



Star-studded lineup for tomorrow's vote

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

LOK SABHA ELECTION PHASE V SEATS

2024 LS voting concludes for States marked in red on May 20

STATES	NO. OF SEATS	CONSTITUENCY
Bihar	5	Sitamarhi, Madhubani, Muzaffarpur, Saran, Hajipur (SC)
Jammu & Kashmir	1	Baramulla
LADAKH	1	Ladakh
MAHARASHTRA	13	Dhule, Dindori, Nashik, Kalyan, Palghar, Bhiwandi, Thane, Mumbai North, Mumbai North-West, Mumbai North-East, Mumbai North-Central, Mumbai South-Central, Mumbai South
Odisha	5	Bargarh, Sundargarh, Bolangir, Kandhamal, Aska
Uttar Pradesh	13	Mohanlalganj (SC), Lucknow, Amethi, Rae Bareilly, Jalaun, Jhansi, Hamirpur, Banda, Kaushambi (SC), Barabanki (SC), Faizabad, Kaiserganj, Gonda
West Bengal	7	Bangaon, Barrackpore, Howrah, Uluberia, Srerampore, Hooghly, Arambagh
Jharkhand	3	Chatra, Koderma, Hazaribagh

From santustikaran (ensuring to satisfaction) to tustikaran (appeasement), plotting to send Ram Lalla to tent again and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's retirement age to scrapping of Citizenship Amendment Act, these issues dominated during campaigning for the fifth phase of the 2024 Lok Sabha to be held on May 20. The political fate of Rahul Gandhi, Smriti Irani, Chirag Paswan, Piyush Goyal, Rajnath Singh, Omar Abdullah, Ujjwal Nikam, Karan Bhushan Singh, Rajiv Pratap Rudy, Rohini Acharya, will be decided in the fifth phase in 49 constituencies spread across eight States and Union Territories.

The voting will begin at 7 am on Monday and conclude at 6 pm. This phase will witness voter participation from 14 states in Uttar Pradesh, 13 in Maharashtra, seven in West Bengal, five in Bihar, five in Odisha, three in Jharkhand, and one each in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. Political rhetoric continued during the fifth phase campaigning by both the BJP and the Congress. During the campaign, Modi raised the issue of CAA, Muslim appeasement, Marxists economics and attacked the

Congress, accusing it of indulging in "shameful" politics and plotting to send "Ram Lala to tent" again.

Modi said he has resolved to free India from the biggest model of corruption, appeasement and dynastic politics. Addressing a public rally in Uttar Pradesh's Lalganj ahead

of Phase 5 of the Lok Sabha elections, Modi asked, "Koi maai ka laal paida hua hai jo CAA ko khatam kar sakta hai? ("Has anyone been born from a mother who can repeal the CAA?" Jo bhi taakat ikathi karni hai karlo, mai bhi maidan me hun, tum bhi maidan me ho...aap CAA nahi mita paoge (gather all the strength you want, I am here, you are also here. You won't

be able to repeal CAA)," Modi challenged INDIA Bloc leaders.

On the other hand, the Congress and other Opposition parties claimed that if the BJP wins 400 seats, they change the Constitution while AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal raised the issue of Modi's retirement age saying Amit Shah will be next Prime Minister in an apparent move to create confusion among the BJP's voters. The Amethi Lok Sabha constituency in Uttar Pradesh will be one of the most watched seats in the fifth phase of voting, due to the uncertainty over who the Congress will field from the constituency against sitting MP and Union Minister Smriti Irani.

The Amethi constituency, formed in 1967 during the delimitation of parliamentary seats, encompasses five Assembly segments: Tiloi, Salon, Jagdishpur, Gauriganj, and Amethi. The Congress party has announced Kishori Lal Sharma as its candidate against the sitting Member of Parliament (MP) and current Union Minister for Minority Affairs from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Smriti Irani. Sharma has played a significant role in Congress since 1983 and is instrumental in Sonia's victory in the Amethi Lok Sabha constituency in 1999.

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Aide nabbed, Kejriwal throws the gauntlet

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Minutes before his anticipatory bail was rejected, the Delhi Police on Saturday arrested Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's controversial aide Bibhav Kumar in connection with the alleged assault on AAP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal on Saturday.

Kumar was picked up from the Chief Minister's official residence by the police and brought to the Civil Lines Police Station. Maliwal has yet not reacted to the news of Kumar's arrest. The Tis Hazari court disposed of Kumar's anticipatory bail plea, terming it as "infructuous".

Additional Sessions Judge Sushil Anuj Tyagi noted that Additional Public Prosecutor Atul Kumar Srivastava appeared through videoconferencing around 4.45 pm and informed the court that Kumar has already been arrested in the case. "On a court query, the additional public prosecutor for the State submitted that the applicant was arrested at about 4:15 pm," the judge said.

In a direct challenge to the



Prime Minister, AAP convener and Kejriwal on Saturday dared him to arrest all top AAP leaders who will be marching en masse to the BJP headquarters on Sunday noon instead of picking them up one by one. Kejriwal, however, asserted that his party could not be crushed by sending its leaders to jail.



Party (AAP). Advocate Karan Sharma representing Kumar said, "We've not received any information from the police yet. We've sent them an email that we will cooperate in the investigation." Kumar on Saturday told the Tis Hazari court that he was "getting quashed in the battle of political giants." "On May 17, I (Bibhav) sent an email stating that I will join the investigation. I don't know why this is happening to me," lawyer Hariharan, appearing on behalf of Kumar, told the

court. He also said Kumar could not be arrested without being served with a notice under section 41A of the CrPc. His lawyer said he was just seeking interim relief as the apprehension of arrest was real.

"I'm not at flight risk. I'm not running anywhere," Kumar's lawyer Hariharan said while reading the application. "I'm just seeking protection right now...as the apprehension of arrest is very real," he added. The AAP shared an email sent by Kumar which stated, "It has come to knowledge of the undersigned through the media that a case FIR number 277/2024 has been registered at PS Civil Lines in which the undersigned has been named as an accused. Though the undersigned has not been served with any notice in the case till now, the undersigned categorically submits that he is willing to cooperate and join the investigation as and when called upon to do so by the investigating officer." "It may be emphasised here that the undersigned has also made a complaint bringing to light the true facts of the alleged incident that happened on 13.05.2024 vide

Continued on Page 6

Bullet to ballot, Bundelkhand turns a new leaf

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ JHANSI

The political landscape of Bundelkhand has long been intertwined with the shadowy world of dacoits, where election outcomes were once dictated by those lurking in the ravines. What began as a symbiotic relationship between politicians and bandits evolved into a political dynasty, with dacoit families entrenching themselves in the corridors of power.

While some locals believe dacoits still exist, their threat has greatly reduced. Ram Niranjana, 49, recalls a brutal attack on his home one dark night in August 2012 by the Babli Kol gang in Doda Mafi, a village in Chitrakoot, resulting in the deaths of six family members. However, since Kol was killed in a police encounter in 2019, Niranjana says peace has been restored, and for the first time, his entire family feels safe enough to vote. "The worst is perhaps over,



and this is the first Lok Sabha poll without the menace of dacoits. We will vote for law and order, an issue that, along with employment, affects the poor the most," he said. The dacoits and politicians had a deeply intertwined relationship. Six out of seven districts in Bundelkhand, including Jhansi, Jalaun, Banda, Mahoba, Hamirpur, and Chitrakoot, were dacoit-infested. Figures

like Dadua, Nirbhay Singh Gurjar, and Thokia rose to prominence, declaring themselves rulers of the ravines. Over time, they transitioned from outlaws to political patrons, wielding significant influence over electoral outcomes. Initially, politicians would seek bandit support to secure election victories. However, as time passed, dacoit progenies

entered politics themselves. Dadua, infamous in Chitrakoot, Mahoba, Banda, and parts of Madhya Pradesh, established a political legacy. Despite his death in a 2007 encounter, his son Veer Singh became an MLA from Chitrakoot, and his brother Bal Kumar Patel won the MP seat from Mirzapur. Even Dadua's nephew, Ram Singh, secured the Patti assembly seat in Pratapgarh. Similarly, Ambika Patel alias Thokia's family ventured into politics. Thokia's aunt Sarita was elected uncontested as the head of Karvi block in Banda in 2005, while another aunt, Savita, secured a spot in the District Panchayat without opposition. In 2007, Thokia's mother, Pipariya Devi, contested the Naraini Assembly seat in Banda under the Rashtriya Lok Dal banner, rallying support in Thokia's name. Nirbhay Singh Gurjar wielded considerable influence over the politics of Garautha in Jhansi, as well as Jalaun and

Continued on Page 6

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Last-ditch efforts by poll candidates

SHARMILA KRISHNA LUCKNOW

The campaigning by political parties peaked on Saturday, the final day, featuring bike rallies, roadshows, door-to-door canvassing, and padayatras.



BJP candidate Rajnath Singh (left) at a public meeting in Lucknow, and (right) SP candidate during a roadshow on Saturday

Pioneer

Despite the blazing sun, the candidates exerted all their energies to woo voters.

Meanwhile, speaking at a

public gathering in Madiaon on Saturday, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh lamented the lack of substantial issues raised by opposition political parties, accusing them of misleading the general public.

"We are going to win with a historical margin this time," he asserted. After the campaign, he said they would arrange for polling day, instructing corporators to distribute voter slips to every ward member.

ings on the last day. "We do not carry out any roadshows or rallies because our aim is simply to meet the poor general public. The campaigning was satisfactory.

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Reflecting on his role as a representative of the constituency, Singh highlighted the collaborative efforts behind Lucknow's development, crediting MLAs and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for their contributions.

Singh underscored the BJP's inclusive approach towards Muslims, aiming to foster love and support within the community, in contrast to attempts by rival parties to instill fear. He criticised opposition parties for their lack of substantive issues, contrasting their rhetoric with the tangible progress achieved by the government in poverty alleviation and economic growth.

He emphasised that his 'jan sampark' would continue post-campaign, adding, "I never rest during elections and as soon as the polling is completed, I will go to Azamgarh."

