human relationships has not often been noticed, either with analytical fervor or poetic exuberance. If that had been done, there would have been greater recognition that nothing, not even emotional bonding, takes place without some skill being the foundation of it. Be that as it may, it is an additional dimension of playfulness, friendship and relationships and from there it goes on to earning and livelihood.

What is happening today is the induction of this skill formation into a standardised format like education leading to a degree. Today even skill in laying bricks in construction can get the status of a degree. A degree is indeed nothing but the benchmarking of standards. Similarly, there is even a proposition on degree in acting and more.

In other words, like any other degree, a degree in skills can lead to earnings and a livelihood. This is new on the landscape. There is more to earn and more ways to earn with it than before. This has widened and deepened the nature of learning, which by popular parleys has been addressed as 'education'. The industry, if one might say so,

of education has its own components, which are widely understood but not equally commonly categorised in our operational terms. Such being the case, a time may have come to categorise different types of learning and different types of skills. It is this component of education which needs greater thought and analysis than has been done so far for 'education' leading to a degree.

It may, therefore, be a fit proposition to submit that to understand 'skills' as a part of learning, one needs to begin the overhaul of the learning process with an overhaul of the learning process of degree in 'education' itself. Operationally this could mean, to begin with, the review of the curriculum of the B.Ed. and M.Ed degree. It is generally agreed that conceptual reflection to be converted into operational reality requires a fulcrum point of intervention. In the text above, the philosophical reflection on skill has been sought to be combined with the world of action and research. This could be a point to be seriously taken on board for further discussion and action.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal)

PICTALK



Devotees at the Kedarnath temple during the 'Char Dham Yatra', in Rudrapurag

PTI

Modi filing nomination boosts BJP morale

Varanasi electrified as Narendra Modi filed papers, underscoring UP's centrality and Modi-Yogi alliance's lasting impact on national politics

Varanasi recently witnessed a surge of excitement as Prime Minister Modi filed his nomination papers for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. This event not only underscored the significance of Uttar Pradesh in shaping national politics but also highlighted the enduring influence of the Modi-Yogi partnership in the State's political landscape.



The ancient city of Varanasi buzzed with excitement as Prime Minister Narendra Modi submitted his nomination papers for the Lok Sabha polls once again last Tuesday. Accompanied by his trusted ally, UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and a host of supporters, Modi's presence electrified the streets during a massive roadshow prior to filing his papers. The atmosphere in the holy city exuded confidence among leaders and workers of the saffron party, indicating a strong belief in their impending triumph in the Lok Sabha polls.

The significance of Uttar Pradesh (UP) in determining the fate of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by the BJP, cannot be overstated, especially as they over the opposition's prospects. The BJP's ambitious goal of securing all 80 Lok Sabha seats in UP is buoyed by the confidence placed in this dynamic duo. Modi has lauded Yogi's development initiatives on numerous occasions, underscoring their collective vision for UP's progress. This sentiment was echoed during Modi's recent rally in Amroha, where he expressed optimism about surpassing previous electoral records under Yogi's leadership, thereby making history in UP.

The 2014 Lok Sabha elections marked a turning point in UP's political landscape, ending the BJP's electoral drought in the State. Securing a staggering 71 out of 80 seats, the BJP emerged victorious without any significant opposition alliance.

The subsequent 2019 elections saw the BJP leverage the Modi wave and Yogi's governance to further consolidate its position, despite facing a united opposition front. Yogi's proactive stance on law and order issues resonated with voters, contributing to the BJP's resounding victory. Yogi's tenure as Chief Minister

has been characterised by a crackdown on criminal elements, instilling a sense of security among the populace. Under his leadership, UP has witnessed a significant decline in crime rates, marking a departure from the lawlessness of the past. Central Government support for development initiatives has further bolstered UP's economy, with the Gross State Domestic Product witnessing substantial growth.

As the 2024 elections unfold, the BJP finds itself in a favourable position in UP, owing to the combined successes of the Modi Government at the centre and Yogi's governance model. The tangible improvements in governance and economic indicators serve as testaments to their administration's efficacy, instilling confidence among voters. While the outcome of the elections remains uncertain, one thing is clear: the Modi-Yogi alliance continues to enjoy unwavering support from the people of UP.

(The writer is a senior journalist and author of two books; his views are personal)



VIVEK SHUKLA

AAP'S CANDID ADMISSION

Madam — This relates to the news story "AAP admits to assault," which was published on May 15. While the action of the CM's PS Bibhav Kumar is condemnable, to say the least, the very admission of the act by the AAP's leader Sanjay Singh is a rare instance of admission of guilt. It is reassuring to note that the party has promised to take strict action against its own. Contrast this with how a well-entrenched party (the BJP), which hopes for a "chaar so paar" score in the LS polls, stood by Brij Bhushan Saran Singh, despite a barrage of sexual allegations against him, only to give the LS sabbha ticket to his son, as some kind of saving grace.

Though AAP has not yet acted on its promise, the admission of wrongdoing has, by itself, lessons for all other parties that choose to look the other way when such incidents involve their party folk. For now, at least, it is the AAP and not the BJP, which is walking the talk on "Beti bachao".

Avinash Godbole | Devtas

DIGNIFIED CAMPAIGNING

Madam — Apropos the editorial "Bitter ballot battle," published on May 15, the ongoing Lok Sabha elections may go down as the most bitterly fought yet, in the history of independent India. Senior citizens like this writer cannot help but recall a time when politicians were dignified in fighting opponents during election campaigning. For instance, during the 1969, assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, when the Congress stalwart Kamaraj thundered that he would win from Virudhunagar constituency 'lying down', Rajaji retorted, "His lying down is a certainty, but winning is difficult!" Rajaji's Swatantra party and the DMK fought that election in alliance, resulting in the Congress defeat and the DMK forming Government.

Differences cropped up between Rajaji and Anna. Said a disillusioned Rajaji in a press meet — "The honeymoon between the Swatantra party and the DMK is over!" When Annadurai heard this, he quipped — "Yes, the honeymoon is over and fam-

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ageing gracefully



Proposes the news article "Embracing the joys and wisdom of age," published on 16 May, this is my response. Reflecting on the passage of time and the shifting perspectives it brings, one can't help but marvel at the journey of life. The writer's experience in the mountains, juxtaposed with encounters that touch upon age, paints a poignant picture of acceptance and

growth. The narrative resonates with the universal theme of ageing, gracefully navigating the transition from youth to seniority. Initially resistant to notions of age, the writer's attitude evolves, finding solace and even pride in the title of 'old'. The seismic impact of the pandemic serves as a sobering reminder of life's fragility, prompting a deeper appreciation for each passing year.

Amidst reflections on personal experiences, there's a poignant call to action - a reminder of the responsibilities that accompany ageing. It's a testament to the profound impact one can have on others, echoing Frank Lloyd Wright's sentiment that life's beauty amplifies with age. In a world often fixated on youth, this narrative serves as a gentle reminder of the richness that comes with embracing the journey of ageing, with all its complexities and rewards.

Khirabdi | Noida

ily life has begun"! Again, in 1976, Loknayak J P Narayan, who was arrested during the emergency, campaigned relentlessly for the Janata Party. But soon thereafter, one of the first persons to call on the vanquished Mrs Gandhi was JP. After the meeting, when press reporters sought a Statement from him, JP said "I wish Mrs. Indira Gandhi, a brighter future than her Rajaji past!" We have had leaders like Rajaji, Kamaraj and JP, who fought their political opponents with might, but without ever hating them, indulging in personal vilification or mudslinging. Will we ever see their likes again?

V Jayaraman | Chennai

NEPAL'S CURRENCY NOTE ISSUE

Madam — India-Nepal relationship has had its highs and lows. Being a demographically close neighbour, the tiny Himalayan country has always been wary about India's might. Though India has been quick to respond to the devastating earthquakes that rock Nepal with frightening frequencies, Kathmandu was sore with the insensitive reporting of ground realities by some

television channels during a major earthquake.

The Madhesi agitation had further strained bilateral relations resulting in Nepal's outreach to China. Overall, New Delhi's inability to keep up the tempo of goodwill has irked Kathmandu. The recent decision of the Pushpa Kamal Dahal Government to depict the controversial India-Nepal-China tri-junction on its currency notes has raised eyebrows in Indian diplomatic circles. It is widely felt that apart from traditional issues, Kathmandu's unhappiness with New Delhi over a few crucial projects not taking off, or not being maintained after being inked, could be among the few triggers for its currency notes step. Both countries should display maturity to ensure that the negative influence of Beijing does not cast a shadow on mutual friendship. The currency note issue should be resolved soon after the elections for peace and stability in the region.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

INDIA AND IRAN SIGN CHABAHAR PORT PACT

A significant step for connecting the Indian Ocean to Europe and beyond



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

India and Iran finally managed to put a long-term contract closure for one of the most stretched flagship projects in the bilateral relationship between the countries. India managed to sign a ten-year Long-term Contract for the development of Shahid Beheshti Port Terminal, Chabahar. It was no surprise that, despite being in the middle of elections, Union Minister of Ports Shipping and Waterways Sarabandona Sonowal visited Chabahar port to witness the signing of this crucial bilateral agreement.

Chabahar is a deep water port, located nearest to India, which is crucial for India's access to central Asia and vice versa for the States in the region into the Indian Ocean. The Chabahar project first came up as a crucial bilateral platform for Iran and India in 2003 when PM Vajpayee and Iranian counterpart Hassan Roubani, unveiled a transformational strategic cooperation blueprint between the two nations. Iran and India while getting closer on the bilateral, were focussed on securing Afghanistan and making it an important transit destination further into Central Asia. The Delhi Declaration of 2003, signed between Iran and India reiterates "The recent trilateral agreement between the Governments of India, Iran and Afghanistan to develop the Chabahar route through Melak, Zaranj and Delaram would facilitate regional trade and transit, including to Afghanistan and Central Asia, contributing thus to enhanced regional economic prosperity."



However, post the Vajpayee Government, India's focus on the crucial infrastructure project shifted, partially impacted by domestic politics and a new world order. It wasn't until Prime Minister Modi became the prime minister that this integrated multi-modal Chabahar project found prominence. Hectic backroom negotiations, including the visit of the Afghan President to India in 2015, followed by PM Modi's visit to Iran in 2016, the signing of the trilateral agreement provided the much-needed impetus to the project. It also involved close coordination with the US (which wasn't too keen on India's enthusiasm, with Chabahar), but the independent access to Afghanistan served as the crucial lynchpin to unblock the hesitancy.

In 2017 India, Iran and Afghanistan held the second ministerial-level trilateral meeting to get an update on the establishment of a transport and transit corridor in Chabahar. The Statement released after the trilateral stated "Reiterating the importance of Chabahar as a hub for regional economic connectivity and their commitment to work towards this objective, the Ministers commended the joint efforts of the three countries in the recent successful transit of wheat from India to Afghanistan through Chabahar."

It was nearly seven years later that India got complete access to the Chabahar port for handling the crucial operations. It is important to be reminded that China has made significant progress in Central Asia by aggressively pursuing its Belt and Road initiative. Iranian President led a high-level economic delegation to China in February this year, while reiterating that China continues to be its largest trading partner. India's relations with Central Asian countries and further into Russia have been stable for decades. China has been a new entrant in the region which has first managed to acquire critical infrastructure projects in India's immediate neighbourhoods like Pakistan, Sri Lanka etc and is now in weather with Russia.

Iran has traditionally been a key influencer in the West Asian and Central Asian regions, however, the ongoing war in Gaza has revived old fault lines in the region. The US which withdrew from Afghanistan used to be a key decision-maker in the region and is keen to.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

RBI fortifies the nation's economy with gold



SHIVAJI SARKAR

Taking a cue from prudent household savers, the Reserve Bank of India has significantly increased its gold reserves to 817 metric tonnes to hedge the economy



In a strategic move reminiscent of Indian households safeguarding their wealth, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is fortifying the nation's economic resilience by actively acquiring gold reserves. This bold initiative mirrors the prudence of household savers, as the central bank positions itself to shield itself against potential economic turmoil and bolster the country's financial stability.

The RBI now has accumulated gold reserves of 817 tonnes.

This surge can be attributed to a combination of factors including escalating tensions in West Asia, Israel's assault on Palestine, the Russia-Ukraine war and persistent inflation, all of which have heightened the appeal of gold. Central banks worldwide are actively accumulating gold to diversify reserves and reduce dependency on the US dollar. China, in particular, has been on a gold-buying spree for the 17th consecutive month, aiming to hedge against currency depreciation and geopolitical risks. The world is unofficially going back to the gold standards it abandoned in 1971.

India is also hit by a continuous six-day fall in the stock market. It wipes out a significant investment. The loss is estimated at Rs 7 lakh crore.