Rajesh Kumar, the BSP candidate from Mohanlalganj, focused on door-to-door meet-

Brij Bhushan seeks redemption by securing victory for son Karan

BISWAJEET BANERJEE KAISERGANJ

In a heartfelt campaign in Kaiserganj, Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh is urging voters to support his son, Karan Bhushan, in his bid for Parliament.

Bhagatram Mishra of Samajwadi Party, Narendra Pandey of Bahujan Samaj Party, and independent Arunima Pandey. The campaign landscape is relatively subdued, with Brij Bhushan's personal narrative dominating small gatherings and overshadowing other candidates.

ment schemes like free rations and concerns over employment opportunities. Since 2014, the BJP has dominated in Kaiserganj, but the delayed ticket allocation raises questions about potential shifts in the political landscape.

The Brahmin vote, comprising 32 per cent of the general population, is a significant focus for both BSP and SP. Narendra Pandey, a transporter from Lucknow, represents BSP, while SP has fielded Bhagatram Mishra.

KAISERGANJ LS CONSTITUENCY

SP to BJP, although many Dalit voters seem to be drifting away from BSP in this election cycle. In the busy Balpur market, amid the usual hustle, an elderly gentleman summed up the prevailing sentiment: "Elections? Who's left to contest? The field is clear now."

Rana Pratap Singh views this election as a crucial fight for BJP's survival, benefiting from Brahmin candidates from both SP and BSP. For Brij Bhushan, this election is a personal challenge. Despite controversies and the ticket cancellation, he seeks redemption by securing a significant victory for his son.

Video depicting cruelty riles animal lovers

Lucknow (PNS): Yet another video of animal cruelty in Lucknow went viral on social media on Saturday, drawing the ire of animal lovers in the city, and police action.

Kaushal Kishore Srivastava of Ashiyana. "After we saw the video on Saturday we went to the person's home to enquire about the matter, his son Rahul Srivastava misbehaved with us," said Khare, who runs an NGO based in Lucknow.

Notice regarding animal cruelty video, mentioning police action and NGO involvement.

Two UPSSC examinees booked for impersonation

PNS LUCKNOW

Two candidates of the Uttar Pradesh Subordinate Services Selection Commission (UPSSC) exams for the posts of 'Combined Village Panchayat Adhikari', 'Village Development Officer', and 'Supervisor Social Welfare' were implicated for allegedly resorting to impersonation to clear the exam.

was uncovered during the cross-examination of shortlisted candidates' biometric data at the UPSSC office in PICUP Bhawan, Vibhuti Khand. He explained that a private company conducted the exam and submitted the biometric data of examinees captured during the exam.

against the accused for resorting to impersonation. The police registered a case in this regard. In another FIR for the same offense, Rishabh Kumar Bhardwaj lodged a complaint against Anup Kumar of Firozabad for allegedly opting for impersonation.

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Table with columns: S.No., Name of Property Owner, Account No. and Name, Description of the property, O/S Balance as on 08-09-2023. Includes details for M/S R.K. Electricals & Engineering Works.

Two youths found hanging from ceiling in separate incidents

PNS LUCKNOW

Two youths were found hanging in separate incidents across the city on Saturday. Police have initiated investigations into both cases and sent the bodies for autopsy.

In Gosainganj, Anil Kumar Rawat (25) of Baruwa village was discovered hanging from a tree with a gamchha tied around his neck. Anil, a daily-wage labourer, was a bachelor. The incident was reported around 8 am on Saturday, with police concluding it as a case of suicide, yet failing to provide a reason.

CITYBRIEFS

MANGO FESTIVAL The 12th Annual Mango Festival, organised by the Lucknow Farmers Market, is set to take place in June. Key organiser Jyotsana Habibullah highlighted the event's significance in celebrating Awadh's heritage and culture.

MEETING

The inaugural executive council meeting of the Indian Social Science Academy, Prayagraj, was convened at Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (BBAU) on Saturday. It was chaired by BBAU Vice-Chancellor Prof NMP Verma.

Meanwhile, in the Sushant Golf City area, an electrician, identified as Sudhir Prapapati (22), was found hanging from the ceiling of his rented room. His landlord came to know about the incident when Sudhir failed to wake up in the morning.

Earlier on Friday, a 35-year-old man sustained grievous injuries in a road accident in Mall and later succumbed at KGMU Trauma Centre. As per reports, Ram Sahai Maurya was travelling with his nephew Ajay Maurya when their bike was hit from behind by another motorcycle.

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Yogi braves scorching heat to woo voters

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The campaigning for the fifth phase of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections that ended on Saturday evening, saw Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath vigorously campaign for the Bharatiya Janata Party and National Democratic Alliance candidates. Despite the scorching heat, with temperatures soaring to around 45 degrees Celsius in some areas, the BJP's star campaigner has drawn large crowds at his rallies and roadshows. The chief minister has expressed gratitude for the public's unwavering support, underscoring the trust placed in him by the people of Uttar Pradesh. A significant highlight of this phase is the polling in Ayodhya (Faizabad), one of UP's most pivotal constituencies.

Presently, the Congress holds only one Lok Sabha seat (Rae Bareli) in the state, with the rest represented by the BJP. To secure Rae Bareli and bolster the NDA's presence, Chief Minister Yogi has actively supported candidates across the state and beyond, campaigning in eight other states. Since taking charge of the election campaign on March 27 with a Prabuddha Sammelan in Mathura, Chief Minister Yogi has conducted an impressive 144 events over 49 days. His efforts include 111 public meetings, 15 Prabuddha Sammelans, and 12 roadshows. Notably, he also participated in the nomination processes of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, and attended a Karyakarta Sammelan in Varanasi.



The devotional song 'Jo Ram ko laye hain, hum unko layenge...' by Kanhaiya Mittal has gained popularity, celebrating Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's roles

in constructing the Ram Temple in Ayodhya. This has added to the significance of the Ayodhya (Faizabad) Lok Sabha seat, where a massive roadshow featured Yogi and Modi in support of BJP candidate Lallu Singh. Chief Minister Yogi held additional public meetings backing Lallu Singh, emphasising the importance of Faizabad parliamentary constituency. In this phase, five Union ministers are contesting from five of the 14 constituencies going to polls in UP. Chief Minister Yogi has urged voters to ensure their victories. The key figures include Defence Minister Rajnath Singh from Lucknow, Union Minister Smriti Irani from Amethi, Kaushal Kishore from Mohanlalganj, Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma from Jalaun, and Sadhvi Niranjani

Jyoti from Fatehpur. The Rae Bareli Lok Sabha seat, currently held by Congress, is being contested by BJP's Dinesh Pratap Singh, a minister in the Yogi government. The BJP has introduced new candidates for Kaiserganj and Barabanki — Karan Bhushan Sharan Singh in Kaiserganj and Rajrani Rawat in Barabanki. Prime Minister Modi and Chief Minister Yogi rallied for Rajrani Rawat on May 17, while Chief Minister Yogi campaigned for the Barabanki seat on May 13 and held a public meeting for Karan Bhushan in Kaiserganj on May 12, urging voters to elect him for the first time. As the fifth phase polls approach, all eyes are on these critical constituencies in UP, with the BJP striving to maintain and expand its foothold in the state.

Campaigning ends for 5th phase

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Campaigning for the 14 Lok Sabha constituencies going to polls in the fifth phase of Lok Sabha elections ended on Saturday evening. The polling in these constituencies will be held on May 20. Polling for the by election to Lucknow East assembly constituency will also be held on Monday along with polling for the Lucknow Lok Sabha seat. Biswajeet Banerjee, the prominent Lok Sabha constituency going to polls in the fifth phase include Rae Bareli, Amethi and Lucknow. The other constituencies where voting will be held on Monday are Mohanlalganj, Hamirpur, Jalaun, Jhansi, Banda, Fatehpur, Kaushambi, Faizabad, Barabanki, Kaiserganj and Gonda. All these 14 constituencies are considered significant for the BJP as barring Rae Bareli,

the saffron party had won all 13 other seats in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. Rae Bareli seat was retained by former Congress president Sonia Gandhi. However, her son Rahul Gandhi had lost the Amethi Lok Sabha seat to Union Minister Smriti Irani. This time Rahul Gandhi is contesting from Rae Bareli and is pitted against minister of state Dinesh Pratap Singh of the BJP. In Amethi, the Congress has fielded long-time Gandhi family loyalist, KL Sharma against Smriti Irani. In Lucknow, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is seeking a third straight term. He is pitted against Ravidas Mehrotra of Samajwadi Party and Sarwar Malik of Bahujan Samaj Party. Kaiserganj seat, represented by controversial MP and former Wrestling Federation of India president Brij Bhushan Sharan

Singh, is also voting in the fifth phase polls. The BJP has fielded Karan Bhushan Singh, son of party's sitting MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh from the sea. He is pitted against Bhagat Ram Mishra of SP and Narendra Pandey of BSP. With 80 Lok Sabha seats at stake, Uttar Pradesh is key for NDA's target of winning 400 seats. The BJP won 62 of these 80 seats while two were won by its ally Apna Dal (Sonelel) in 2019 and 71 by BJP and two by ally in the 2014 general elections. Congress is contesting elections in UP in alliance with Samajwadi Party as part of INDIA bloc. Meanwhile UP's Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa said here on Saturday that the polling parties would be dispatched to polling booths on Sunday to ensure the safe, fair and peaceful conduct of voting scheduled for May 20.