The household savers, of course, got their savings dipped as unemployment and rising prices hit them. The RBI in a clarificatory note on May 9, mentions that "they are putting their savings into real estate and the central bank is not worried of the phenomenon".

The bank itself has stepped up gold purchases to "help diversify its foreign exchange reserves base amid US dollar volatility". The US inflation rate in February hit 3.2 per cent year over year. Since the Federal Reserve began raising rates in 2022, it has raised rates from 5.25 per cent to 5.5 per cent in July 2023. It's

holding further raises given the US elections.

The price of gold has surged over 10 per cent since the start of the year, cementing its status as a preferred hedge against inflation and a sanctuary amid political and economic uncertainty. This significant uptick is largely due to considerable purchases by central banks and a rising demand for safe-haven assets.

Gold prices, in India, have been experiencing a significant surge in 2024, with a remarkable rally that has propelled them to an unprecedented all-time high of over Rs 73,000 per 10 gm two days before Akshaya Tritiya, when customary gold purchases reach a peak. This surge represents an impressive increase of approximately 21.1 per cent within just one year. On the day of Akshaya Tritiya on May 10, it has slightly dipped to Rs 72,788. Over six months, domestic gold prices surged from Rs 54,000 per 10 grams to a record high of Rs 73,958.

One can realise that nothing can appreciate faster than gold and can't question the RBI's sagacity. One dollar is at Rs 83.88. Rupee is expected to rise to Rs 82.50 in six months, a gain of about 1.1 per cent and in a year it could rise to Rs 82 - a gain of 1.7 per cent. It means the RBI dollar reserves would lose about 2 per cent value in a year. So, the RBI has decided to buy more gold than dollars. Its investment would be less at even Rs 73,000 for 10 gm and gains over 20 per cent. That's an intelligent economy.

The RBI has increased gold purchases to diversify reserves, with

gold value contributing to a \$3 billion rise in forex reserves to \$648.5 billion. RBI acquiring more gold in early 2024, aiming for diversification and inflation hedging.

The World Gold Council (WGC) says that RBI gold purchases touched 19 tonnes during January-March. This dwarfs the 16 tonnes of gold it bought in the whole of 2023.

In terms of countries with the highest gold reserves, the USA leads with 8,133 tonnes, followed by Germany, Italy, France and the Russian Federation with 3,366.49, 2,451.84, 2,436.01 and 2,271.16 tonnes of gold, respectively, according to WGC.

The surge in central banks' gold acquisitions stemmed from the aftermath of the US imposition of sanctions on Russia. These sanctions, triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, included freezing Russian reserve dollars and imposing restrictions on crucial commodity trades such as crude oil. The global repercussions of these measures were profound, exposing vulnerabilities within Western financial institutions.

The option of investments in the stocks has become riskier. In February, China divested an additional \$22.7 billion in US Treasury securities, as per the latest Federal Reserve data, reducing its total holdings to \$775 billion. Despite this decrease, China retains its position as the second-largest foreign holder of U.S. debt. China is reducing its dependence on the dollar, as per US Federal Reserve data.

According to ICICI Direct study,

The RBI wants to diversify its foreign exchange reserves and reduce dependence on the US dollar. Gold offers stability and isn't directly tied to the performance of any one currency. It can be especially valuable during times of economic uncertainty or fluctuations in the dollar's value.

Gold is considered as a hedge against inflation. When the value of currencies weakens due to inflation, gold tends to hold its value or even increase. It protects the purchasing power of India's foreign reserves.

The diversification of the portfolio to gold reserve, RBI says, can inspire confidence in the Indian economy from foreign investors. It signals a strong financial position and stability, potentially attracting more foreign investment.

While less common today, gold can still be used for international transactions. Holding a gold reserve allows India to settle debts with other countries if needed, or if those countries aren't willing to accept rupee.

The next few years can be times of turmoil and gold can be a stabilising factor in the international economy. It is particularly so as the IT sector, industry, markets are in a destabilised condition and would take time to calm. At such volatile times gold is likely to be more in demand than paper currencies. The RBI has resorted to the right move and lead the India economy, which has been striving to become one of the major world economies.

(The author is a senior journalist; views are personal)

THE WORLD GOLD COUNCIL SAYS THAT RBI GOLD PURCHASES TOUCHED 19 METRIC TONNES DURING JANUARY-MARCH THIS DWARFS THE 16 TONNES OF GOLD IT BOUGHT IN THE WHOLE OF 2023

Reflections of an oncologist navigating imperfections in cancer care

Doctors aren't infallible gods but compassionate humans dedicated to easing human suffering, even in the face of formidable medical challenges

As an Oncologist, my days are filled with facing the most dreaded and life-threatening cancers head-on, armed with an arsenal of anti-cancer treatments that range from mild to equally dreadful. But amidst the battle against this relentless disease, I've come to understand that medical science is far from perfect.

Every time I sit down with a patient and their family to discuss treatment options, I embark on a delicate balancing act. Yes, I outline the potential benefits of the treatment, but I also dedicate ample time to explaining its imperfections and the associated risks - risks that can sometimes be massive, impacting not only the



PRASHANT MEHTA

patient's life but also their quality of life. These discussions are rarely brief; on average, I find myself engaging with 2 to 8 family members, ensuring that everyone understands the complexities involved. And in these conversations, I make it a point to acknowledge that success is not guaranteed. I've had my fair share of failures and I recognise that my clinical judg-

ments aren't infallible. In the realm of oncology, the weight of responsibility is immense. The human toll of the disease, coupled with the emotional turmoil experienced by families, weighs heavily on me every single day. There are moments when the sheer gravity of it all threatens to overwhelm me, but I gather my strength, reminding myself of the dignity, composure and compassion required to navigate through these turbulent waters.

Recently, I stumbled upon an opinion piece penned by Mr. CY Gopinath, recounting the journey of a patient grappling with suspected pancreatic cancer. The patient felt as though his oncologist was pushing a

cancer diagnosis onto him. Such situations are not uncommon, especially when dealing with cancers that are notoriously difficult to biopsy. Misdiagnoses and the fear of missing a fatal diagnosis loom large in the minds of oncologists.

The widening trust gap between patients and healthcare providers is a cause for concern. Patients and their families may perceive our actions and recommendations in various ways, sometimes attributing them to ulterior motives. But the reality is often far more nuanced than it appears.

Having worked extensively in both private and Government healthcare settings, I've witnessed my fair share of diagnostic and ther-



apeutic errors. These errors stem from the inherent imperfections of medicine and the challenges of navigating a complex healthcare landscape. In the modern era, doctors are acutely aware of the trust

deficit that exists between us and our patients. The notion of a 'God complex' is a myth; instead, we recognise our limitations and strive to bridge the gap through open communication and transparency.

While drugs and surgeries aren't panaceas, alternative treatments aren't always the answer either. It's imperative to base our decisions on evidence-backed practices rather than succumbing to anecdotal allure.

In the realm of healthcare, there's no one-size-fits-all solution. Each patient's journey is unique, shaped by their individual preferences and circumstances. As doctors, we must personalise our approach, empowering patients to be active participants in their healing process.

It's crucial to foster an environment where patients feel empowered to question, learn and seek second opinions. After all, informed decision-making is the cor-

nerstone of effective healthcare delivery. In conclusion, amidst the cacophony of controversy and misinformation, the voice of expertise must prevail. Medicine is a science guided by evidence, not conjecture. Despite the challenges and uncertainties that lie ahead, I remain steadfast in my commitment to serve, echoing the words of my mentor: "Someone has to do this work and you've been chosen. Do it well."

The writer is a Senior Consultant and Program Director (Lymphoid Neoplasms and Cellular therapy) Department of Medical Oncology Amrita Institute of Medical sciences, Faridabad. Views are personal.



Helped Modi when he was Gujarat CM: Sharad

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid vicious criticism of him by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the Lok Sabha poll campaign, NCP chief Sharad Pawar on Thursday revealed that he had helped Modi when the latter was the Gujarat chief minister. Talking to media persons, Pawar said that he had helped Modi tackle the agrarian crisis in Gujarat when the latter was the Chief Minister in that state.

"Modi used to come to me with the problems of the agriculture sector and even took me to Gujarat. Once he wanted to visit Israel so I took him there also. I am not concerned about whatever Modi says Narendra Modi says now," Pawar said.

A four-time Maharashtra Chief Minister and former defence Minister in the PV Narasimha Rao government, Pawar was the Union Agriculture Minister in the Dr Manmohan Singh-headed Congress-led UPA government.

Modi was the Chief Minister of Gujarat from 2001 to 2014 before he became the Prime Minister of the BJP-led NDA government.

It may be recalled that Modi - speaking at an election rally at Madha in western Maharashtra had slammed Pawar by saying that the NCP chief had miserably failed as the Union Agriculture Minister. Modi had also claimed that Pawar had failed to keep his 2009 Lok Sabha poll promise of providing water to the people of Solapur.

Later addressing an election in Pune, Modi had hit out at Pawar without naming him. "There is a 'bhakti atma' (wandering soul) in Maharashtra... If he does not manage to succeed, he spoils others' good work. Maharashtra has been a victim of it," Modi had said. Modi's comment had generated considerable sympathy among the people for senior Pawar in the run-up to Lok Sabha polls in Baramati.

Later on Modi and Pawar had exchanged barbs between them. In a sharp retaliation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's criticism about his "inability" to manage his family, NCP chief Sharad Pawar on Saturday wondered as to "when did Modi take care of his own family" and said the condition of the latter's family "is a matter of serious concern".

Pawar had taken a swipe at Modi for the latter's recent comment made in a television interview that "when Pawar cannot manage his own family, how can he manage Maharashtra?" by saying: "When did Modi manage or take care of his family? I do not want to stoop to that level... The condition of his family is a matter of serious concern. I avoid making personal comments... But, the Prime Minister does not believe in this..."

On Modi's comment on how and why Pawar who criticised him as being "Putin in the making" received the Padma Vibhushan honour from his government, Pawar said: "When we were in the government, we had honoured the



leaders from different political parties who had made notable contributions to the country. The awards like Padma are national honours. They do not belong to any political party. The Padma award is Modi's personal property. The BJP does not have copyright over these honours".

Averting that his faith in Modi was waning, Pawar said: "Modi had said many things during his election speeches in the past. But, he has not implemented them. He keeps making casual comments without application of mind. That's my faith in him going down".

On the Prime Minister's criticism of his predecessor about the Dr Manmohan Singh government's policies in the past, Pawar said: "Modi used to criticise Dr Manmohan Singh's policies bitterly in the past, but he is implementing the same policies. The speciality of Dr Manmohan Singh used to work quietly without talking about things he was doing and he used to produce results. But, in the case of Modi, he spends a lot of time criticising others. People have begun to understand Modi's style of functioning".

Later in the day, while addressing an election rally at

Purandar in Pune district for Opposition NCP-Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) candidate Supriya Sule from Baramati Lok Sabha constituency, Pawar slammed Modi, saying that Modi was totally different from the best of Prime Ministers like Indira Gandhi, Narasimha Rao and Dr Manmohan Singh.

"The country has seen many Prime Ministers. I myself have seen many Prime Ministers, worked with some. After independence, we have not seen the work of a prime minister like Jawaharlal Nehru, but we read and learned about his work, he worked to give direction to this country. In his later times a gentleman like Lal Bahadur Shastri became the Prime Minister of the country and created a new history," he said. "Subsequently, Indira Gandhi not only worked hard to alleviate the sufferings of the poor but also taught a lesson to Pakistan. After Pakistan's attack Indira Gandhi retaliated and divided the country into two. After that Pakistan did not rise again. Later we have had prime ministers like Narasimha Rao and Dr Manmohan Singh with whom I had worked," Pawar said. "Among all the Prime Ministers that the country has had, Modi is totally different.

Thanks to him, the condition of farmers has become miserable. They are in distress. He has contributed to high inflation in the country," Pawar said. Pawar - whom Modi had criticised at his election rally at Madha in western Maharashtra early this week saying that the NCP chief had miserably failed as the Union Agriculture Minister - charged that the current Prime Minister had badly managed Agriculture in the country.

"When we were in power, the management of agriculture was in the hands of our people. After 10 years of Mr. Modi's arrival, the management of agriculture is in the hands of BJP. When I was in charge of agriculture, we increased the procurement rate of paddy by Rs 138 per quintal, and during Modi's tenure, it was increased by Rs 66 quintal," Pawar said. "The procurement price of wheat was increased by Rs 122 per quintal during my tenure, while during Modi Saheb's time it was increased by Rs 62. The procurement price of sugarcane was increased by Rs 187 per quintal during my tenure, while it was increased by Rs 50 during Modi Saheb's tenure," the NCP chief said.

"The procurement price of cotton rose by Rs 114 during my tenure and rose by Rs 78 during BJP's tenure. The price of maize increased by Rs 159 during my time, while in 10 years of BJP it was Rs 59 per quintal. I am giving you these comparative figures because the Modi government did not pay adequate remunerative prices to the farmers in the country," Pawar said.

Shah arrives in Srinagar ahead of Baramulla polls

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU



Ahead of the fifth round of polling on the Baramulla Lok Sabha seat on May 20, Union Home Minister Amit Shah arrived in Srinagar late Thursday evening.

The timing of the Home Minister's visit instantly created a lot of buzz in the surcharged political atmosphere prevailing in the valley.

Former Chief Minister and National Conference Vice President Omar Abdullah, who is contesting from the Baramulla Lok Sabha seat, has also questioned the timing of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's visit to Kashmir.

"Doesn't it look strange that despite BJP having no candidate in the fray here, the Home Minister is visiting Kashmir, leaving behind his campaign for the Lok Sabha election," he told media persons in north Kashmir's Bandipora district where he addressed an election rally.

The BJP also clarified that the Home Minister's visit is not political.

BJP leader in-charge of Kashmir division, Sunil Sharma, told reporters, "The Union Minister is coming to Kashmir today, but the visit is not political. The elections are on. The voter turnout on May 13 is a huge success of the policies of the Central Government including the abrogation of Article 370."

"I think the Home Minister is coming here to review the

measures from the security point of view to increase the turnout and create an atmosphere of peace. There is no political activity, but the BJP workers will meet him and discuss the party's organizational matters," he said.

Referring to the recent statement made by former chief of Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) Ghulam Qadir Wani that it was ready to contest polls if the Centre lifts the ban on it Sunil Sharma maintained every organisation has a right to contest elections under the ambit of the Indian Constitution and law.

"But no organisation which is anti-India or unlawful or involved in anti-national activity will be allowed or tolerated," he added.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had earlier imposed a ban on JeI in 2019 terming the organization as "anti-national". Before visiting Srinagar the Union Home Minister in an interview to a National News Agency claimed the Jamaat-e-Islami and Hurriyat Conference, who didn't believe in the Indian Constitution earlier, have voted in Srinagar Parliamentary constituency election held on May 13 boosting the voting percentage to 36 which used to be between 8 to 13 per cent during Farooq Abdullah Government.

Asked whether a JeI delegation will also meet Shah, Sharma said no delegation is meeting the Home Minister. He said that non-political or senior people can meet Shah, but no political delegation is meeting him.

Meanwhile, in response to a similar question Omar said he has already demanded that the ban on them (JeI) should be revoked, and in the upcoming Assembly election, they should participate.

Omar claimed that in the past Jamaat used to support different candidates behind the curtain. "They (Jamaat) will now have their candidates in the fray should they (Jamaat) take part in the elections," he added.

Now, concerns prop...

From Page 1
The BHU researchers on Covaxin adverse impact said serious AESI, which included stroke and Guillain-Barre syndrome, were reported in one per cent of individuals. The study had looked at long-term safety of the BBV152 vaccine in adolescents and adults. "Close to one third of the individuals developed AESIs. New-onset skin and subcutaneous disorders, general disorders, and nervous system disorders were the three most common disorders observed in adolescents after receiving the vaccine," the study, conducted from January 2022 to August 2023, said. New-onset skin and subcutaneous disorders (10.5 per cent), general disorders (10.2 per cent), and nervous system disorders (4.7 per cent) were the common AESIs in adolescents.

General disorders (8.9 per cent), musculoskeletal disorders (5.8 per cent), and nervous system disorders (5.5 per cent) were the common AESIs in adults.

Menstrual abnormalities were noticed in 4.6 per cent of female participants. Ocular abnormalities and hypothyroidism were observed in 2.7 per cent and 0.6 per cent of participants. Four deaths (three female individuals, one male individual) were reported in adults, the study added. All four had diabetes, while hypertension in three, and a history of pre-vaccination COVID-19 was present in two of them. Stroke was the main contributor in two deaths and one fatality was due to post-COVID-19 rhinocerebral mucormycosis, which supposedly disseminated after vaccination as reported by the caregivers.

The fourth death happened in a woman with multiple episodes of unconsciousness post-vaccination, the etiology of which remained unidentified till death. In the absence of a definite causality association, no conclusions can be drawn from these events.

With the majority of AESIs

persisting for a significant period, extended surveillance of COVID-19-vaccinated individuals is warranted to understand the course and outcomes of late-onset AESIs, the study underlined.

Serious AESIs might not be uncommon and necessitate enhanced awareness and larger studies to understand the incidence of immunemediated phenomena post-COVID-19 vaccination.

Female individuals, adolescents with pre-vaccination COVID-19, those with co-morbidities, and those with post-vaccination typhoid had respectively 1.6, 2.7, and 3.2 times higher odds of persistent AESIs.

Adults with co-morbidities had more than two times higher odds of AESIs and persistent AESIs, the study stated. Adults receiving three doses and those receiving one dose of BBV152 were respectively at four and two times higher risk of AESIs compared with adults receiving two doses of the Covaxin, the study said.

I am very much a part of INDIA: Mamata

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Much mellowed than she was a till few days before Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee continued to send signals to the top Congress leadership and their counterparts in the Indian National Democratic Inclusive Alliance saying she was very much a part of the INDIA alliance and that her Trinamool Congress would take a leading role in formation of a new Government should Narendra Modi go out of power --- which she had already predicted early this week warning the Prime Minister about the "changing weather".

While addressing an election rally at East Midnapore on Thursday Banerjee complained about some "mischievous elements" who had been working overtime on a "disinformation campaign that I have left INDIA... this is not true... I am very much in the Alliance contrary to what some mis-

chievous people in Delhi have been telling because I conceived it and I created it".

In a bid to differentiate between what some critics called --- in reference to her tactical stance a "good INDIA and bad INDIA" Banerjee said I will continue to be in the Alliance unlike the CPI(M) and the Congress in Bengal... they are not the real INDIA people... they are friends of the BJP".

The Chief Minister who had decided to go solo in Bengal saying there was no INDIA alliance in the State had apparently made it clear on Wednesday that she was not a part of the opposition Alliance when she said that after the elections she would provide outside support to an alternative government.

Saying that the "weather is changing" for the Prime Minister, she said her party would provide outside support to the new dispensation. Banerjee's speech was promptly received by Bengal Pradesh Congress president Adhir

PCC livid as Delhi Congress leaders skip Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A section of the Bengal Pradesh Congress is incensed with the national party leadership for having jettisoned the State party and its leaders in a bid to keep Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee happy and well-disposed towards the Indian National Democratic Inclusive Alliance. They are unhappy because "the Bengal party was left to its fate in the elections and there was literally no help from the national leadership," said a PCC leader refusing to share his name.

"At a time when the top BJP

leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and others were making almost daily trips to Bengal to campaign for their candidates was it wrong on our part to expect some of our own national leaders to attend a few rallies here," asked another senior leader. "Not a single senior leader came to Bengal for campaigning let alone Rahul or Priyanka ji... only Kharge ji came as a replacement to address only one rally... is this what the Bengal party is worth at a time when our men are being killed or sent to jail to hold the party flag high... our senior leaders went to cam-

paign for a single seat at Diu but they could not come here... when we have expecting to win 3-5 seats for the party," a former MLA said adding "we should thank the Left leadership for coming and campaigning for us and saving our face." In 2019 Rahul had come to campaign in Bengal twice and had earned the wrath of the Chief Minister. When reminded that the national party had other compulsions as in case of a hung parliament they might need the support of the TMC in Delhi, the leader said, "let the TMC win that many seats first in Bengal," adding "voters do not want to see the Congress alongside the TMC."

INDIA," Chowdhury said adding that "Mamata Banerjee is trying to remain afloat in the national politics by clutching on to the INDIA alliance... but the people will not believe in her as she has lost her credibility."

Mercury rising: Delhi...

From Page 1
These alerts coincide with broader concerns about escalating heatwaves attributed to climate change, underlining the urgent need for mitigation measures and global efforts to combat greenhouse gas emissions.

"Severe heatwave conditions are very likely in some parts of west Rajasthan during May 17-20 and in Punjab, Haryana and Delhi during May 18-20," the IMD said. A yellow alert has been issued for east Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Gangetic West Bengal and Odisha.

The Met office had earlier predicted a higher-than-normal number of heatwave days in the northern plains and central India in May. Normally, the northern plains, central India and adjoining areas of peninsular India experience around three days of heat waves in May. High temperatures pose grave risks, including heat

stroke, skin rashes, cramps, and dehydration," said Dr Naval K Vikram, from Department of Internal Medicine, AIIMS Delhi. Dr Neha Rastogi, infectious diseases expert added that for those with pre-existing conditions, these issues can quickly turn fatal if not promptly addressed. She also expressed concern that warmer weather is also an invitation for vector-borne diseases such as dengue and malaria.

More than 1.53 lakh deaths a year were associated with heat waves around the world, with over a fifth of these deaths - the greatest share - coming from India, according to new research looking at data over 30 years since 1990.

India is already reporting high intensity summers. For instance, in India April saw record-smashing maximum temperatures in east, northeast and southern peninsular India, prompting health warnings from government agencies and

some states to suspend in-person classes in schools. Several pockets recorded their highest-ever April day temperatures, with the mercury soaring to 47 degrees Celsius. According to IMD data, heatwave days in April were the highest in 15 years in Gangetic West Bengal and nine years in Odisha.

The World Weather Attribution (WWA) group emphasised that heatwaves intensified by climate change are making life much tougher for people living in poverty across Asia.

In response to these challenges, there is a pressing need for mitigation measures at various levels, including urban planning strategies, healthcare preparedness, and community outreach programs. Additionally, efforts to curb greenhouse gas emissions and combat climate change are crucial in addressing the root causes of extreme weather events like heat waves.

Sachin...

From Page 1
The poll body has enhanced its targeted interventions to reach out to every eligible voter. The poll body has collaborated with BCCI for voter awareness activities during the ongoing IPL season. The voter awareness messages and songs are being played at different stadiums during the cricket matches. The most innovative aspect of this campaign is the administration of voter's pledge by cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar, in a pre-recorded video message, at various IPL venues. Further, voter awareness messages are integrated into cricket

commentary. Cricketers from 10 IPL teams have encouraged voters to participate in the Lok Sabha Elections 2024 with their recorded voter awareness messages.

Telecom Service Providers such as Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd, Bharti Airtel Limited, Jio Telecommunication, Vodafone-Idea Ltd. are reaching out to every mobile user in the respective Parliamentary Constituency through push SMS/ Flash SMS, Outbound dialling calls to mobile users, RCS (Rich Communication Services) messaging and Whatsapp messages/ alerts. These activities are carried out two/three days prior to the poll and even on the poll day, in

regional languages, with an appeal to vote.

The poll body said Music App Spotify is running a campaign 'Play Your Part', and they have issued print advertisements, and curated the playlists for the elections, on their app.

Payments app PhonePe has integrated voter awareness messages in their app and is actively encouraging voters. Grocery App Blinkit changed its logo to "Inkit" for the elections, incorporating a message encouraging people to "Go out and Vote" as a tagline. BookMyShow has launched an integrated campaign, titled "Aaj Picture Nahi, Bigger Picture Dekho," for raising awareness among voters. MakeMyTrip is running a

campaign titled 'MyVoteWalaTrip', whereby discounts are offered to citizens, going for voting. Food delivery platforms such as Zomato and Swiggy are disseminating voter awareness messages through their platforms and social media activities.

A voting day alert was sent to all Facebook users pan India to inform and inform the voters about the general elections and to nudge them to participate in the festival of democracy. WhatsApp personalised messages have begun on polling day. Google India is contributing through its iconic feature of Google Doodle on poll days and banners appearing on YouTube, Google

pay and other Google Platforms.

Vast network of post offices and banking institutions was utilised by EC to reach out to a wide and diverse audience across the length and breadth of the country. The Department of Post has over 1.6 lakhs post offices and 1,000 ATMs and 1,000 digital screens. There are over 1.63 lakh bank branches and 2.2 lakh ATMs across public and private sector banking institutions. In collaboration with the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, the Parliamentary elections campaign logo "Chunav ka Parv, Desh Ka Garv" has been integrated with IRCTC portal and tickets.

Interim bail to Delhi CM justified...

From Page 1
The Delhi Chief Minister was arrested on March 21. On May 10, the apex court granted interim bail to Kejriwal till June 1 in a money laundering case related to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam. He has to surrender on June 2. The ED on Thursday told the Supreme Court it will soon file a prosecution

complaint against Kejriwal and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in a money laundering case related to the alleged excise policy scam. Appearing for the ED, Additional Solicitor General SV Raju told a bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta, "We are proposing to file the prosecution complaint (charge sheet) against

Kejriwal and AAP. We will do it shortly. It is in the pipeline." The statements were made by the ED during the hearing on Kejriwal's plea against his arrest. The court, however, barred him from visiting his office or the Delhi secretariat, and signing official files, unless absolutely necessary for obtaining the Lieutenant Governor's approval.