Priyanka key player in Amethi, Rae Bareli

PNS ■ AMETHI

In the high-stakes political battles for Amethi and Rae Bareli Lok Sabha constituencies, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is emerging as a key player, directing the Congress party's poll campaign efforts from the sidelines. Drawing from her personal experiences and her family's political legacy, she aims to secure victories for her brother Rahul Gandhi in Rae Bareli and close family aide Kishori Lal Sharma in Amethi. Priyanka's approach intertwines personal narratives, such as the loss of her father Rajiv Gandhi with broader national issues. Her campaign strategy faces significant challenges from Bharatiya Janata Party candidates Dinesh Singh in Rae Bareli and Union minister Smriti Irani in Amethi, the latter having previously defeated Rahul Gandhi in the 2019 Lok Sabha election. As a strategist, Priyanka seeks to resonate with voters by leveraging her family's historical ties to the constituencies and addressing bread-and-butter issues over divisive factors

'Amethi has suffered in last five years'

Amethi: Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Saturday attacked Bharatiya Janata Party's Amethi Lok Sabha seat candidate and sitting MP Smriti Irani, alleging that the region has "suffered" in the last five years as the BJP never thought about its development. She was in Amethi to seek support for Congress' candidate from the seat Kishori Lal Sharma, who she said has "dedicated his entire life to Amethi". Priyanka held a roadshow in Jasi town on the last day of campaigning for the seat that goes to polls on May 20 in the fifth round of the seven-phase general elections. During the roadshow, which began from



the Jais bus stand and ended at the Navjeet Intersection, Priyanka Gandhi and Sharma were seen waving at and greeting people from a vehicle. Flower petals were showered on them as the vehicle passed through the town. PTI

like religion and caste. Senior journalist Manmohan Rai notes, "Congress is in the DNA of the people of Amethi and Rae Bareli. Priyanka is reminding the people of their old association with the Gandhi

family." During a recent gathering in Amethi, Priyanka recounted a moving story about a woman's determination to educate her daughter, highlighting her ability to connect with voters on a

personal level. She criticises Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Irani, focusing on the economic shortcomings of the Central government and what she describes as Irani's singular focus on defeating Rahul Gandhi. While predictions favour Rahul Gandhi in Rae Bareli, the contest in Amethi remains fiercely competitive. Voter opinions are divided, with some lauding Modi's development projects like the Ram temple, and others supporting Sharma due to Priyanka's dynamic campaign. "In Amethi, the fight is between Badi Didi and Chhoti Didi," says Congress leader Vishwanath Chaturvedi Mohan, referring to Priyanka as Chhoti Didi. Despite varying perspectives, there is a consensus that Priyanka's presence has significantly shaped the campaign. As the election results for both constituencies are set to be announced on June 4, her leadership underscores her influential role, especially notable with no Gandhi family member contesting from Amethi for the first time in 25 years. Rae Bareli and Amethi will go to polls on May 20.

'Rahul, Akhilesh not visiting Ram temple fearing they will lose minority votes'

Ayodhya: Eyeing a hat-trick of poll victories from the Faizabad Lok Sabha constituency, incumbent BJP MP Lallu Singh feels that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav are not visiting the Ram temple in Ayodhya "fearing that they will not get the votes of the minorities". He also asserted that the ruling BJP never indulges in the politics of Hindu-Muslim. "They feel that if they visit (the Ram temple), they will not get the votes of the minorities and hence, they are not going there," Singh told PTI, when asked whether he feels that Gandhi and Yadav are hesitating to pay a visit to the newly-built temple. "In July 2005, when hand grenades were hurled at the Ram Janmabhoomi and then there was a terror attack, it was Mulayam Singh Yadav's government in UP. Not even a minister of state went to Ayodhya after the blasts. From this, you can make out (about them) and they claim that they are devotees of Lord Ram," he said.

Baroda U.P Bank

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Date:- 19-05-2024 Place:- Fatehpur (Authorized Officer- Baroda UP Bank)

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KISAN NYAY

- Legal guarantee of MSP
- Loan waiver for farmers
- GST-free agriculture

SHRAMIK NYAY

- ₹400 daily wage under MGNREGA
- Free healthcare of up to ₹25,00,000

NARI NYAY

- ₹1 lakh annual cash transfer to women
- 50% reservation for women in government jobs

HISSEDARI NYAY

- Socio-economic caste census
- Settlement of all FRA claims within 1 year

HAATH BADLEGA HALAAT



BJP poll campaign picks up pace

PNS ■ VARANASI

The poll campaigning of Bharatiya Janata Party has gained momentum in this high-profile Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency from where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking a hat-trick of victories.

Though Modi is busy campaigning for the party across the country, the local public representatives, BJP office-bearers and workers met first time voters, advocates, women and businessmen on Saturday. The prime minister will arrive here to address the Matrishakti Sammelan at Sampurnanand Sanskrit University (SSU) on May 21 and he is likely to come here before the end of campaigning on May 30 as he always did in the last two Lok Sabha elections and the same number of Vidhan Sabha polls in the recent past in his last-ditch attempt to woo the voters. Polling in Varanasi will be held in the seventh and last phase of Lok Sabha elections on June 1.

As the date of polling inches closer, the BJP leaders have intensified their campaigning in all five assembly segments of Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency, urging voters to ensure victory of Modi with record votes. In this direction, UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) Ravindra Jaiswal met the first-time voters, beneficiaries of welfare schemes and other voters in Chowkghat ward, Vishwakarma Educational Institute and other places in Bageshwari division and Pandeypur, Pahadiya and other areas in Rajarshi division and handed over leaflets highlighting the 10 years of achievements of the Central government. He also pasted stickers of Modi's guarantee on the houses of his Varanasi North assembly areas. He was accompanied by party's divisional presidents Siddhanath and Ratan Maurya, corporator Sushil Gupta and others.

Another UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) Dr Dayashankar Mishra 'Dayalu' met voters and traders in Rohania market in Rohania assembly segment and urged them to increase the voting percentage. He also continued his campaign to meet saints and mahants of monasteries, temples, akharas and handed them leaflets highlighting the government's achievements and seeking their support for Modi. The minister first reached Mahanirvani Akhara



(Top) UP minister Dayashankar Mishra 'Dayalu' seeking support for BJP candidate from Kashi and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Varanasi on Saturday. (Above) UP minister Ravindra Jaiswal contacting residents in a locality

at Shivala Ghat. He then visited Panchayati Akhara Shri Niranjani and had a cordial meeting with its secretary Omkar Maharaj, Dinesh Giri Maharaj and Radhey Giri Ji Maharaj. Later, Mishra reached Mumukshu Bhawan and met Ishwaranand Ji Maharaj. He also visited Raghav temple in Assi Sangam area to meet Mahant Siyaram Das, and Shri Marwari Seva Sansthan locat-

ed in Bhadaini to have a cordial meeting with its manager Nandu Babu. During this, Dr Hardat Shukla, Sanjay Mishra, Gaurav Rathi, Santosh Saini, Sudhir Tripathi and others were present. Similarly, BJP district president and MLC Hansraj Vishwakarma, former MLA Shiv Tapasya Paswan and party workers met the beneficiaries of welfare schemes at booth

numbers 242, 243, 244 in Ramna area of Shooltankeshwar division in Rohania assembly segment. During their campaign, they discussed the changes brought in the life of people after getting the benefits of different schemes. Zila panchayat chief's representative Kumar Siddharth, block pramukh's representative Praveesh Patel, Ramshankar Patel, Ram Milan Maurya and many others were also present.

Varanasi Cantonment MLA Saurabh Srivastava met several advocates in the court premises and asked for their votes and support for Modi on the basis of the unprecedented development work done during the last 10 years in Kashi. During this meeting, Central Bar Association president Muralidhar Singh, general secretary Surendra Nath Pandey, Abhishek Mishra and others were present.

Besides, MLC Dharmendra Rai visited various areas in the Sewapur assembly segment while Varanasi Lok Sabha convener Surendra Narayan Singh met people in the Rohania assembly segment. BJP city president Vidyasagar Rai campaigned in Mahmooorganj area in Varanasi Cantonment assembly segment, BJP regional spokesman Navratan Rathi and co-media in-charge Santosh Solapurka in Jawahar Nagar Colony of Varanasi South assembly segment. Earlier, a meeting of businessmen was held at Shriram Machinery Market located in Maldahiya area. It was addressed by former basic education minister and Lok Sabha in-charge Satish Dwivedi. In his address, Dwivedi urged the businessmen to play an active role in the Lok Sabha elections and appealed to them for maximum voting. He said that under the efficient leadership of Modi, 25 crore poor people were brought out of the poverty line and crores of families were given roofs and empowered by providing facilities like toilets, electricity, water and cooking gas connections etc.

Administration playing partisan role: Ajay Rai

PNS ■ VARANASI

Congress candidate from Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency, Ajay Rai, criticised the administration for playing a partisan role in the favour of Bharatiya Janata Party candidate Narendra Modi.

Addressing a press conference at his election office here on Saturday, Rai, who is also the president of Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee, alleged that the administration was playing a partisan role for electoral gains of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is BJP candidate from Varanasi.

According to him, a big example of this partisan role is the declaration of Modi's nomination valid without inviting objections despite the required information not being filled in many columns of the nomination papers.



Congress candidate Ajay Rai addressing mediapersons in Varanasi on Saturday

Ajay Rai, supported by INDIA bloc, also flayed the local administration for allotting Rudraksh Cultural Convention Centre to Modi for election and political dialogue and ignoring the huge expenditure of election money made on buses and other vehicles, flowers etc apart from the expenditure by government and semi-government bodies on special decorations and lighting on the routes of the roadshow of the BJP candidate.

"All these wrongs are happening with the special grace of the prime minister and under the pressure of a top senior official who has been posted on important posts in Varanasi for almost five years. The same officer was also accused of being biased in the last election also," Rai said, adding that in this direction, the UPCC has written a letter to the Election Commission of India demanding removal of the officer from Varanasi.

"It is extremely objectionable that during the scrutiny of nomination papers of other candidates, objections were invited two or three times, but

in case of Modi's nomination, it was the first to be declared valid without inviting objections, even when there are no mentions in nomination papers related to his wife's income etc," Ajay Rai said, alleging that due to these serious shortcomings, the BJP has also nominated a dummy candidate and the Congress has also sent its objections to the Election Commission of India.

Raising his strong objection over Modi's election dialogue at Rudraksh Cultural Convention Centre after filing his nomination papers, Rai said that its allotment to the BJP candidate was against the election code of conduct as it was a public property built with the funds of the Government of India under the Cultural Promotion Agreement between India and Japan, which was operated by a private company.