LUCKNOW...

From Page 1
Kejriwal claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had implemented a rule stating that individuals over 75 years of age would not be appointed to any position in the government or organisation and would be retired.

"LK Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi were retired as per this rule and several BJP leaders, as per this rule, were removed or not given tickets. Modi is going to cross the age of 75 next year and has decided to make Shah the Prime Minister of the country," Kejriwal said.

The leaders who could have caused hindrance were sidelined. Shivraj Singh

Chouhan, Vasundhara Rajje, Raman Singh, Devendra Fadnis and Manohar Lal Khattar have been finished, he asserted.

"There is only one person who could prove to be a thorn in the way of Shah and he is Yogi. They have now decided to remove Yogi within two months if their Government is formed," Kejriwal said.

Kejriwal said trends coming from across the country show that the BJP is getting less than 220 seats. The seats of BJP in Haryana, Delhi, Karnataka, UP, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand are reducing and the party is not winning a single seat in Punjab, he claimed.

Maliwal..

From Page 1
"The last few days have been very difficult for me. I thank those who prayed for me. Those who tried to do character assassination and said that she was doing it on the instructions of the other party, may God keep them happy too. An important election is going on in the country, Swati Maliwal is not important, the issues of the country are important. There is a special request to BJP people to not do politics on this incident." The police team, led by Additional Commissioner of Police (ACP) P S Kushwaha reached Maliwal's house, and stayed there for more than four hours. According to police officials, the team, including a woman

police officer, had gone to the residence of the Rajya MP to seek details of the incident and record her statement."

Additionally, the NCW summoned Bibhav on Thursday in connection with the case, with his hearing scheduled for Friday at 11 am. The commission took suo moto cognisance of a media post titled "ex-DCW chief Swati Maliwal accuses Arvind Kejriwal's personal secretary of assaulting her," where she claimed that she was assaulted at the Chief Minister's residence by Bibhav Kumar, Kejriwal's Private Secretary. On Tuesday, Sanjay Singh addressed a Press conference and said the incident with Maliwal was a "highly condemnable" one, confirming that the assault did happen at Kejriwal's residence.

RAEBARELI...

From Page 1
She said her party will restore the earlier method of permanent appointment with pension provision for the army personnel. The Congress general secretary also spoke about creating a Rs 5,000 crore fund to help small entrepreneurs. Voting in both the constituencies is scheduled in the fifth phase on May 20.

JAUNPUR /AZAMGARH...
From Page 1
Accusing the leaders of the INDIA Bloc of advocating reservation on the basis of religion, Modi said, "They advocate reservation on the basis of religion. They want to take away the right of reservation of the SCs, STs and OBCs by changing the Constitution of the country."



PoK belongs to India, we will take it back at any cost: Shah

PTI ■ SITAMARHI (BIHAR)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday asserted that Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) belongs to India and the country will take it back "at any cost".

Addressing an election rally in Sitamarhi Lok Sabha seat in Bihar, the former BJP president slammed the Congress-led opposition for "raising fear about Pakistan's atomic power".

"When Article 370 was scrapped, Rahul Gandhi had said that it would lead to bloodshed. Five years have elapsed and not a pebble has been hurled. But Congress's ally Farooq Abdullah tries scaremongering by saying that we cannot take back PoK as Pakistan has atom bombs," Shah asserted.

"I wish to declare from the birthplace of Goddess Sita that Bharat and its 140 crore people fear no one. Pakistan occupied Kashmir is ours and it will remain so. We will take



it back," he said. Shah said the Modi government will also ensure full security along the India-Nepal border in its third term. Attacking the INDIA bloc, he said, "Lalu Prasad-led RJD has joined hands with the Congress that opposed the Mandal Commission's recommendations but PM Modi has given respect to lakhs of people from the

backward classes. Lalu joined hands with the Congress only to make his son, Tejashwi Yadav, the chief minister of Bihar... But the state needs 'vikasraj, not 'jungelraj'." "Congress ruled the country for 60 years but did not think about welfare of 60 crore OBCs. Congress and RJD never thought of conferring Bharat Ratna on former Bihar chief minister Karpoori

Thakur... It was done by the Modi government," he said. Shah said that the NDA government has decided to develop 'Punaura Dham Mandir', a temple in Sitamarhi district considered to be the birthplace of Goddess Sita, as an international pilgrimage site.

"After Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, we will construct a massive temple of Sita Mata in Sitamarhi," he said. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's cabinet has approved Rs 72.47 crore for the development of the temple.

Senior JD (U) leader and Bihar Legislative Council chairman Devesh Chandra Thakur is the NDA nominee from Sitamarhi Lok Sabha seat.

Shah will address another election rally in Madhubani Lok Sabha seat later in the day.

Sitamarhi, Madhubani, Muzaffarpur, Saran and Hajipur Lok Sabha seats will go to polls in the fifth phase on May 20.

BJP will win 32 Lok Sabha seats out of 42 in Bengal: Tripura CM

PTI ■ AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Thursday said the BJP will win 32 Lok Sabha seats out of 42 in West Bengal.

"I had the opportunity to join the party's campaign trail in West Bengal during which I saw great enthusiasm among voters for the BJP. I am sure the party will win 32 out of the 42 Lok Sabha constituencies," he told reporters here.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP had won 18 seats out of 42 Lok Sabha constituencies, the best show by the saffron party in Bengal so far.

On BJP's prospects, Saha said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set the goal of 400-plus seats for the NDA.

"We all are working to achieve the target. I have already visited West Bengal and campaigned for the party. I will go again to Bengal to canvass for the party. We are confident that



the BJP-led NDA will win more than 400 Lok Sabha seats (out of 543 seats)," he said.

The Chief Minister is scheduled to leave for Kolkata later in the day to join the party's campaign for the last three phases.

The Chief Minister dismissed the opposition's claim that the BJP would secure fewer than 200 seats, stating that it was merely an attempt to rally their party's supporters.

Officials running Government in Odisha: Nadda



PTI ■ PADAMPUR/SUNDERGARH (ODISHA)

BJP president J P Nadda on Thursday warned the people of Odisha that their votes were not being effectively utilised, as those they elected to power were not the ones governing them.

Nadda made the remark at two election rallies in Padampur under Bargarh Lok Sabha seat and Sundergarh parliamentary constituency.

He highlighted that although the people voted for BJD candidates, the government was being run by someone who isn't even their elected representative.

"Do you need such a government? Officials are running the government here while MLAs/MPs have been made redundant. Do MLAs wield any power in the state? There is only one person who is taking the stage here and there is no place for the MPs and the MLAs. Are you able to meet your Chief Minister? Does he speak to you in Odia?," Nadda asked the gathering in both the places.

Nadda emphasised the necessity for a young, locally rooted chief minister who actively manages daily administration, stressing the importance of preserving Odisha's cultural identity and pride.

While seeking votes for BJP candidates, Nadda accused the BJD government of being corrupt. "Will you allow corrupt people to return power? It is the time to bless the BJP and help it form the government in the state," he said.

Nadda also addressed the issue of Lord Jagannath's Ratna Bhandar (treasury), echoing concerns previously expressed by PM Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

He criticised the BJD government over the missing Ratna Bhandar keys, suggesting that pressing the lotus button at the polling station would lead to the BJP government opening the temple's treasury, a task the BJD has failed to accomplish. Referring to BJD government's alleged misrule, Nadda said, "People of Odisha will not tolerate anymore. They will vote for the lotus symbol twice, one

for MP and another for MLA, and get double development."

Claiming that BJP means growth-centric politics, Nadda said before 2014, politics was all about vote-bank, divide and rule and appeasement.

"But today, the culture of politics has changed completely. It has now become politics of performance and politics of 'report card'," Nadda said. Though there is no BJP government in Odisha, Nadda pointed out that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been very concerned towards the state's development.

"Modi has always ensured the state's development. He increased the grant-in-aid and also established a permanent campus of IIM at Sambalpur," he said.

Nadda said the allocation in the railway budget for Odisha was increased 12 times and 4,300 km of national highways was laid in the state. The third railway line connecting Manoharpur-Rourkela-Jharsuguda-Jamga is under progress. These are development milestones," Nadda added.

The BJP chief also came down heavily on the BJD government for not implementing the Ayushman Bharat scheme in the state. He said nearly 68 lakh families were deprived of Rs 5 lakh health cover due to non-implementation of the scheme in Odisha.

"It would have helped Odias living outside the state but Naveen Patnaik did not like this health cover being given by Modi and kept harping on Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojna," he said.

Nadda also pointed out that the Modi government provided 5 kg rice and 1 kg dal to each family holding a ration card. "Under PM Kisan Samman Nidhi, about 11.78 crore farmers, including those in Odisha, are getting Rs 6,000 annually."

While everyone had accepted that there will be no change in this country, Modi came to power in 2014 following which India started embracing transformation. The able leadership of Modi made everyone believe that India would become a developed nation by 2047, he said.

INDIA Bloc will disintegrate khata khat after June 4: Modi

PTI ■ PRATAPGARH (UP)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday said the INDIA bloc wants to make five prime ministers in five years and claimed that it will disintegrate after June 4.

The counting of votes for all the seven phases of polling for the Lok Sabha elections will be undertaken on June 4. Addressing an election rally in support of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate Sangam Lal Gupta at the Government Inter College Pratapgarh grounds here,

Modi said the INDIA bloc wants to replace the stable NDA government and make five prime ministers in five years.

"Many things will happen after June 4. The INDIA alliance will disintegrate and they will look for a scapegoat after the defeat."

Modi took a jibe on Rahul Gandhi's statement of sending money "khata khat, khata khat" (quickly) in the account of women after coming to power.

"The Modi government will definitely be formed after

June 4 but the INDIA alliance will disintegrate 'khata khat, khata khat,' said the prime minister.

"These people will run away 'khata khat, khata khat' after the elections. Only we will remain. I guarantee that I will work day and night to serve you," he said.

In an apparent attack on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, he said, "The shehzade (princes) of Lucknow and Delhi will leave for abroad on summer vacations," said Modi.

Commenting that running a country is not a play for those born with a golden spoon, Modi said, "They have gone from Amethi and will go even from Rae Bareilly."

The prime minister said, "The entire country is saying that the third term of this government will be more powerful."

Modi said his every moment and every bit of his body will be in the name of the people. He attacked the INDIA bloc leaders by saying they had questioned the bravery of the Army.

"What is their agenda? They are saying they will reinstate Article 370 in Kashmir. They will repeal the CAA law made by Modi... These people are appealing for 'vote jihad' against Modi," he said, referring to an SP leader's remarks.

Without taking names, Modi said a companion of the Congress' prince remarked that if their government is formed they will send Ram Lalla back to the tent again and will lock him. But these people are forgetting that it is impossible to happen under

him and the country will force the people of this mentality to live in tents, he added.

Modi said the SP and Congress leaders will again go to Pakistan with bouquets of flowers and fly pigeons with them and asked the people to be cautious with them.

He said the Congress and INDIA bloc have been out of power for 10 years and their coffers of "black money" have become empty. Their eyes are on the country's treasury now, he added.

66.95 per cent turnout in first four LS phases: EC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The cumulative turnout in the first four phases of the Lok Sabha elections has been recorded at 66.95 per cent, the Election Commission (EC) said on Thursday, adding 45.10 crore of the nearly 97 crore electors have voted so far in the ongoing electoral exercise. In a statement, the poll panel urged electorate to come out and vote in large numbers in the coming phases.

According to the EC, the updated voter turnout in the fourth phase of polling held on May 13 was 69.16 per cent, 3.65 percentage points higher than the corresponding phase in the 2019 parliamentary polls. The updated voter turnout figures for the third phase of polling in the Lok Sabha election stood at 65.68 per cent. In the third phase of the 2019 general election, the turnout was 68.4 per cent. In the second phase of the election held on April 26, the



turnout was recorded at 66.71 per cent as against the 69.64 per cent in the second phase of the 2019 polls.

In the first phase of the ongoing general elections, a 66.14-per cent turnout was recorded. In the 2019 polls, the turnout in the first phase was 69.43 per cent.

The EC said there is enhanced

focus on to inform, motivate and facilitate voters in the remaining three phases of the parliamentary polls and state chief electoral officers have been asked to step up measures.

"The Commission strongly believes that partnership and collaboration are essential pillars of voter awareness programme. It's really heartening

to see that on Commission's request, different institutions, influencers and celebrities have working enthusiastically on pro-bono basis," Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar said. A total of 379 seats across 23 states and Union Territories have voted in the first four phases of elections. A high voter turnout, Kumar felt, would be a message from Indian voters to the world about the strength of Indian democracy.