"The premises built for cultural and educational events was used for the first time for political purposes due to the interference of the administration," he alleged, adding that if

Rudraksh Cultural Convention Centre was allotted to the BJP candidate, then along with investigating who relaxed the rules, the Election Commission of India should also ensure that the prescribed fee was deposited without any concession and its expenditure was added to the personal account of the candidate.

He also asked the Election Commission to ensure that Rudraksh Centre was allotted to other parties and candidates also in the elections on the same conditions.

Launching a scathing attack on the prime minister, the Congress candidate said if Modi was really concerned about the youth of Kashi, all the permanent workers in the Amul Dairy Plant or Adani's small biogas plant built on government land would not have been Gujaratis, rather the youth of Kashi would have been there and all the construction work in Kashi would have been done by local entrepreneurs and not the companies of entrepreneurs from Gujarat.

Baroda U.P Bank
Main Branch : Fatehpur, Katra Abdul Gani, Kotwali Road, Fatehpur
RBO:2A Gautam Nagar Fatehpur 212601
NOTICE TO BORROWER & GUARANTORS
Notice Under Section 13 (2) of SARFAESI and RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS & ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002

A Notice is hereby given that the following Borrower and Guarantors have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the Loans facility obtained by them from the Bank and the loans have classified as Non Performing Assets (NPA). The Notice was issued to them under section 13(2) of Securitization and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 on their last known addresses but they have not returned unserved and as such they are hereby informed by way of this public notice.

The steps are being taken for substituted service of notice. The above Borrower and/or their Guarantor(s) (whenever applicable) are hereby called upon to make a payment of outstanding amount within 60 days from the date of publication of this notice failing which further steps will be taken after expiry of 60 days from the date of this notice, under sub-section (4) of Section 13 of Securitization and Re-constructed of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002. The borrowers attention is invited to provision sub-section 8 of section 13 of the Act. In respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

S.No.	Name of property Owner	Account No. and Name	Description of the property	O/S Balance as on 08-09-2023
1.	M/S Mishra Cable Networks prop. Late Pankaj Kumar Mishra Legal heir Smt.Laxmi Mishra W/o Late Pankaj Kumar Mishra R/O House No. 55, South Gautam Nagar, Fatehpur	Account number- 54170500001078 Baroda U.P. Bank Main Branch Distt. Fatehpur 212601	Details of Mortgaged Property House no. 55, South Gautam Nagar Fatehpur Where area is 70 square meters Page number - 181 to 194, book number - 1, volume number - 2710, S. No. 228, title deed is registered in the office of Deputy Registrar Fatehpur on date - 08.01.2004. Boundary East: Plot of Tiwariji. West: Rasta Kachcha. North: Rasta Kachcha. South: House of Suraj Singh.	Rs. 50000+interest+other expenses Date of Demand notice 08.05.2024 Date of NPA 08.05.2024

Date: 19-05-2024 Place: Fatehpur (Authorized Officer- Baroda UP Bank)

Observer explains accounting of poll expenses

PNS ■ VARANASI

Expenditure observer Ajit Dan gave detailed information regarding the maintenance of accounts of election expenditure to the candidates contesting the Lok Sabha election and their agents.

Presiding over a meeting at New Circuit House Auditorium here on Saturday, Dan said that as per the instructions of the Election Commission of India, the election expenditure was being monitored. The meeting was also attended by assistant expenditure observers. Dan said a separate bank

account had to be opened by each candidate for election expenses. "This can be a joint account in the name of the candidate (single account) or the election agent. This bank account should be valid at least one day before nomination and all election related expenses should be incurred from this account. The candidate will make all election related expenses from the bank account opened for the purpose through cheque. If any cash amount is paid to any person/celebrity for any item of expenditure, then this amount should not exceed Rs 10,000 during the entire election

process. The candidates will not receive more than Rs 10,000 in cash or loan as contribution from any one person or entity during the election process and the amount should be received through cheque/NEFT/RTGS etc," he said.

He also gave all other details to the candidates/agents including the daily account of the election expenditure. He said the Election Commission of India had set the maximum limit of election expenditure for the candidates during the Lok Sabha election at Rs 95,00,000. He said the candidates and their agents were required to

maintain accurate accounts of all types of election expenditures and failure to maintain accounts was an electoral offense under Section 171 I of the Indian Penal Code.

Chief Treasury Officer Govind Singh said the date for inspection of the day-to-day election expenditure register of the contesting candidates had been fixed - first account reconciliation on May 20, second on May 24 and third on May 29 (10 am to 5 pm).

NOMINATION WITHDRAWN
Rashtriya Samajwadi Jan Kranti Party candidate Paras Nath Keshari withdrew his nomination papers for Varanasi parliamentary constituency on Friday. Now only seven candidates remain in the fray.

Later, symbols were allotted to the candidates.

'Lotus' (kamaal) symbol was allotted to Narendra Modi (Bharatiya Janata Party), 'Hand' to Ajay Rai (Indian National Congress), 'Elephant' to Athar Jamal Lari (Bahujan Samaj Party), 'Envelope' (lifafa) to Gagan Prakash Yadav (Apna Dal-Kamerawadi), 'Road roller' to Koli Shetti Shivkumar (Yug Tulsji Party), 'Flute' to Sanjay Kumar Tiwari (Independent) and 'Dumb-bells' to Dinesh Kumar Yadav (Independent).

Bank of Baroda Regional Office, Kanpur Dehat Region: 118/330, 2nd Floor, Gumti No. 5, Kaushalpur, Kanpur - 12

DEMAND NOTICE

Hereby this is to inform that under named borrower has not repaid principal and interest thereon of the loan. Therefore the loan become NPA on below Dated . A notice under section 13(2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 was issued at last known address, which was returned undelivered. Therefore we again inform to under named borrower/ Guarantor by this public notice to repay the loan amount due including interest and other expenses as mentioned in this notice within 60 days from the date of publication of this notice otherwise bank will take action u/section 13(4) of the SARFAESI Act 2002.

The borrower's attention is invited to provision of sub-section (8) of 13 of the act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets, that after publication of public auction/inviting quotation/tender/private treaty your right to redeem the secured assets will not be available.

Sl. No.	Name and Address of Borrower / Guarantor and Security agreement with brief description of securities/N.P.A. Date & Outstanding Amount as per Demand Notice
1.	Borrower : Shri Sudheer Kumar S/o Shri Satya Narayan, R/o : Raghunathpura Road, Jamunapuram Colony, Village Panari, Tehsil & Distt. Lalitpur. Outstanding Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs. 28,38,700.00 + Intt. +Others Charges Property : Land & Building Situated at Land No. 1539 Min, Raghunathpura Road, Jamunapuram Colony, Village Panari, Tehsil & Distt. Lalitpur in the name of Shri Sudheer Kumar S/o Shri Satya Narayan . Area : 92.88 Sq. Mtr. Bounded-North : Plot of Bhupendra Singh, South : 6 Mtr. Wide Road, East : Property of Sahu Ji, West : Krishna adi Ka Plot. N.P.A. Date : 30-04-2024 + Demand Notice Date : 07-05-2024 Branch : Lalitpur Main, Lalitpur
2.	Borrower : Smt Anita Devi W/o Shri Rakesh Babu and Shri Rakesh Babu S/o Shri Lal Singh, Both R/o : Village Padhean Darwaja, Uttari, Auraiya Distt. Auraiya. Guarantor : Shri Nitin Kumar S/o Shri Rakesh Babu. R/o : Village Pata, Auraiya, Distt. Auraiya. Branch : Auraiya, Distt. Auraiya Outstanding Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs. 11,99,297.95 + Intt. +Others Charges Property : Land & Building Situated at Part of Gata No. 121, Mauza Auraiya, Pargana, Tehsil and Distt. Auraiya in the name of Smt Anita Devi W/o Shri Rakesh Babu. Area : 92.936 Sq. Mtr. Bounded-North : Rasta 18 Ft. Wide, South : Plot of Other, East : Plot of Jaat, West : House of Ganeshi. N.P.A. Date : 08-01-2024 + Demand Notice Date : 08-05-2024
3.	Borrower : Shri Dinesh Kumar Srivastava S/o Shri Ramesh Kumar Srivastava and Smt. Sarita Srivastava W/o Shri Dinesh Kumar Srivastava, Both R/o : 36, Village and Post Tehrol, Distt. Jhansi. Guarantor : Shri Pankaj Anand S/o Shri Prem Kumar Anand, R/o : House No. 337/7, Jhokan Bag Distt. Jhansi. Outstanding Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs. 11,13,194.78 + Intt. +Others Charges Property : House Situated at Tehrol Distt. Jhansi in the name Shri Dinesh Kumar Srivastava S/o Shri Ramesh Kumar Srivastava, Area : 130.45 Sq. Mtr. Bounded-North : Property of Shri Akhilesh Srivastava, West : Property of Shri Radhey Shyam Srivastava, East : Way Followed by Property of Shri Chaubey, South : Property of Shri Sachan. Branch : Kachehari Chauraha, Distt. Jhansi N.P.A. Date : 30-10-2023 + Demand Notice Date : 07-05-2024

Date : 19-05-2024 Place : Lalitpur / Auraiya / Jhansi Authorised Officer

Loco pilots made aware of methods to prevent fire

Prayagraj (PNS): Following directives from the Railway Board, training classes for loco pilots have been organised. In these classes, drivers are taught necessary precautions to prevent fires during summer. On Saturday, experts at Prayagraj Junction's loco provided loco pilots with fire-related information and prevention methods.

Amit Singh, PRO of North Central Railway, Prayagraj division, stated: "Safety counselling for loco pilots was conducted in the classroom, with participation from the operations department's running staff. Loco pilots were informed about the Railway Board's safety drive."

During the counselling session, safety advisor Chandrika Prasad used quizzes to explain various topics in detail. Chief loco inspector JN Tiwari, crew controller RK Singh, and SK Mishra were also present.

3 agencies looking for Atiq's wife

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Clain mafia don-turned-politician Atiq Ahmed's wife Shaista Parveen, who is on Uttar Pradesh's most wanted list, has eluded the three most important investigative agencies. Along with the UP Police and Special Task Force (STF), the Enforcement Directorate (ED) is now actively searching for her. Shaista, who allegedly led the IS-227 gang, is the subject of a coordinated manhunt by these agencies.