He urged voters to cast their ballot in huge numbers, as voting day is not a holiday but a day of pride to participate in the festival of democracy.

The poll panel also listed out outreach efforts undertaken by various private and public bodies to enhance voter participation in the elections.

Banks, post offices, private entities and telecom platforms are using their public interface to encourage registered voters to turn up at the polling stations on various voting days.

Government appeals to eastern Naga body not to abstain from ULB elections

PTI ■ KOHIMA

The Nagaland government on Thursday appealed to ENPO to reconsider its decision not to participate in the urban local body (ULB) elections.

The Eastern Nagaland Peoples' Organisation, the apex body of seven Naga tribes of the region, has been demanding a separate state since 2010, claiming that six districts in the eastern part of Nagaland have been neglected for years.

The appeal from the government comes after the ENPO sent a letter to the State Election Commission (SEC), apprising the poll panel of its decision to abstain from participating in the ULB elections on June 26.

"During the state cabinet meeting today, the government has once again appealed to the ENPO and its constituent bodies to participate in the ULB elections, which are being

conducted on the directions of the Supreme Court after the prolonged legal battle on women's reservation in ULBs in the state for the larger interest of the public and their welfare," state minister K G Kenye told reporters here.

The people of Eastern Nagaland had on March 19 reaffirmed their commitment to the "Chenmoho Resolution", wherein it was resolved "not to participate in any central and state election due to the delay to create the Frontier Nagaland Territory (FNT) as assured by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on December 7, 2023".

The ENPO had abstained from the April 19 Lok Sabha elections with no voter turning out in the six districts of the eastern part of the northeastern state.

Despite numerous reminders through letters and public rallies, the MHA did not pay heed to the ENPO demand, the organisation alleged.

Election campaign in Himachal sees bitter name calling, personal attacks

PTI ■ SHIMLA

"Kale naag", "bigda shehzada", "husn pari" - the election campaign in Himachal Pradesh has been marked by name-calling and personal attacks.

The bitter discourse that followed the cross-voting by six Congress rebels in the Rajya Sabha polls in February seems to have continued into the Lok Sabha election campaign, with some senior political leaders calling it a new low.

The level of politics is deteriorating every day, senior BJP leader and former chief minister Shanta Kumar said here.

Even leaders who are in the news for their harsh speeches and name-calling say such behaviour is uncalled for when they find themselves at the receiving end of such language. Himachal Pradesh Chief

Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has also spoken out against the nature of campaign rhetoric for the ongoing elections.

Speaking to PTI, Sukhu said that Himachal Pradesh had never witnessed such remarks during elections and this behaviour is against the culture of the state.

But Sukhu's language against Congress rebels as "kale naag" (black snakes) and "bikau" (on sale) and stuck to his "bikau versus tikau" tirade against them during his campaign trail.

Nine legislators - the six Congress rebels and three independent MLAs - voted in favour of the BJP nominee Harsh Mahajan in the Rajya



Sabha polls held on February 27. They later joined the BJP and the six former Congress

MLAs are now contesting the assembly bypolls on BJP tickets from their respective

constituencies. At a rally in Kulehar, the assembly constituency

represented by Congress rebel Devinder Kumar Bhutto who was disqualified from the House for defying a party whip, Sukhu allegedly remarked "Bhutto ko Kooto (beat Bhutto)".

The BJP filed a complaint with the state's chief electoral officer, accusing Sukhu of inciting violence. Another candidate who has been in the thick of controversies since her nomination for the Lok Sabha election is BJP's candidate from Mandi, Kangana Ranaut.

Soon after her nomination, Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete posted a picture of Ranaut and captioned it "Mandi main bhav kya chal raha hai". The post, considered derogatory, faced massive backlash, prompting Shrinete to remove the remarks from all of her social accounts. She claimed that they had been posted not by her but by

someone else who had access to her accounts.

Ranaut has also indulged in a fair share of name-calling and has referred to Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Vikramaditya Singh - also her rival for the Mandi seat - as "bada pappu" and "chhota pappu".

She has also targeted Congress leaders of the Gandhi-Nehru family, from former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and his father Motilal Nehru to Indra Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi during her campaign, calling the Congress "a disease" and "termites" left by Britishers, which was "eating the country" till 2014.

The actor has also referred to Vikramaditya as "bigda shehzada" (spoilt prince), asserting that she was not in politics due to her father or husband's influence.

Vikramaditya's father Virbhadra Singh is a 4-time

chief minister of the state and his mother Pratibha Singh is the sitting MP from Mandi. Pratibha, the state Congress president, has called Ranaut a "pari" and that people only come to see her.

Reacting to the remark, the actor's mother Asha Ranaut said senior Congress leaders are making comments like "yeh husn pari hai", and "yeh kya cheez hai", forgetting that they also have daughters at their home. "Being a mother, I am pained and feel that other mothers are also feeling sad due to such remarks."

Several senior citizens too flagged indecent language used in the campaign. Om Prakash Sood, an 88-year-old businessman, said, "Lines of civility have been crossed, we have never witnessed such a low-level political campaign in Himachal Pradesh, which is known as 'Dev Bhoomi', where people are respectful and decent."

UN's top court opens hearings on military incursion into Rafah

AP ■ THE HAGUE

The United Nations' top court on Thursday opened two days of hearings into a request from South Africa to press Israel to halt its military operation in the southern Gaza city of Rafah, where more than half of Gaza's population has sought shelter. It is the fourth time South Africa has asked the International Court of Justice for emergency measures since the nation launched proceedings alleging that Israel's military action in Gaza amounts to genocide. According to the latest request, the previous preliminary orders by The Hague-based court were not sufficient to address "a brutal military attack on the sole remaining refuge for the people of Gaza". South Africa said the situation was getting worse in the war-ravaged area. "Israel's genocide has continued at pace and has reached a new and horrific stage," said



Vusumzi Madonsela, South Africa's ambassador to the Netherlands. Israel has portrayed Rafah as the last stronghold of the militant group, brushing off warnings from the United States and other allies that any major operation there would be catastrophic for civilians. South Africa has asked the court to order Israel to withdraw from Rafah; to take measures to ensure unimpeded access for UN officials, humanitarian organisations and journalists to the Gaza Strip; and to report back within one week on how it is meeting these demands. During hearings earlier this year, Israel strongly denied committing genocide in

Gaza and said it does all it can to spare civilians and is only targeting Hamas militants. It says Hamas' tactic of embedding in civilian areas makes it difficult to avoid civilian casualties. In January, judges ordered Israel to do all it can to prevent death, destruction and any acts of genocide in Gaza, but the panel stopped short of ordering an end to the military offensive that has laid waste to the Palestinian enclave. In a second order in March, the court said Israel must take measures to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza, including opening more land crossings to allow food, water, fuel and other supplies to enter. Most of Gaza's population of 2.3 million people have been displaced since fighting began. The war began with a Hamas attack on southern Israel on Oct 7 in which Palestinian militants killed around 1,200 people and took about 250 hostages. Gaza's Health Ministry says over 35,000

Palestinians have been killed in the war, without distinguishing between civilians and combatants in its count. South Africa initiated proceedings in December 2023 and sees the legal campaign as rooted in issues central to its identity. Its governing party, the African National Congress, has long compared Israel's policies in Gaza and the occupied West Bank to its own history under the apartheid regime of white minority rule, which restricted most Blacks to "homelands". Apartheid ended in 1994. On Sunday, Egypt announced it plans to join the case. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Israeli military actions "constitute a flagrant violation of international law, humanitarian law, and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 regarding the protection of civilians during wartime". Several countries have also indicated they plan to intervene, but so far only Libya, Nicaragua and Colombia have filed formal requests to do so.

Violence rages in New Caledonia France rushes emergency reinforcements to its Pacific territory

AP ■ PARIS

Violence raged across New Caledonia for the third consecutive day on Thursday, hours after France imposed a state of emergency in the French Pacific territory, boosting security forces' powers to quell deadly unrest in the archipelago that has long sought independence. French authorities in New Caledonia and the interior ministry in Paris reported that five people, including two police officers, have been killed in the violence after protests earlier this week over voting reforms pushed by President Emmanuel Macron's government turned deadly. At least 60 members of the security forces were injured and 214 people were arrested in the Thursday's clashes with police, arson and looting, according to the territory's top French official, High Commissioner Louis Le Franc. "Everything is being done to restore order and calm that Caledonians deserve," French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal said



Burnt cars are lined up after unrest in Noumea, New Caledonia, Wednesday. France has imposed a state of emergency in the French Pacific territory of New Caledonia

after Thursday's security meeting at the Elysee presidential palace in Paris. Attal said France will provide the island with essential goods after three days of unrest. In addition to the 1,700 security forces troops that have already been deployed to help police curb the

violence, 1,000 more are on the way, he added. The situation "remains very tense, with looting, riots, arson and attacks which are unbearable and unspeakable," Attal said. Two members of the island's Indigenous Kanak community were among the five dead.

French Interior and Overseas Territories Minister Gerald Darmanin said Thursday. "The (French) state will regain total control," Darmanin declared in a series of interviews with French media. Darmanin said 10 people, all alleged members of the pro-independence movement known as The Field Acton Coordination Unit, have been placed under house arrest. In April, the group had backed several protests against French authorities on the island. However, Darmanin, the interior minister, alleged on Thursday that the movement is a "small group which calls itself pro-independence, but instead commits looting, murder and violence." "We will not back down," Darmanin said. The National Council of Chiefs of the Indigenous Kanak people condemned "all acts of vandalism and gun violence" as "unjustifiable," but rejected the allegations that members of The Field Action Coordination Unit have been involved in the deadly violence.

Xi, Putin hint at political settlement to end war

PTI ■ BEIJING

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Thursday hinted at a political settlement to end the Ukraine war, saying he expects peace and stability will return to the European continent, shortly after his talks with Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin as the two leaders vowed to counter any attempt by the US to hinder their strategic ties. Putin received a grand welcome upon his arrival here earlier in the day on his first foreign visit after winning the fifth term in office in March for wide-ranging talks with Xi to reset the burgeoning China-Russia strategic ties for future. "China hopes that peace and stability will return to the European continent at an early date, and stands ready to play a constructive role to this end," Xi said at a joint press conference with Putin after their talks. A joint statement issued after Putin-Xi talks said that both sides believe that for "a sustainable settlement of the Ukrainian crisis, it is necessary to eliminate its root causes." In a veiled criticism of the US, which is pressuring Beijing to end its strategic ties with Russia, the joint statement said relations between China and Russia do not target any third countries, therefore they will counter any attempts to hinder such cooperation. "The two sides note that the relationship between Russia and China has progressed to a more advanced interstate coop-

eration compared to the military-political unions of the Cold War era as it is not bloc or confrontational in nature, nor does it target any third countries," Russia's new agency Tass quoted the document as saying. According to the statement, Russia and China reaffirmed their resolve to defend their legitimate rights and interests and block any attempts to impede a normal development of bilateral ties, and any interference in the internal affairs of the two nations or to impose restrictions on their economic, technological and foreign policy potential. Putin's visit to China, the second since last October, follows Xi's just concluded European Union tour to France, Serbia and Hungary where the Chinese leader came under pressure from EU leaders not to sell arms to Russia. The US too is mounting pressure on China not to sell arms to Russia. While Xi, 70, regards his ties with Putin, 71, as counter to the US' increasing hostility towards China, which Beijing says is aimed at countering its rise, there is unease here over the Russian leader's continuation of the Ukraine war. Though Beijing has not publicly supported Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the "no-limits" China-Russia strategic partnership has come under intense scrutiny from the US and its allies, who have imposed sanctions on Moscow and repeatedly called Beijing to use its leverage to bring the war to an end.



Chinese President Xi Jinping, right, and Russian President Vladimir Putin attend a signing ceremony in Beijing, China, on Thursday

Slovak lone wolf charged with PM assassination attempt

AP ■ BANSKA BYSTRICA

Slovak authorities charged a 59-year-old man Thursday with attempting to assassinate populist Prime Minister Robert Fico, saying the suspect acted alone in a politically motivated attack that laid bare the extreme polarization that has gripped the small central European country. Fico, 59, was in serious but stable condition a day after being shot multiple times in the stomach, a hospital official said. President-elect Peter Pellegrini said he spoke to Fico at the hospital but confirmed his condition "remains very serious." The attempted assassination has shocked the nation and reverberated across the continent weeks ahead of European elections. While President Zuzana Caputova called on everyone to dial back the vitriol that has characterized the political debate, some government ministers took aim at Slovakia's media for contributing to the fractious atmosphere. Interior Minister Matus Sutaj Estok asked jour-



Slovakia's incumbent President Zuzana Caputova speaks during joint press statements with President elect Peter Pellegrini at the presidential palace in Bratislava, Slovakia, on Thursday. Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico was in serious but stable condition Thursday, a hospital official said, after the populist leader was shot multiple times in an assassination attempt.

nalists to "reflect" on how they had covered Fico's policies. He referred to the suspect — who was charged with premeditated murder — as a "lone wolf" who did not belong to any political groups, though he said the attack itself was politically motivated. Fico has long been a divisive figure in Slovakia and beyond, and his return to power last year on a pro-Russian, anti-American message led to even greater worries among fellow

European Union and NATO members that he would abandon his country's pro-Western course — particularly on Ukraine. At the start of Russia's invasion, Slovakia was one of Ukraine's staunchest supporters, but Fico halted arms deliveries to the neighbor when he came to power. Fico's government has also made efforts to overhaul public broadcasting — a move critics said would result in the

government's full control of public television and radio. That coupled with his plans to amend the penal code to eliminate a special anti-graft prosecutor have led opponents to worry that Fico will lead Slovakia down a more autocratic path. Thousands of demonstrators have repeatedly rallied in the capital and around the country of 5.4 million to protest his policies. Slovak police have provided little information on the identity of the suspect. But unconfirmed media reports suggested he was a 71-year-old retiree who was known as an amateur poet, and may have previously worked as a security guard at a mall in the country's southwest. At a news conference on Thursday following a meeting of Slovakia's Security Council, government ministers gave more details about the man, while still not naming him. Estok said that the man himself cited his dissatisfaction with several of Fico's policies as motivation for the attack. The minister said presidential elections in the spring prompted the assault, and that the suspect

Shooting of Slovak PM sends shockwaves across Europe

Bratislava (AP): The shooting Wednesday of Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico in the town of Handlova following a political event sent shockwaves across Europe three weeks before EU parliament elections are scheduled to be held. Leaders from across the political divide denounced the apparent assassination attempt against the populist, pro-Russian leader, calling it an attack on democracy. Here's what European leaders and others are saying: "What has happened is something that we cannot seem to realize because we cannot comprehend it. A physical attack on the prime minister is, first of all, an attack on a person, but it is also an attack on democracy. Any violence is unacceptable. Hateful rhetoric we've been witnessing in society leads to hateful actions. Please let's stop it." — Slovak President Zuzana Caputova, Fico's political rival, in a televised statement. — "An assassination attempt on one of the highest constitutional officials is an unprecedented threat to Slovak democracy. If we express different political opinions with guns in the squares, and not in polling stations, we endanger everything we have built together in 31 years of Slovak sovereignty." — Slovak President-elect Peter Pellegrini. had attended a recent anti-government protest. "I can confirm to you that the reason it was a politically motivated, attempted premeditated murder is as the suspect himself said: the media information that he had

Indian national charged in connection with Nijjar's murder appears before Court

PTI ■ OTTAWA

An Indian national charged in connection with the killing of a Khalistani separatist appeared before a Canadian court, which ordered him to re-appear on May 21 alongside three co-accused arrested in the high-profile case that has severely strained India's relations with Canada. Amandeep Singh, a 22-year-old suspect in the killing of Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, appeared via video in a Surrey court on Wednesday, and the matter has been put forward to next week, local media reports said. Nijjar, 45, was killed outside Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara in Surrey, British Columbia on June 18, 2023. Amandeep was charged on May 11 with first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder, just over a week after identical charges were announced against three co-accused — Karan Brar (22),

Kamalpreet Singh (22) and 28-year-old Karanpreet Singh. Amandeep appeared in court in Surrey virtually from Ontario, where he was already up in the custody of Peel Regional Police for unrelated firearms charges. A judge set his next court date for May 21 — when he'll appear alongside the other three men charged with conspiring to kill Nijjar. His appearance before the court was marred by technical delays. More than two dozen people gathered outside the courtroom before Amandeep's appearance, holding flags in support of Khalistan. Amandeep, Karan Brar, Kamalpreet Singh and Karanpreet Singh are all Indian nationals. Police say Amandeep was splitting his time in Canada between Brampton, Abbotsford, and Surrey. They are allegedly members of a hit squad that investigators

believe was tasked by the government of India to carry out the murder of Nijjar, according to the Canadian media. Amandeep was already caught up in the Canadian justice system at the time of Nijjar's death, CBC News reported. The Indian national, who entered Canada on a temporary visa, appeared in a Surrey courtroom to answer charges on an unrelated matter just two days before he lay in wait for Nijjar at the entrance to the Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara, according to the report. Amandeep had been arrested in Surrey on a warrant after fleeing from police in March 2023. He was charged with flight from police and dangerous operation of a motor vehicle and made a first court appearance on June 16, 2023. Court documents show that his case came up before the court again 19 days after the killing, on July 7, and was proceeding through the system toward a trial, scheduled for

later this year, when he was arrested on separate firearms and drug charges in Brampton last November. The ties between India and Canada came under severe strain following Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations in September last year of the "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Nijjar. India has dismissed Trudeau's charges as "absurd" and "motivated." Nijjar, a Khalistani separatist, was wanted in India on various terror charges. India has been asserting that its "core issue" with Canada remained that of the space given to separatists, terrorists and anti-India elements in that country. Following Trudeau's allegations last year, India temporarily suspended the issuance of visas to Canadian citizens. The visa services were resumed several weeks later.

FB and Instagram face fresh scrutiny under EU's digital regulations

AP ■ LONDON

The European Union opened fresh investigations Thursday into Facebook and Instagram over suspicions that they're failing to protect children online, in violation of the bloc's strict digital regulations for social media platforms. It's the latest round of scrutiny for parent company Meta Platforms under the 27-nation EU's Digital Services Act, a sweeping set of regulations that took effect last year with the goal of cleaning up online platforms and protecting internet users. The European Commission, the bloc's executive arm, said it's concerned that the algorithmic systems used by Facebook and Instagram to recommend content like videos and posts could "exploit the weaknesses and inexperience" of children and stimulate "addictive behaviour". It's worried that

these systems could reinforce the so-called "rabbit hole" effect that leads users to increasingly disturbing content. The commission is also looking into Meta's use of age verification tools to prevent children from accessing Facebook or Instagram, or be shown inappropriate content. Only children aged 13 and older are allowed to use the platforms. It's also looking into whether the company is complying with DSA rules requiring a high level of privacy, safety and security for minors. "We want young people to have safe, age-appropriate experiences online and have spent a decade developing more than 50 tools and policies designed to protect them," Meta said in a prepared statement. "This is a challenge the whole industry is facing, and we look forward to sharing details of our work with the European Commission."

WH blocks release of Biden's special counsel interview audio, says GOP is being political

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden has asserted executive privilege over audio of his interview with special counsel Robert Hur that's at the center of a Republican effort to hold Attorney General Merrick Garland in contempt of Congress, the Justice Department told lawmakers on Thursday. It comes as the House Oversight and Accountability Committee and the Judiciary Committee are each expected to hold a hearing to recommend that the full House refer Garland to the Justice Department for the contempt

charges over the department's refusal to hand over the audio. Garland advised Biden in a letter on Thursday that the audio falls within the scope of executive privilege. Garland told the Democratic president that the "committee's needs are plainly insufficient to outweigh the deleterious effects that the production of the recordings would have on the integrity and effectiveness of similar law enforcement investigations in the future." Assistant Attorney General Carlos Felipe Uriarte urged lawmakers not to proceed with the contempt effort to avoid "unnecessary and

unwarranted conflict." "It is the longstanding position of the executive branch held by administrations of both parties that an official who asserts the president's claim of executive privilege cannot be held in contempt of Congress," Uriarte wrote. White House Counsel Ed Siskel wrote in a separate, scathing letter to Congress on Thursday that lawmakers' effort to obtain the recording was absent any legitimate purpose and lays bare their likely goal — "to chop them up, distort them, and use them for partisan political purposes." The White House letter is a tacit admission that there are

moments from the interview it fears portray Biden in a negative light in an election year — and that could be exacerbated by the release, or selective release, of the audio. The transcript of the Hur interview showed Biden struggling to recall some dates and occasionally confusing some details — something longtime aides says he's done for years in both public and private — but otherwise showing deep recall in other areas. Biden and his aides are particularly sensitive to questions about his age. At 81, he's the oldest ever president, and he's seeking another four year term.

S Korean court denies bid to halt medical school admissions boost

AP ■ JERUSALEM

A South Korean court ruled in favour of the government's contentious plan to drastically boost medical school admissions on Thursday. A standoff between the government and doctors opposed to the plan has shaken the country's medical system for months. More than 10,000 junior doctors have been on strike since February in protest. The Seoul High Court rejected a request from striking doctors and other opponents for an injunction to block the plan, which would raise the

medical school enrollment quota by 2,000 next year, from the current cap of 3,058. Lee Byung-chul, a lawyer for the doctors, said he will prepare to appeal the ruling to the Supreme Court, the country's top court. He said he will issue an official statement on Thursday's ruling after reviewing details of the verdict. Prime Minister Han Duck-soo welcomed the ruling, saying the government appreciates "the wise ruling by the judicial branch." He said the government will take steps to finalise medical school admission plans for the 2025 academic year. The striking doctors represent

a fraction of all doctors in South Korea, estimated to number between 115,000 and 140,000. But in some major hospitals, they account for about 30 per cent to 40 per cent of doctors, assisting fully qualified doctors and department chiefs during surgeries and other treatments while reviewing details of the verdict. Prime Minister Han Duck-soo welcomed the ruling, saying the government appreciates "the wise ruling by the judicial branch." He said the government will take steps to finalise medical school admission plans for the 2025 academic year. The striking doctors represent

Doctors say schools aren't ready to handle an abrupt increase in students and that it would ultimately undermine the country's medical services. They say the government plan would also result in doctors performing unnecessary treatments because of greater competition. But critics argue that many doctors are mainly worried that more competition would lower their incomes. Government officials earlier threatened to suspend the licenses of the striking doctors but later halted related administrative steps to facilitate dialogue with the strikers.

STALWART CHHETRI ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The iconic Sunil Chhetri on Thursday announced his decision to retire from international football after the FIFA World Cup qualifying match against Kuwait on June 6, bringing the curtains down on a glorious career that is unparalleled in Indian football for its longevity and consistency. The long-serving national team captain announced his decision via a video he posted on his social media accounts.

Chhetri, who made his debut in 2005, has scored 94 goals for the country. He will leave the scene as India's all-time top scorer and most-capped player.

He is also third in the list of goal scorers among active players behind Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi and currently sits at the fourth in the all-time list of international goal-scorers as well.

Chhetri, 39, will walk into international sunset after rendering yeoman service for nearly two decades, 19 years to be precise, to a team that was heavily reliant on the 5'7" forward to deliver the goods every time he wore the blue jersey.

"The match Against Kuwait is the last," Chhetri said while announcing his decision.

Chhetri's final match will be played at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata, and it is appropriate that he will end his journey in a city, where he has played a lot of his football while evolving into a potent striker.

India are currently second in Group A with four points, behind leaders Qatar.

Chhetri had made his 150th national



appearance in March and scored on the occasion against Afghanistan in Guwahati. India, though, stunningly lost that game 1-2. On his international debut against Pakistan way back in 2005, Chhetri, who would go on to become one of the game's most lethal strikers, scored, and he rated it as his best moment. "There is one day that I never forget and remember it quite often is the first time I played for my country man, it was unbelievable. "But the day before, morning of the day, Sukhi sir (Sukhwinder Singh),

my first national team coach, in the morning he came to me and he's like, you're going to start? I can't tell you how I was feeling man," Chhetri recalled.

He added, "I took my jersey, I sprayed some perfume on it, I have no idea why. So that day, everything that happened, once he told me, from breakfast to lunch and to the game and to my first goal in my debut, to conceding late in the 80th minute, that day is probably that I will never forget and is one of the best days of my national team

journey." Speaking on the future of Indian football, Chhetri said that it was time for the country to find the next 9. He felt the team is currently handicapped as none of the current lot of players play as the main striker for their respective clubs and sees the massive hole in the current national team. In recent times, Chhetri said he could sense that he was heading towards the end of his glorious journey. "You know the feeling that I recollect in the last 19 years is a very nice

combination between duty, pressure and immense joy. I never thought individually, these are the many games that I've played for the country, this is what I've done, good or bad, but now I did it.

"This last one and a half, two months, I did it and it was very strange. I did it because probably I was going towards the decision that this game, this next game is going to be my last." The moment he had arrived at the decision, memories came flooding back to his mind.

"And the moment I told myself first, that yes, this is the game that is going to be my last, is when I started recollecting everything.

"It was so strange, I started thinking about this game, that game, this coach, that coach, that team, that member, that ground, that away match, this good game, that bad game, all my individual performances, everything came, all the flashes came. So when I did decide that this is it, this is going to be my last game."