Previously, only the police and STF were looking for her. Now, the ED has also filed a chargesheet against Shaista, necessitating her apprehension and presentation in court. She has a bounty of Rs 50,000 on her head from the Prayagraj police commissionerate.

Reports suggest that there are plans to hand over the command of the IS-227 gang to Shaista. In addition to Shaista,

Youth mowed down by train

The bereaved family members reached the scene after which the body was sent for the post-mortem examination. Meanwhile, the police have yet to apprehend a suspect who allegedly molested a 6-year-old girl on the pretext of giving her a toffee in Lalgalpaganj area under Nawabganj police station in Prayagraj. The victim's mother accused a nagar panchayat employee, who lives in the neighbourhood, of committing the crime. An FIR has been registered at Nawabganj

police station, and a search for the accused is underway. The incident took place in Lalgalpaganj, where a family lives in a rented house. On Thursday evening, the 6-year-old girl was playing outside. The victim's mother reported to the police that a nagar panchayat employee, who also lives nearby, lured her daughter into his house with the promise of a toffee and then raped her. The mother stated that when the girl's condition worsened, the employee fled the scene. The

Meritorious students feted at 'Pratibha Samman Samaroh'

Prayagraj (PNS): A 'Pratibha Samman Samaroh' was organised at Maharishi Krishna Inter College in Prayagraj on Saturday. Fifteen students from classes 10 & 12 of UP Board, who scored over 90% marks, were felicitated. UP Board Secretary Dibyakant Shukla honoured these students with medals and certificates. Shukla said these students possess immense talent and simply need proper guidance. College manager Brahma Prakash Singh outlined the college's achievements, while principal Dr Hari Prakash Yadav expressed gratitude to all attendees. Shukla also interacted with the students and offered them success tips. He said no task is difficult with the right education, which plays a crucial role in simplifying challenges. He stressed that the goal should not only be higher education but also inculcating values alongside academics. The meritorious students who were felicitated included Deepanshi Yadav (92.4%), Kajal Yadav (92.4%), Sadhana Yadav (90.8%), Shreya Yadav (90.2%), Amit Kumar Sahu (95.17%), Mahesh Kumar (93%), Apsara (92%), Shivani (92%), Vivek Maurya (91.66%), Sandeep Kumar (91%), Kaushalendra Yadav (91%), Ranjit Kumar (90.6%), Srija Singh (90.33%), Shivani (90.33%), and Alok Chaurasia (89.61%).

Family worried when the girl did not return home by late evening, began searching for her.

FIRE
Goods worth lakhs were destroyed in a fire at a shoe warehouse in Bahadurganj under Kotwali police station on Saturday. The fire caused panic throughout the locality. Several fire tenders were pressed into service. Anil Jaiswal, who runs a shoe and slipper business, has a warehouse in Bahadurganj that caught fire on Saturday. The fire escalated quickly, with massive flames rising.

India, UK undertake comprehensive review of Roadmap 2030

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and United Kingdom undertook a comprehensive review of the India-UK 'Roadmap 2030' during Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra's two-day visit to London, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said here on Saturday.

The two sides also agreed to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in areas of trade, defence and security, science and technology and people-to-people exchanges.

The foreign secretary visited the UK from May 16 to 17 to attend the 16th round of

Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) between the two sides. In 2021, India and the UK adopted a 10-year roadmap to expand ties in the key areas of trade and economy, defence and security, climate change and people-to-people connections among others.

At the FOC, the foreign secretary held talks with Sir Philip Barton, the permanent under-secretary at the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). Kwatra also held meetings with Minister of State (Foreign Office) Lord Tariq Ahmad, MoS for Defence Procurement James Cartledge, NSA Sir Tim Barrow, Home Office



Permanent Secretary Matthew Rycroft, Chief Trade Negotiator Crawford Falconer and Senior Foreign Policy Advisor to the UK prime minister, John Bew.

The MEA said both sides discussed the entire gamut of bilateral relations and regional and global issues of mutual interest.

"The foreign secretary and permanent under-secretary undertook a detailed review of the Roadmap 2030," it said.

"Welcoming good progress across all pillars, they underscored their interest to raise the level of ambition and agreed to further strengthen bilateral cooperation including in trade

and economic, defence and security, science and technology, people-to-people ties and mobility, energy, and climate change, as well as health," the MEA said in a statement.

It said India and the UK share a comprehensive strategic partnership which has been strengthened across all domains through regular high-level political exchanges and meetings of bilateral institutional mechanisms. The India-UK relationship was elevated to the comprehensive strategic partnership in May 2021.

The two sides are currently negotiating a free trade agreement. Both sides are also keen to expand cooperation in the

maritime sphere.

In June 2021, the UK posted a liaison officer at the Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre (IFC) that has emerged as a key hub in tracking movements of ships and other developments in the Indian Ocean region. The UK joined a select group of countries such as the US, Australia, Japan and France to depute officials at the Gurugram-based facility.

The Indian Navy established the IFC-IOR in 2018 to effectively keep track of the shipping traffic as well as other critical developments in the region under a collaborative framework with like-minded countries.

India asks its students to stay indoors in Kyrgyzstan after clashes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Taking cognisance of violence in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, India on Saturday asked its students there to stay indoors after the Kyrgyzstan capital city reported clashes between some locals and foreigners. There are about 15,000 Indian students there. Pakistan also issued a similar advisory to its students in Bishkek.

The Indian embassy said it is in touch with the Indian students and the situation is "calm" now. The mission asked Indian students in the city to stay indoors.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar advised the Indian students to stay in regular touch with the Indian embassy.

"Monitoring the welfare of Indian students in Bishkek. Situation is reportedly calm now. Strongly advise students to stay in regular touch with the Embassy," he said in a post on X.

The Indian embassy said, "We are in touch with our students. The situation is presently calm but students are advised to stay indoors for



the moment and get in touch with the Embassy in case of any issue."

Police in riot gear were deployed in part of Kyrgyzstan's capital overnight as large crowds gathered in anger over an alleged fight between local and foreign people, The Times of Central Asia reported.

The incident appeared to reflect tension over the presence of migrants, many from South Asia, in Kyrgyzstan, it said.

Pakistan's mission said a few hostels of medical universities in Bishkek, where students from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan reside, have been attacked amid the violence.

students. The situation is presently calm, but students are advised to stay indoors for the moment and get in touch with the Embassy in case of any issue. Our 24-7 contact number is 0555710041."

In its advisory posted on social media, Pakistan's Embassy in Bishkek said the matter escalated after videos of a fight between Kyrgyz and Egyptian students on May 13 went viral online on Friday.

"A few hostels of medical universities in Bishkek and private residences of international students, including Pakistanis, have been attacked. The hostels are inhabited by students from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh," it said.

"There have been reports of light injuries to a number of students from Pakistan. Despite social media posts about the alleged death and rape of Pakistani students, so far, we have not received any confirmed reports."

The Embassy further said Pakistani students have been asked to "stay indoors until the situation returns to normal", adding that the violence appeared to be directed against all foreign students,

and not just Pakistanis. There are about 10,000 Pakistani students in the Central Asian nation currently.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan, Hasan Zaigham said authorities were liaising with local law enforcement in Bishkek to ensure the safety of students. Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has also expressed "deep concerns" over the situation in Bishkek, saying he has directed the country's envoy in Bishkek to "provide all necessary help and assistance" to the students.

Also taking to social media, the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) party posted several videos, in which a mob was seen walking and running on a road at night.

"Extremely disturbing reports coming in from Kyrgyzstan, where thousands of Pakistani students are under attack, with reports of violence and deaths," the party tweeted on Saturday and asked the Pakistan Foreign Office, the Embassy in Bishkek and the Foreign Ministry in Kyrgyzstan to "take immediate and effective measures to ensure safety of all Pakistani students."

4.24 lakh poll complaints on cVIGIL app reported so far

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The cVIGIL app, launched by the Election Commission of India, has proven to be a powerful tool for citizens to report election code violations during the Lok Sabha polls of 2024 with at least 4.24 lakh complaints logged in on it as of May 15, 2024 since the start of the General Election.

The complaints ranged from unauthorized campaigning to the misuse of loudspeakers, convoys without permission, and the dissemination of religious or communal speeches as election code violations.

At least, 99.9 per cent of cases have already been disposed of by the top election authority. "Rapid response to reported violations has been facilitated by flying squads, aided by geo-tagging, often reaching the location within minutes. The

app has been instrumental in addressing various malpractices such as putting up posters/banners without permission (3.24 lakhs) unauthorized campaigning (4742 complaints), misuse of loudspeakers (2883), defacement of property (14022), and other forms of electoral misconduct. The efficient handling of complaints underscores the effectiveness of technology in ensuring fair and transparent elections," said an official from the Commission.

"Out of these 4.23,908 complaints have been disposed of and the remaining 409 cases are under process. Nearly 89% complaints were resolved within a 100 minutes timeline, a promise by ECI, firmly held. "Citizens have used this APP for checking electoral malpractices in use of loudspeakers beyond prescribed time or noise levels, campaigning during ban period, placing banners or posters without permission, deployment of vehicles beyond permitted limit, property defacement, display firearms/intimidation and in checking

inducements," said the official.

The cVigil is a user-friendly and easy to operate application, which connects vigilant citizens with the District Control Room, Returning Officer and Flying Squads Teams. By using this app, the citizens can immediately report on incidents of political misconduct within minutes and without having to rush to the office of the returning officer.

"As soon as the complaint is sent on the cVigil app, the complainant will receive a unique ID through which the person will be able to track the complaint on their mobile," explained the official.

A trinity of factors working simultaneously makes cVIGIL a success. Users capture audios, photos or videos in real-time, and a "100-minute" countdown for time-bound response to complaints is ensured.

The app automatically enables a geo-tagging feature as soon as the user switches on their camera in the cVIGIL to report a violation.

SC Collegium recommends two names for appointment as judges at Gauhati HC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Collegium headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud has recommended to the Centre the names of two additional judges for appointment as permanent judges of the Gauhati High Court.

The Collegium, also comprising Justices Sanjiv Khanna and B R Gavai, recommended that Justice Rajesh Sekhri be appointed as an additional judge of the Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh High Court for a fresh term of one year with effect from July 29, 2024.

"... The Collegium resolves to recommend that Justice Susmita Phukan Khaund and Justice Mitali Thakuria, additional judges, be appointed as permanent judges of the Gauhati High Court against the existing vacancies," said one of the Collegium resolutions uploaded on the apex



court website.

It noted that the Collegium of the Gauhati High Court had unanimously recommended on April 1 the names of these two judges for appointment as permanent judges.

"The chief ministers of the States of Assam, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh and the Governors of the States of Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh have concurred with the recommendation," the resolution said.

It noted that with a view to assess the merit and suitability

of the two additional judges for appointment as permanent judges, the Supreme Court Collegium scrutinised the material placed on record, including the opinion of the consulting judges and the report of the judgement evaluation committee.

"Bearing in mind the above, the Collegium is of the view that Justice Susmita Phukan Khaund and Justice Mitali Thakuria, additional judges, are fit and suitable for being appointed as permanent judges," the Collegium resolution dated May 17 said.

In a separate resolution, the Supreme Court Collegium noted that the Collegium of the Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh High Court had on April 23 recommended that Justice Rajesh Sekhri be appointed as an additional judge for a fresh term, "there being no vacancy of permanent judge against which he could be considered".

Severe heatwave likely in northwest India for next five days: IMD

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Over the next five days, Northwest India is expected to continue experiencing extreme heat, with temperatures likely to remain high across Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. On Friday, maximum temperatures surged to 47.4 degrees Celsius in Najafgarh and 47.1 in Haryana's Sirsa.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Saturday predicted a severe heat wave over the plains of northwest India during the next five days and a heat wave over the east and central regions during the next three days. A severe heat wave is declared if the departure from normal exceeds 6.4 notches. The Met office also issued a red warning for Delhi, Haryana, Punjab and west Rajasthan, stressing the need for "extreme care for vulnerable people". It issued an orange alert for east Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and



Bihar and emphasised "high health concern" for vulnerable people, including infants, the elderly and those with chronic diseases.

The Met office said high humidity could add to people's inconvenience in Goa and sub-Himalayan West Bengal.

The IMD also said warm night conditions are likely in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and west

Rajasthan over the next two-three days. High night temperatures are considered dangerous because the body doesn't get a chance to cool down.

Increasing nighttime heat is more common in cities because of the urban heat island effect, in which metro areas are significantly hotter than their surroundings. In view of the general elec-

tions in India, experts have warned of an increased likelihood of heat-related illnesses in people exposed to the sun for prolonged periods or engaging in heavy work.

Researchers at Climate Central, a US-based group of climate scientists, said 543 million (54.3 crore) people in India will experience at least one day of extreme heat during May 18-21.

"Human-caused climate change has made this intense heat much more likely. The high overnight temperatures make this event particularly alarming," said Andrew Pershing, vice-president for science at Climate Central.

Heat waves can be deadly, particularly at risk of heat exhaustion and heatstroke. According to the World Health Organization, more than 1,66,000 (1.66 lakh) people died as a result of heat waves between 1998 and 2017.

Extreme temperatures can also impact economies. People are less productive

during hot weather, even if they work indoors, while children struggle to learn in extreme heat.

Before this, Kalaikunda in the Gangetic West Bengal region had recorded a high of 47.2 degrees Celsius on April 30.

The threshold for a heat wave is met when the maximum temperature of a weather station reaches at least 40 degrees Celsius in the plains, 37 degrees in the coastal areas, and 30 degrees in the hilly regions, and the departure from normal is at least 4.5 notches.

April witnessed record-smashing maximum temperatures in east, northeast, and southern peninsular India, prompting health warnings from government agencies and a few states to suspend in-person classes in schools.

Several places recorded their highest-ever April day temperatures, with the mercury soaring to 47 degrees Celsius. At least two people died in Kerala due to suspected heatstroke during this period.

Over 50 lakh farmland trees disappeared in India from 2018 to 2022

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Between 2018 and 2022, over 50 lakh large farmland trees disappeared in India owing to changes in farming practices like favoring paddy rice fields and removing mature trees from agroforestry systems, thus posing a threat to the environment and livelihoods, according to a study. The research is published in the journal Nature Sustainability.

Researchers said that "an observable trend was emerging" wherein agroforestry systems are being replaced with paddy rice fields, even as a certain loss rate could be found to be natural.

Large and mature trees within these agroforestry fields are removed, and trees are now being cultivated within separate block plantations typically with lower ecological value, they said.

Block plantations, usually involving fewer species of



trees, were found to have increased in numbers which some villagers from Telangana, Haryana, Maharashtra and other states confirmed via interviews.

The team, including researchers from the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, explained that the decision to remove trees is often driven by perceived low benefits of the trees, coupled

with concerns that their shading effect, including that of Neem trees, may adversely affect crop yields.

Boosting crop yields also contributed to the expansion of paddy rice fields, further facilitated by water supply which was augmented by the establishment of new boreholes, the authors said.

"This finding is particularly unsettling given the current

emphasis on agroforestry as an essential natural climate solution, playing a crucial role in both climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies, as well as for livelihoods and biodiversity," the authors wrote.

Agroforestry trees are a vital part of India's landscapes as they generate socio-ecological benefits, along with being a natural climate solution owing to their ability to absorb carbon dioxide from the air.

However, despite their importance, the lack of robust monitoring mechanisms has contributed to an insufficient grasp of their distribution in relation to management practices, as well as their vulnerability to climate change and diseases, the researchers said.

For the study, the team used AI-based deep learning models for detecting individual non-forest trees for each year. By tracking the tree crown over the years, they then analysed the changes. Crowns of multiple trees together form

a canopy.

The researchers mapped about 60 crore farmland trees, excluding block plantations, and tracked them over the past decade.

They found that around 11 per cent of the large trees, each having a crown size of 96 square metres and mapped in 2010/2011, had disappeared by 2018. "Moreover, during the period 2018-2022, more than 5 million large farmland trees (about 67 square metres crown size) have vanished, due partly to altered cultivation practices, where trees within fields are perceived as detrimental to crop yields," the authors wrote.

The researchers clarified that while the findings may appear to contradict official reports and studies showing that tree cover has increased in recent years, they reported only gross losses and did not look at tree gains as a separate class. Urgent action is needed to understand and address this concerning trend.

Species barrier preventing spread of deadly CWD: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A substantial species barrier is preventing the spread of deadly chronic wasting disease (CWD) seen in deer, elk, and moose to humans, according to a study conducted by National Institutes of Health scientists and published in Emerging Infectious Diseases.

CWD, also known as zombie deer disease, is highly transmissible and a type of prion disease -- degenerative diseases found in some mammals and primarily involve brain damage but can also affect the eyes and other organs.

The deadly disease occurs when abnormal proteins fold, clump together, and eventually destroy the central nervous system in the brain. While CWD has never been found in humans, so far, Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD) is the most common form of prion



disease among humans.

In the study, scientists from the National Institutes of Health in the US used a human cerebral organoid model to decode the risk of spread in humans. To validate the model, the team infected the organoids with human CJD prions (positive control).

The study's findings indicate a substantial resistance to CWD transmission in human cerebral organoids, providing reassurance regarding the risk of contracting prion diseases from CWD-infected cervid meat.

While acknowledging potential genetic susceptibilities and the emergence of new strains, researchers remain optimistic about the low likelihood of humans contracting prion diseases through inadvertent consumption of CWD-infected meat.

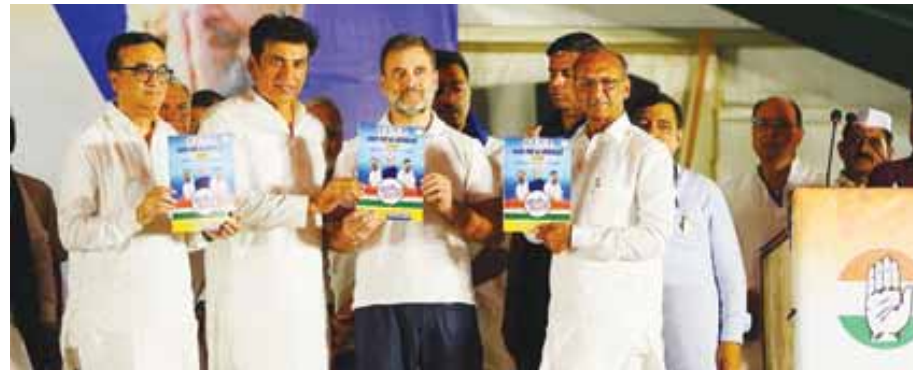
They then directly exposed the healthy human organoids for seven days with high concentrations of CWD prions from white-tailed deer, mule deer, elk, and normal brain matter (negative control). The results published in the journal Emerging Infectious Diseases showed none of the organoids became infected with CWD in the six months of observation. "This indicates that even following direct exposure of human central nervous system tissues to CWD prions, there is a substantial resistance or barrier to the propagation of infection," according to researchers.