His family members reacted differently to his big decision. "I told my mom, my dad and my wife, my family first, my dad was...He was normal, he was relieved, happy, everything, but my mom and my wife started crying," he said.

"...They couldn't express to me as to why they burst into tears. It's not that I was feeling tired, it's not that I was feeling this or that, when the instinct came that this should be my last game, then I thought about it a lot."

Chhetri was felicitated ahead of his 150th outing for the Blue Tigers in the World Cup qualifier against Afghanistan in Guwahati.



Griezmann scores hat trick as Atletico beats Getafe in Spanish league to seal Champions League spot

AP ■ MADRID

Antoine Griezmann scored a hat trick as Atletico Madrid defeated Getafe 3-0 in the Spanish league on Wednesday to secure a Champions League spot next season.

The France international scored twice in the first half and again in the second to give Atletico its 12th straight appearance in Europe's top club competition.

The victory at Getafe moved Atletico 11 points clear of fifth-place Athletic Bilbao with two rounds remaining. Athletic's hopes of making it to the Champions League ended with a 2-1 loss at Celta Vigo.

Griezmann hadn't scored since a brace in Atletico's 3-1 win against Girona five matches ago. "We've been qualifying for

the Champions League for many years now, that has to be valued," Griezmann said.

It was Atletico's fourth straight league victory. It was the third straight defeat for Getafe, which stayed in 10th place.

RELEGATION FIGHT: Three teams fighting against relegation won on Wednesday. In addition to Celta's win against Athletic, Rayo Vallecano beat Granada 2-1 at home and Cadiz won 1-0 at Sevilla.

Celta opened a five-point gap to Cadiz, which remains the first team inside the relegation zone. Rayo was one point ahead of Celta. Cadiz sat four points inside the demotion area.

Rayo got the win over Granada despite playing with 10 men after Oscar Trejo was sent off in the fifth minute.

AP ■ ROME

Danielle keeps on winning even with retirement looming

Danielle Collins has been nearly unbeatable lately. Even with her announced retirement looming.

The 15th-ranked American beat former No. 1 Victoria Azarenka 6-4, 6-3 on Wednesday to reach the Italian Open semifinals and extend her record to 19-1 since early March.

Having won back-to-back titles in Miami and Charleston, South Carolina, recently, she hasn't dropped a set on Rome's red clay.

Collins underwent surgery in 2021 to treat endometriosis and has said she wants to have a child - which is why she plans to retire at the end of the year.

"A lot of it has to do with my health," Collins said. "Everybody has different ways of ending their professional journey. I want to go out playing my best tennis."

Collins frustrated Azarenka with her aggressive baseline

play and even took out her aggression on a TV cameraman on a point, telling him after being approached on a changeover, "Hey dude, you're going to have to back up a little bit."

Late in the second set, Azarenka slammed her racket on the Campo Centrale as her unforced errors piled up. Then Collins slammed her racket, too, after wasting a series of break points. But Collins came up with some clutch serving to finish Azarenka off - finishing with six aces to Azarenka's none.

"I feel dialed in with my shots and I've gotten better at hitting those small parts of the court," Collins said. Collins' semifinal opponent will be Aryna Sabalenka, who showed no ill-effects from her previous marathon match as she eased past Jelena Ostapenko, the 2017 French Open champion, 6-2, 6-4.

Sabalenka's win over Collins in the fourth round of the the Madrid Open marked the American's only loss since a defeat to top-ranked Iga Swiatek at Indian Wells on March 8.

All three top-ranked women have reached the final four in Rome as the other semifinal pits Swiatek against No. 3 Coco Gauff.

In men's action, 29th-seeded Alejandro Tabilo of Chile extended his surprising run by beating Zhang Zhizhen 6-3, 6-4 to follow up his upset victories over Novak Djokovic and Karen Khachanov in the previous two rounds.

Tabilo, who hasn't dropped a set during his first appearance in Rome, served an ace down the T on his first match point. In his first Masters series semifinal, Tabilo will face 2017 champion Alexander Zverev, who beat 11th-seeded



Taylor Fritz 6-4, 6-3.

Zverev lost his footing on a service return early in the match, fell to the clay and bloodied his hands and arms. It appeared his left hand got the worst of it but after receiving medical attention he continued playing. He won the point when he got injured.

"My finger is crooked. ... It's starting to be a bit blue," Zverev said of his left pinkie, adding that he wasn't sure if it was broken or not. "I felt pain, but, probably not to the extent that we'll feel it tomorrow."

Zverev plays right-handed but uses a two-handed backhand. The other quarterfinal matches are scheduled for Thursday. Stefanos Tsitsipas faces Nicolas Jarry - another Chilean - and Hubert Hurkacz plays Tommy Paul.

Collins, who reached the Australian Open final in 2022, said she's playing the

best tennis of her career. "It's been nice to have a stretch where I've really been kind of climbing, because, it's not always like that," Collins said. "You have to be really happy for yourself in these moments because it doesn't always work out that way."

Sabalenka, who didn't allow the ninth-seeded Ostapenko a break opportunity, showed no sign of the back problem that required treatment during Monday's three-setter against Elna Svitolina that ended well after midnight local time.

The 26-year-old Sabalenka said she didn't even practice on Tuesday and focused instead on treatment and recovery. And that clearly paid off.

"I would definitely say that it was the best performance of the tournament," Sabalenka said. "I'm super happy that I was able to play without pain today and hopefully with every day I will feel better and better, and I will recover as good as I can for the next match."

Ten Hag addresses Man United fans after winning last home game of season

AP ■ LONDON

Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag had just seen his team win its last match at Old Trafford this season when he strode onto the field and took the microphone to address the club's fans.

There might have been a smattering of boos but there was largely a backdrop of cheers as the under-pressure Dutch coach delivered a speech that felt like an audition to continue in the job next season.

"As you know," he said after the 3-2 win over Newcastle in the Premier League, "it wasn't an easy season, but one thing remained constant - and that was the backing of you for the team."

"But this season is not over yet." Indeed, United still has to go to Brighton in Sunday's final round of Premier League games. Then, the following weekend, it's another FA Cup final against Manchester City.

Two huge games. Two opportunities to qualify for Europe. Two final chances for Ten Hag to stake his claim to stay on as manager of England's grandest club as it undergoes a shake-up.

United remained in eighth place in the league - hugely disappointing for a club of its stature - but moved level on points with Newcastle in seventh and three behind sixth-place Chelsea, which beat Brighton 2-1 away in Wednesday's other game.

With Tottenham likely to finish in fifth place, Chelsea, Newcastle and Man United look to be fighting for the final two European qualifying



positions. The teams finishing in sixth and seventh place should qualify for the Europa League and Europa Conference League, respectively.

Man United could also get in the Europa League by winning the cup final against City on May 25.

Chelsea's win at Brighton was its fourth straight in the league. That hasn't happened since October 2022.

NKUNKU CELEBRATION: Christopher Nkunku inflated a blue balloon and held it between his lips to celebrate his second-half goal that ultimately proved the difference for Chelsea at Amex Stadium. The France striker's 64th-minute strike added to Cole Palmer's 22nd goal of the campaign in the 34th minute.

Second-half Chelsea substitute Reece James was shown a straight red card in the 88th - following a VAR review - after he kicked out at Joao Pedro while on the ground.

Danny Welbeck grabbed Brighton's consolation goal in

the seventh minute of stoppage time.

HOJLUND STRIKES: A strike by substitute Rasmus Hojlund in the 84th minute proved to be the clinching goal for Man United in a match between direct rivals for Europe.

Kobbie Mainoo put United ahead in the 31st after a pass was slipped through the Newcastle defense by Amad Diallo, who regained the lead for the home side with a fierce left-footed shot through a crowd of players after a 57th-minute corner wasn't fully cleared.

Anthony Gordon had scored Newcastle's equalizer in the 49th and Lewis Hall ensured a nervy finish to the game for Man United by making it 3-2 in stoppage time.

FAREWELLS: French players Anthony Martial and Raphael Varane waved goodbye to Man United's supporters after the game against Newcastle. They are leaving the club at the end of the season because their contracts are expiring.

Asian soccer body scraps 12 years limit for senior officials and lets Sheikh Salman stay beyond 2027

AP ■ BANGKOK (THAILAND)

Asian soccer leaders can have unlimited years in power after their governing body voted to scrap a key pillar of reforms passed after the corruption crisis that rocked FIFA in 2015.

Saudi Arabia and Qatar were among four of the 47 Asian Football Confederation members who put the proposal to their annual congress in Bangkok on Thursday. Only Australia and Jordan voted "No."

The vote lets AFC president Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa seek reelection in 2027 when he had been due to step down after 14 years in office.

Ahead of the vote, the Bahraini royal family member told members of the AFC's wish to be "a model confederation" in world soccer aligned with FIFA.

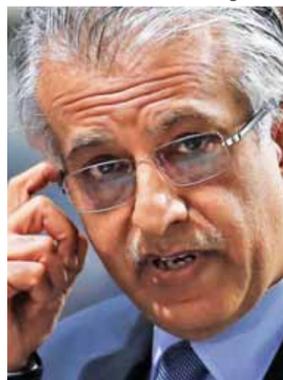
Presidential term limits have been pushed in two waves of governance reforms at FIFA in response to bribery

and corruption scandals in 2011 and 2015 - Asian soccer was linked to both. In 2011, then AFC leader Mohamed bin Hammam of Qatar was barred from the FIFA presidential election after Caribbean voters were paid \$40,000 cash in brown envelopes after a campaign meeting in Trinidad.

In fallout from the 2015 scandal two years later, senior AFC official Richard Lai of Guam pleaded guilty in a federal court in Brooklyn to being part of a bribe-paying scheme that built influence in international soccer. Lai said it was run by a Kuwaiti faction which helped Sheikh Salman win election to succeed Bin Hammam in 2013.

Removing presidents after no more than 12 years were then seen as essential to curb networks of patronage and loyalty that can enable corruption and poor governance.

However, FIFA president Gianni Infantino has been allowed by a subsequent statutes amendment he



oversaw to stay in office for 15 years until 2031, and UEFA voted in February to ensure its president Aleksander Ceferin can seek to stay beyond his 11th year in 2027. Ceferin

later said he will not stand for reelection.

Even the International Olympic Committee is still weighing a members' request last October to change legal rules to let their president, Thomas Bach, seek a third election next year. That would go beyond the 12-year limit set after the Salt Lake City bidding corruption scandal 25 years ago.

The AFC has trumped both FIFA and UEFA in removing all barriers to its president and executive committee members staying in place.

It was, the AFC said in a later statement, "another clear signal of our intent to ensure that we remain a model confederation that continues to uphold the highest ethical standards and best governance practices for the future generations of our great game."

One legal barrier still remains for Sheikh Salman at FIFA. Its statutes currently block him from continuing beyond 2031 as a FIFA vice president and member of its ruling council.

Anjum, Swapnil post first wins in Olympic Selection Trials

PTI ■ BHOPAL

Olympian Anjum Moudgil and Paris Olympic Games quota winner Swapnil Kusale posted their maiden victories in the ongoing Olympic Selection Trials (OST), winning the women's and men's 50m rifle 3-positions here on Thursday. In men's 50m rifle 3P final, Swapnil, who had finished second in the qualification round on Wednesday with a score of 587, shot 463.7 to beat the challenge of Akhil Sheoran, who finished



second with 461.6. Local lad and qualifications topper Aishwary Tomar shot 451.9 to finish third, being eliminated after the 44th shot of the 45-shot final.

In women's 3P final, Anjum shot 463.9 to leave India No. 1 Sift Kaur Samra 1.9 points behind in second place. Ashi Chouksey, took the third spot with 447.3 points in OST (Olympic Selection Trial) T3.

In women's 10m air pistol OST T3 qualification, Olympian Manu Bhaker was placed on top with a score of 577, followed by Palak (576),

Esha Singh (576), Rurbi Rao (574) and Rhythm Sangwan (573).

OTHER SCORES:

Men's 10m air pistol OST T3 qualification: 1. Arjun Singh Cheema (583), 2. Ravinder Singh (581), 3. Sarabjot Singh (581), 4. Naveen (579), 5. Varun Tomar (577).

Women's 10m air rifle OST T3 qualification: 1. Elavenil Valarivan (634.4), 2. Tilottama Sen (632.4), 3. Ramita (630.8), 4. Nancy (629.4), 5. Mehuli Ghosh (628.4).

Men's 10m air rifle OST T3 qualification: 1. Arjun Babuta (632.2), 2. Rudranksh Patil (632.0), 3. Sandeep Singh (631.6), 4. Divyansh Singh Panwar (631.4), 5. Sri Karthik Sabari Raj (630.5).



Mumbai Indians, Lucknow Super Giants look to end dismal IPL campaigns with win

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Out of reckoning from the IPL playoffs, Mumbai Indians and Lucknow Super Giants will look to end their campaign on a winning note when they clash at the Wankhede Stadium here on Friday. While Mumbai Indians were knocked out of the playoffs race long ago, Lucknow Super Giant's chances of making the last-four are extremely bleak even if they win their last IPL game here by a huge margin. Three consecutive defeats have not only denied LSG crucial points, they have also battered their net run rate. A 98-run loss to KKR was followed by a 10-wicket hammering by Sunrisers Hyderabad with a 19-run defeat to Delhi Capitals all but ending their chances of

getting into the playoffs after making the final-four in the previous edition. The seventh-placed LSG's NRR of -0.787 will not improve significantly for them to get back into contention, as Royal Challengers Bengaluru, at No. 6, are much better placed with a NRR of 0.387. Five-time IPL champions Mumbai Indians were the first team to be knocked out of the race for the playoffs this year as they endured a horror first season under new skipper Hardik Pandya. With only four wins from 13 matches so far, Mumbai Indians can at best finish with 10 points if they win on Friday, something that can possibly help them avoid a last-place finish. For Mumbai Indians, a pre-season change of leadership, with Pandya replacing Rohit

Sharma as captain, set off angry reactions from fans, which seem to have marred their campaign to a large extent. As a team, MI failed to get behind their captain. While their batting failed collectively, Jasprit Bumrah's individual brilliance with the ball (20 wickets in 13 matches), could not inspire the other bowlers to come together. The focus of the match would be on the likes of T20 World Cup-bound players such as Pandya, Rohit Sharma, Bumrah and Suryakumar Yadav given that they would be pivotal to India's hopes of bringing back the elusive trophy. Rohit is enduring a horror run with the bat with his best being 19 in the last six outings for MI, while Pandya too has not been able to inspire

confidence in his all-round role. Suryakumar, though, has regained confidence with a strong showing in the IPL following three fifties and a century. For LSG, the lack of firepower and failure to capitalise on key moments has led to their plight even though skipper KL Rahul has had a successful run with the bat, scoring three half-centuries in his 465 runs this season at an average of 136.36. His strike rate, however, remained a topic of debate throughout even as the other batters failed to pull their weight. While Nicholas Pooran (424 runs at 168.92) provided the late impetus, the collective failure of LSG's bowlers has also remained an area of concern.

SRH qualifies for IPL playoff after rain washes out match against GT

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Sunrisers Hyderabad on Thursday qualified for the Indian Premier League play-offs after rain washed out their IPL match against Gujarat Titans here without a ball being bowled. SRH thus became the third team to make the cut after following Kolkata Knight Riders and Rajasthan Royals, who are currently occupying the top two places in the standings. The Sunrisers received one point to take their tally to 15 points with one match to go. They will face Punjab Kings, who have already been eliminated, on May 19 in their last league assignment.

GT, the last year's runners-up and 2022 champions, were knocked out of the play-off race after their previous match was also abandoned due to rain. They thus end the season with 12 points from 14 matches. The toss didn't happen at scheduled time of 7 pm due to rain and wet outfield. The rain intensified before settling into a steady shower as the covers and outfield stayed covered. The cut-off time for a five-over game was 10:56 PM, which meant the drizzle needed to stop for mop-up to begin by around 10:15pm but with rain showing no signs of abating, the official decided to abandon the match. It is the second game to be called off in

this IPL, because of rain and wet outfield. Four teams — Chennai Super Kings (14), Royal Challengers Bengaluru (12), Delhi Capitals (14) and Lucknow Super Giants (12) — are still in fray for the battle for the last spot. If LSG win against Mumbai Indians on Friday, they will move to 14 points to stay mathematically alive but CSK will seal the spot if they beat RCB or the game is washed out on Saturday. If RCB beat CSK by at least 18 runs or 11 balls to spare then they will grab the fourth available spot on the basis of net run-rate as they would be on 14 points, same as DC, CSK and LSG (if they win).



Once I am done, I will be gone; you will not see me for a while: Kohli

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Well aware that he "can't keep going forever", Indian batting superstar Virat Kohli wants to give everything he has to his cricket career because he once he is done, he says he would be "gone" and won't be seen "for a while". Kohli's appetite for runs and centuries has already got him a record eighth ton in the IPL this season and he continues to lead the scoring charts with a mind-boggling 661 runs from 13 games for Royal Challengers Bengaluru. In a video posted by RCB on social media, the 35-year-old said the desire to live a regret-free life keeps him going. "So, it's just about not leaving any undone business behind and not having any regrets later, which I'm very sure of I won't. Once I'm done, I'll be gone; you won't see me for a while. "So, I want to give it everything I have till the time I play and that's the only thing that keeps

me going," said Kohli when asked what keeps him hungry. Kohli was picked by RCB soon after he led India to title triumph in the 2008 Under-19 World Cup and he has continued to be with the franchise ever since. "I think, as sportsmen, we do have an end date to our careers, so I'm just working backwards, I don't want to finish my career thinking what if I had done this on that particular day because I can't keep going on and on forever," he added. The former India captain is part of the Indian squad for the T20 World Cup in the USA and West Indies beginning next month. Former India spinner Harbhajan Singh had recently opined that RCB should think about giving back the team's captaincy to Kohli, saying he has an ideal combination of intent, commitment and aggression to take the side forward from the next season. South African Fa du Plessis is currently leading RCB.

Happy to get some reward after a challenging tournament: Nathan Ellis

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Punjab Kings pacer Nathan Ellis was relieved to see his team register a much-needed win, against second-placed Rajasthan Royals, after what has been a very difficult IPL season for them. Already out of playoffs contention, PBKS are currently placed in the ninth place with 10 points after five wins and eight losses in 13 matches, while RR, who have stuttered after an excellent start, maintain their second position despite a run of four defeats in recent times. "The wicket was a little bit slower than expected, but I still think it was a pretty good

wicket. Really happy for the guys to get some reward as it has been a bit of a challenging tournament for us," Ellis said at the post-match press conference here on Wednesday. Batting first, RR were restricted to 144 for nine in the stipulated 20 overs and then, PBKS chased down the target of 145 for the loss of five wickets, with seven balls to spare. "We were playing for pride today and trying to put in the best performance we can. Collectively, it was one of our better performances, adapted to conditions, bowled in partnerships. It was probably a complete performance," Ellis



said of the win. Skipper Sam Curran's unbeaten 63 off 41 balls anchored the PBKS innings, and he received support from Jitesh Sharma, who made 22 off 20 balls, as the duo combined for a 63-run partnership for the fifth wicket to earn the team's fifth win of the season. Playing his first game in this edition of the IPL, Ellis bowled tidily to finish with miserly figures of 1/24 from his full quota of four overs. He also took the all-important wicket of Sanju Samson. "Coming to the ground, we didn't know what we wanted to do -- bat or bowl. Later, I think we also decided on batting

first. Losing the toss wasn't the desired outcome. But I was happy. We bowled first, which gave us the chance to set the tone for the day," Ellis said. On how the surface played at the ACA Stadium in Guwahati, Ellis said: "The wicket was a little bit slower than expected, but it was still a pretty good wicket. In the powerplay, was where the game could have been won or lost and we both lost wickets there. "I think batting-wise, the powerplay was the best time to score and we both probably didn't have the greatest power players. And then from there the ball got a little bit softer and both teams lost wickets."

Hussey hopes Dhoni will carry on for two more years

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Chennai Super Kings batting coach Michael Hussey is hoping that charismatic Mahendra Singh Dhoni would continue with the team for a couple of years more, saying the former skipper was still batting well. The 42-year-old Dhoni surprised everyone by stepping aside as captain of the team just a day before the start of the 2024 season. Rituraj Gaikwad was handed the reins of the side. "We are hoping he does keep going. He is still batting so well. He does prepare well - he gets into the camp very early and hits a lot of balls. He has been in good touch all season really," Hussey said on ESPN's Around the Wicket show. "I guess we just got to try to manage him from the body side of things. He had a knee surgery after the last season. So, he has been managing that

from the initial stage of the tournament. "I hope he keeps going for another couple of years. But we will just have to wait and see. He is the only one who will make that call. And, he likes to sort of build the drama a little bit as well. So, I wouldn't expect a decision anytime soon." Dhoni, who led the side to record five IPL titles, has been batting quiet down the order this season, sometimes at number eight, and faces only a handful of deliveries. Hussey said that Dhoni's workload is being managed appropriately, given that he had undergone knee surgery. "That [knee surgery] is why we have had to manage him a little bit, and he only comes in at the back end. But, there has been no one better in being able to come in and hit the ball so cleanly from ball one than MS. He has been phenomenal," he added. The Australian was Dhoni wanted to



stick around in the transition phase as Gaikwad was handed the captaincy. "MS sort of announced that he was not going to be attending the pre-tournament captains' meeting. And we're like, 'Oh, no. What's going on?'"

He said Rituraj was going to be captain from then on. "So, it was a little bit of a shock to start with, but it has been managed really well. We have sort of known for a little while that he was the right man to take over the job when MS decided to step aside. "He wanted to still be here while the new captain took over, to try to help him along the way and sort of mentor him a little bit," said Hussey. Under Gaikwad's leadership, CSK has fared decently. The team is placed third on the points table and is likely to make the play-offs. "He has done a great job. He has been really calm and measured on the field. He will just get better and better. The more he does it and the more support we keep around him. The pleasing thing is, it has not affected his batting at all either," Hussey was effusive in his praise for Gaikwad.

OTHER SPORTS



AFI signs multi year deal with sports wear brand Puma

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) on Thursday announced that it has signed a multi-year deal with the sports wear brand Puma, which will now provide apparel, footwear and accessories to around 400 Indian athletes during domestic and international tournaments. Being the official kit sponsor, Puma's accessories will be used by top Indian athletes

including Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra, long jumper Murali Sreeshankar and steeplechaser Parul Chaudhary. "As an athlete training for 12 years, I know the importance of high-quality gear for high-level practice. With AFI teaming up with global sports brand, Indian athletes across all levels will now have access to training gear of international excellence, assisting us to express our best in our game now,"

Chopra was quoted as saying in a release. "This partnership signals the bright future of Indian sport," he added. This is the first time Indian athletes will get access to world-class speed suits that Puma supplies globally to other athletes. The speed suits are designed to aid freedom of movement, aerodynamics and faster speed, supporting athletes to focus solely on their performance and increase efficiency," the press

release mentioned. AFI President Adille Sumariwalla said, "Our association with Puma represents a significant milestone for India's athletes. With their high-quality gear, we are not only enhancing the performance of athletes but also creating a culture of excellence within the country's sporting community. We are confident that this partnership will propel Indian athletics to new heights on the global stage."

Sharath, Manika to lead India in Olympic team debut

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Veteran Sharath Kamal and world no. 24 Manika Batra will lead the Indian men's and women's squads respectively at the Paris Games, where the country will make its Olympic debut in team events. The senior selection committee of the Table Tennis Federation of India on Thursday picked a six-member squad (three in each section) as per the Olympics norms, besides naming the individuals who would compete in the singles events. Sharath, Harmeet Desai, and Manav Thakkar will form the three-member men's team, while Manika, Sreeja Akula and Archana Kamath will be squad members in the women's category. The "Alternate Player" in each section would be G. Sathiyam and Ayhika Mukherjee. In the men's singles, Sharath and Harmeet will compete and it will be Manika and Sreeja in the women's event. The decision was taken based on



the latest world rankings. It will be the fifth and final Olympic appearance for 41-year-old Sharath, who made his Games debut back in 2004. Since the selection of the squads and the individuals were as per the already pronounced TTFI criteria, three players "got selected themselves" because of their consistent performances over time and world rankings. However, there was a debate over the third player for the

women's squad. After Manika and Sreeja Akula walked in on the back of their higher world rankings (top 50), Archana Kamath (103) made it to the team as the third player. The Bengaluru paddler edged out Ayhika Mukherjee (133) on several counts, including her ranking. As for the men, Sharath picked himself as the top-ranked Indian at No. 40, while Harmeet (No. 63) and Manav (No. 62) were separated by one

slot in WR. Though both made it to the team composition, National champion Harmeet got the selectors' nod based on his international (better win-loss proportion to his participation) and national performances. Incidentally, Massimo Costantini's presence as a special invitee at the meeting also added teeth as the foreign expert's inputs proved handy in the selection of the squads. Costantini will take charge of the Indian team for a third time as early as next week. He arrived in India earlier this week. Alternate players Sathiyam and Ayhika will travel with the team to Paris but will not stay in the official Games Village. Their services would be needed in case of an injury. **THE TEAMS:** Men: A. Sharath Kamal, Harmeet Desai, and Manav Thakkar; Alternate Player: G. Sathiyam. Women: Manika Batra, Sreeja Akula, and Archana Kamath; Alternate Player: Ayhika Mukherjee.

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