Modi did nothing for small businessmen, claims Rahul

ABHI SINGHAL ■ NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Saturday alleged that Narendra Modi led Central Government and his party BJP has only increased extortions and unemployment across the country. Addressing his first public rally for the May 25 Lok Sabha elections in Delhi, Rahul slammed Modi for not doing anything for the small businessmen but giving Rs 16 lakh crore to industrialists like Adani-Ambani. Rahul said that their party will scrap the Agniveer scheme, simplify GST, and help small businessmen rather than big industrialists if they are voted to power. Senior leaders and Congress candidates from Chandni Chowk Lok Sabha seat Jai Prakash Agarwal, from the North West Delhi Udit Raj, Kanhaiya Kumar from the North East Delhi, DPCC President Devender Yadav were also present at the address. He urged Congress workers and the Aam Aadmi Party to work together and ensure victory for their alliance on all seven Lok Sabha seats in the national capital. "It's interest-



ing that I'll vote for AAP and Arvind Kejriwal will vote for Congress in these elections," he said. Under a seat-sharing arrangement between the two constituents of the INDIA bloc, the Congress has fielded candidates from three of the seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi while the AAP is contesting the remaining four. "Congress doesn't want 'darpok' leaders those who are joining BJP fearing CBI-ED action and only want 'Babbar Sher' said Rahul Gandhi. Rahul claimed that Narendra Modi is refusing to have a debate with him as the prime minister cannot answer questions about his "links" with a

few favoured businessmen and how he "misused" electoral bonds. "PM Modi is giving non-stop interviews to his favourite journalists but he will not have a debate with me because he knows he cannot answer my questions," he said. Rahul Gandhi also hit out at the media, alleging they were "friends of 2-3 industrialists" as they would either show Ambani weddings, Bollywood stars or Narendra Modi on their channels round the clock. "Still, stringers and cameramen working for these media houses will vote for Congress only," he said. In his speech, the senior Congress leader also referred to his questioning by the

Enforcement Directorate. "They got me interrogated by ED for 55 hours till they got tired... They snatched my house, I told them I don't want your house as the entire country is my home," he said. On those joining the BJP, Gandhi said he was fine with it. "We don't want 'darpok' (coward) leaders, we want 'Babbar Sher'. We don't want those who cover fearing CBI-ED action." Talking about Congress and INDIA bloc plans if they are able to form government, Rahul Gandhi said, "We will throw the Agniveer scheme in the dustbin, simplify GST and help small businessmen rather than big industrialists."

Lone, Omar conclude high pitched poll campaign

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Peoples Conference Chairman Sajad Lone Saturday concluded his electrifying poll campaign by sending out a loud and clear message to the electorate to send a public representative to the Indian Parliament who can fulfill their aspirations and not remain silent. Lone also cautioned the voters against electing a National Conference candidate in the fray.

National Conference Vice President and former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah is locked in a straight fight with Sajad Lone from the Baramulla Lok Sabha seat. The two other key players who can make or break the poll outcome are Abdul Rashid Sheikh, an Independent candidate currently lodged in Tihar jail and former PDP Rajya Sabha MP Fayaz Ahmad Mir. Lone reminded the voters nine out of 10 times a National Conference candidate was elected from the North Kashmir Lok Sabha seat. He said if you verify the records by filing an RTI application you



will not find any data on how many times these elected parliamentarians raised your issues on the floor of the Parliament and resolved them. "Today, the whole world is closely watching you. It is not me but you all who are facing an examination". Lone said after 2009 these were very crucial elections. It is a fight between oppressors and the oppressed. Taunting Omar Abdullah he thundered, "I will be happier with your defeat than my victory. It will be a befitting tribute to my father and all those who were cheated by the National Conference in 1987". "Your hands are drenched in blood. Referring to the histo-



ry, Lone claimed every time New Delhi and Kashmir came face to face you were never seen standing with the Kashmiris. You always supported New Delhi. You remember Kashmir only when you are out of power. While remaining in power you are always against the Kashmiris". On the other hand, Omar Abdullah wined up his campaign in Budgam. He attended an impressive roadshow and also addressed a public rally. Attacking the rival candidates and the tactical support extended to them by the Bharatiya Janta Party in the valley Omar Saturday said, "We have not been able to understand yet

what the aim of the (home minister's) visit was because the BJP has not fielded candidates here. First, there was a rumor that he had come for a security review meeting but no meeting took place," Abdullah told reporters in the Magam area of Central Kashmir's Budgam district. Abdullah claimed Shah's visit was aimed at giving "directions to the administration, BJP and its 'B', 'C', 'D' and 'E' teams on how to defeat the National Conference". These parties have come together to defeat the National Conference on the directions of the BJP, he said. "But, by the grace of God, people are with us and we will prove that on June 4." "Don't you think it is strange that the person who used to claim till yesterday that he would win the elections, his aim has now changed? Today, the People's Conference does not talk of winning the elections, it talks about defeating Omar Abdullah. This tells you that all these parties follow the BJP's instructions. Their only target is the National Conference," Abdullah said.

₹9,000 crore worth of cash, liquor, drugs seized in first four LS phases, announces EC

PTI ■ SHIMLA



RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

With three phases of polling still left, the Election Commission (EC) on Saturday said it had seized nearly Rs.9,000 crore worth of cash, liquor, drugs, precious metals and other freebies in the two months since the Lok Sabha elections were announced. In 2019, the total seizures during the Lok Sabha elections was worth Rs.3,475 crore. The contribution of seizure of drugs is Rs. 3958 Crores which is 45% of total seizures. Data shared by the EC highlights that out of the total seizures worth Rs.8,889 crore by agencies across the country, drugs accounted for 45% or Rs.3,958 crore. The agencies have also seized Rs.849.15 crore in cash, 5.39 crore litres of liquor worth Rs.814.85 crore, Rs.1,260.33 crore of precious metals and Rs.2,006.56 crore of freebies that would have been distributed among electors. The seizure of drugs, liquor, precious metals, freebies, cash influences elections in varying degrees, some flowing directly as inducement while others through reduced levels of circulation of money. This, thereby, adversely impacts linkages of proceeds of illegal activities to political campaigns. These elections have witnessed a series of targeted actions against the menace of drugs. Other states apart from Gujarat, Maharashtra and Delhi have also shown seizures of drugs. On 17.04.2024 Noida Police busted drug factory in Greater Noida wherein 26.7 kg of MDMA drug valued at Rs. 150 Crore were seized and two persons of foreign origin were arrested. The seizures in other cohorts have equally been impressive and surpasses the entire seizures of 2019 Parliamentary Elections by a big margin. Meticulous and exhaustive planning stands at its base. Gujarat had the highest amount of seizures among all states and Union Territories, with Rs.1,461.73 crore in total seizures. The amount reflects a recent operation by the Gujarat ATS, the Narcotics Control Bureau and the Indian Coast Guard that led to seizures of drugs worth Rs.892 crore in three days. A joint force identified and intercepted a suspected Pakistani fishing boat, 'Alraza'

which was carrying 14 crew members, all Pakistani on Indian waters, 180 nautical miles off the coast of Porbandar, Gujarat. The joint team of Gujarat ATS and Narcotics Control Bureau (Operations), New Delhi recovered 78 boxes of contraband suspected to be Heroin weighing roughly 86 Kgs worth nearly Rs. 602 Crore in the international market. The boat and crew were brought to Porbandar for further legal procedures. Operation was based on intelligence received by ATS Gujarat that units in Rajasthan and Gujarat are involved in the illicit manufacturing of psychotropic substances such as Mephedrone. Joint teams of Gujarat ATS and NCB (Operations) Delhi conducted simultaneous raids at Amreli and Gandhinagar in Gujarat, Sirohi and Jodhpur in Rajasthan on 27th April 2024, and seized illicit manufacturing units involved in the production of Mephedrone, a psychotropic substance under the NDPS Act. In the ongoing operations, 10 individuals have so far been detained and a total of 22 kgs of Mephedrone powder and 124 litres of Mephedrone in liquid form has been seized. The total value of the seized psychotropic substance, Mephedrone is estimated to be around Rs. 230 crores in the international market. In another operation, Gujarat ATC, Indian Coast Guard and NCB seized 173 Kgs of Hashish worth Rs. 60.5 Crore has been seized on 29 April. "The Commission has laid special emphasis on seizure of narcotics and psychotropic substances. Analysis of data found that states/UTs which used to be transit zones are increasingly becoming consumption territories," the EC said. The Commission led by CEC Sh. Rajiv Kumar along with ECs Sh. Gyanesh Kumar and Sh. Sukhbir Singh Sandhu held meetings with DG, Narcotics Control Bureau to take up analytics-based proactive action for ensuring action by dedicated Nodal Officers of NCB. Similarly active involvement of DRI, Indian Coast Guard, State police and other agencies was ensured during ongoing elections. All these measures have led to significant seizures in two months post announcement of polls.

Modi changed country's political culture in ten years, says Nadda

PTI ■ SHIMLA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi changed the political culture of the country from politics of divide and rule to that of report card in the past ten years with the mantra of 'sabka saath, sabka vikas, sabka vishwas and sabka prayas,' BJP president J P Nadda said on Saturday. Addressing a public rally at Rehan in the Kangra Lok Sabha constituency in support of BJP candidate Rajiv Bhardwaj, he said, "Politics of divide and rule was going on in the country for 70 years which has been converted in the past ten years to the politics of report card, where the elected representatives have to show their performance." Dubbing the INDIA bloc an "alliance of families promoting dynastic politics and saving corrupt people," Nadda said that leaders of this alliance facing corruption charges are either on bail or in jail, and added that corrupt leaders would go back to jail after the polls on June 1. "Congress leader Rahul Gandhi

is roaming with the Constitution written by B R Ambedkar, which clearly states no reservation in the name of religion but the Congress party in Andhra Pradesh tried four times to give reservation on the basis of religion and similar attempts are being made in Karnataka," he added. Launching an attack on Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Nadda said that Kejriwal used to sit on dharna in the Nirbhaya case but a woman was allegedly assaulted in his drawing room. AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal was allegedly assaulted at the residence of CM Kejriwal a few days back. When the economies of the USA and European countries were dwindling and the economy of China was retarding, India was looked upon as a "shining star and a ray of hope" with the economy jumping from 11th to 5th position. Seeking votes for Bhardwaj, Nadda said that by ensuring the third term for PM Modi, India would become the third largest economy in the world in three years.

Under the leadership of PM Modi, today India is second in the sale of medicine and third largest exporter of toys and the mobile phones are also made in India, he said. "I visited the state thrice during the monsoon disaster last year and the Union government gave a sum of Rs 1,782 crore besides funds for construction of 11,000 houses for victims and 2700 km of roads," Nadda said and asked if the roads and houses were constructed by the state government. About 12,000 km of roads were constructed under the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Sadak Yojna in Himachal Pradesh during the tenure of former chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur, Nadda further said. Referring to the developmental initiatives of the Modi government, Nadda said four crore house have been constructed for the poor and three crore more houses will be constructed in the next five years, solar panels will be installed on the roofs of every household, hence electricity bills will be zero.

Campaigning ends for five LS seats, 35 Assembly segments in Odisha

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

The high-decibel campaigning ended on Saturday for five Lok Sabha seats and 35 assembly constituencies in Odisha, which will go to polls on May 20. Among the prominent candidates in the second round of simultaneous elections in the state are BJD president and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, and his colleagues in the state government Bikram Arukha, Niranjan Pujari, PK Amat, Tukuni Sahu, Rita Sahu and SP Nayak. Ex-union minister and Sundergarh's sitting MP Juel Oram, former Indian hockey captain Dilip Tirkey, former union minister and hotelier Dilip Ray, and BJP's four-time

Lok Sabha MP Sangeeta Singh De are also in the fray in this round of elections. Patnaik is seeking re-election from his home turf Hinjili and also contesting from the Kantabanji assembly segment under the Bolangir Lok Sabha seat this time. Altogether 40 candidates are contesting from Aska, Kandhamal, Bolangir, Bargarh and Sundergarh Lok Sabha seats, while 265 are in the fray for 35 assembly constituencies. Altogether 79.62 lakh voters are eligible to exercise their franchise on May 20. The BJD had won Aska and Kandhamal Lok Sabha seats in 2019, while three others had gone to the BJP. The state, during this round of electioneering, witnessed heavy-

weights of the ruling BJD, and the opposition BJP and Congress canvassing for their respective candidates. Prominent leaders, who campaigned during this round of elections, included Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJD president J P Nadda, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and its leader Rahul Gandhi. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Chhattisgarh CM Vishnu Dev Sai, Rajasthan CM Bhajan Lal, Tripura's ex-CM Biplab Kumar Deb also hit the campaign trail. During the campaigning, PM Modi launched a scathing attack on the chief minister, accusing him of destroying the Odia "Asmita" (pride).

Star-studded lineup...

From Page 1 The Bahujan Samajwadi Party (BSP) has named Nanhe Singh Chauhan as their candidate for Amethi. The party hopes that Chauhan will be able to garner the OBC Nonia community votes, which is a significant segment in the constituency. Amethi has historically been a bastion of the Congress party, as it has lost this seat only thrice, in 1977, 1998, and recently in 2019. Ending weeks of suspense on the last day of filing of nominations for the Rae Bareilly Lok Sabha constituency, Congress announced Rahul as its candidate. The decision put to rest rumours that his sister and party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra would be the one to replace their mother Sonia from the party stronghold. The move to field Rahul from Rae Bareilly instead of Amethi - his former bastion - took many by surprise. Meanwhile, the BJP has nominated three-time Member of the Legislative Assembly and former Congress member Dinesh Pratap Singh as its Lok Sabha candidate from the constituency. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), contesting all Lok Sabha seats in UP independently in the 2024 general elections, has named Thakur Prasad Yadav as its candidate from Rae Bareilly. Yadav, who unsuccessfully contested the UP Vidhan Sabha elections in 2017 and 2022, will make his debut in the lower house of Parliament with this candidacy. The Hajipur Lok Sabha constituency in Bihar,

adjacent to Patna, is one of the State's 40 parliamentary seats and comprises six Assembly segments. Hajipur has been the political bastion of the late Ram Vilas Paswan, who hails from this region. Paswan's electoral prowess was evident from his remarkable record of victory here, having been elected as a Member of Parliament (MP) from Hajipur an impressive eight times. In the upcoming elections, Ram Vilas Paswan's son, Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) leader Chirag Paswan, and Rashtriya Janata Dal's (RJD) Shiv Chandra Ram will face stiff competition. Ladakh Lok Sabha constituency, the largest in the country in terms of area, will be privy to the first major electoral contest after it was carved out of Jammu and Kashmir and granted Union Territory status in 2019. Ladakh will vote on May 20. What was initially touted to be a two-way fight, a direct contest between the BJP and the Congress, the parliamentary seat is now a three-corner fight with an alliance of local groups fielding an Independent to challenge the national parties. Over the last few months, Ladakh witnessed widespread shutdown as thousands participated in marches, advocating for Statehood and constitutional protections under the sixth schedule for the Union Territory. For the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP has nominated Tashi Gyalson, the chief executive councillor-cum-chairman of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (Leh), as its candidate for the seat,

replacing incumbent Member of Parliament Jamiyang Tsering Namgyal. The Congress has put forth Tsering Namgyal as its contender. Adding a twist to the electoral dynamics, the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) has fielded Haji Haneefa Jan, the Kargil district president of the National Conference (NC). Historically, the Congress has clinched victory in the Ladakh constituency on six occasions. As per an agreement with the NC, they have nominated Tsering Namgyal, who serves as the Leader of the Opposition in the LAHDC, both of which are constituents of the INDIA Bloc and the Leh Apex Body. For Karan Bhushan Singh, the 2024 Lok Sabha elections will be a battle of nerves. The Kaiserganj Lok Sabha constituency in Uttar Pradesh is one of the State's 80 Lok Sabha constituencies. It comprises five Vidhan Sabha seats, including Payagpur, Kaiserganj, Katra Bazar, Colonelganj, and Tarabganj, and is scheduled for polling in the fifth phase on May 20. Historically, the constituency has witnessed alternating periods of dominance by various parties, with the BJP currently enjoying momentum after winning the last two Lok Sabha elections in 2014 and 2019. According to the Election Commission, 695 candidates are in the fray for the fifth phase of polling. This count emerged after scrutinising 1,586 nomination forms filed for the fifth phase, 749 of which were deemed valid after the May 3 deadline.

Bullet to ballot, Bundelkhand...

From Page 1

Bhoganipur, ensuring victories for his favored candidates. Another notable figure was Phoolan Devi from Gorha village in Jalaun district. Following the infamous Behmai incident in 1981, she gained national attention. In 1996, two years after her release from prison, the Samajwadi Party gave her a Lok Sabha ticket. Phoolan triumphed in her first electoral contest, becoming an MP from Mirzapur, though she was later assassinated. "There might be some smaller bandits still hiding somewhere, but due to proactive policing, not many would muster the courage," said Prahlad Vishwakarma, a

local carpenter. As Bundelkhand bids farewell to the era of dacoit-dominated politics, a new chapter unfolds, marking a transition from the ravines to the legislative chambers. On the ground, the focus has shifted from dacoits to pressing issues like unemployment and stray cattle. "There is widespread inflation and joblessness. People continue to migrate out," said Raja Bhiyaa, a convener of NGO Vidya Dham Samiti. "People applied for Government jobs but paper leaks have dashed their hopes." The region, rugged and water-starved, has seen efforts from the BJP Government to provide drinking water through the Har Ghar Nal scheme. However, locals

report gaps in execution, with many pipes not connected to houses. A 'Jal Saheli' team surveyed 26 villages and found water supply remains problematic. While the BJP Government's free ration scheme has faded better, some still sell rice to buy wheat. For Dalits, the 'Samvidhan' (Constitution) is a major issue, with concerns that a BJP majority could alter it to their detriment. The INDIA Bloc has capitalised on these fears, warning that another BJP term might jeopardise reservation benefits. As Bundelkhand moves forward, it does so with cautious optimism, hopeful that its political evolution will bring lasting peace and development. Polling in the Bundelkhand region is on May 20.

AIDE NABBED, KEJRIWAL...

From Page 1

emails dated 17.05.2024 to police," it said. On Friday night, Kumar had also mailed a complaint to the police against Maliwal for "illegal/ unauthorised entry into and creating a security breach by trespassing at the Chief Minister's residence; for creating a ruckus and interfering with public servants in discharge of duty". He wrote, "When the complainant asked Maliwal to leave the CM residence, not only was he abused and physically pushed by her, but she also threatened to implicate him in false cases. Since Maliwal has made unauthorised entry, trespassed, breached the security of the CM residence, prevented Government officers from discharging their duty and assaulted the complainant, she is liable for her action as per law." Claiming that this can be BJP's conspiracy, he said, "You are requested to take appropriate legal action

against Maliwal. Since it is election time, all of this may have been done at the behest of the BJP and it is therefore requested that her call records, chats and interactions with BJP leaders should also be investigated." On the arrest, National Commission for Women (NCW) chairperson Rekha Sharma said, "Kumar got arrested from his house. So the CM was giving shelter to alleged criminals." Kumar was also summoned by the NCW to appear before it on Friday, at 11 am in the morning, which he ignored. An FIR was registered on Thursday under sections 308 (Attempt to commit culpable homicide), 341 (Punishment for wrongful restraint), 354 D (Stalking), 506 (Punishment for criminal intimidation), and 509 (Word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) at Civil Lines police station. Maliwal's MLC done at AIIMS hospital during the

few hours of Friday has also confirmed that she sustained injuries on her face and leg. Calling Kumar a parrot in which Kejriwal's soul resides, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said, "It is extremely shameful that Kejriwal, by forgetting his decades-old relationship, is now tarnishing the character of his partner, Maliwal, who has been associated with him for more than two decades. Now that Kejriwal's aide Kumar has been arrested, the day is not far when many dirty pages of Kejriwal's politics will become public." He urged Kejriwal to come forward and support Maliwal at a time when the entire AAP is trying to defame her. "If the AAP is trying to implicate Maliwal by showing edited videos, it would be better for the Delhi Police to immediately take complete CCTV footage of the Chief Minister's residence into its possession," Sachdeva said, reacting to videos of Maliwal in the residence of Kejriwal going viral.

Ukraine's mobilisation law comes into force

... as a new Russian push strains front-line troops

AP ■ KYIV

A divisive mobilisation law in Ukraine came into force on Saturday, as Kyiv struggles to boost troop numbers after Russia launched a new offensive that some fear could close in on Ukraine's second-largest city.

The legislation, which was watered down from its original draft, will make it easier to identify every conscript in the country. It also provides incentives to soldiers, such as cash bonuses or money toward buying a house or car, that some analysts say Ukraine cannot afford.

Lawmakers dragged their feet for months and only passed the law in mid-April, a week after Ukraine lowered the age for men who can be drafted from 27 to 25.

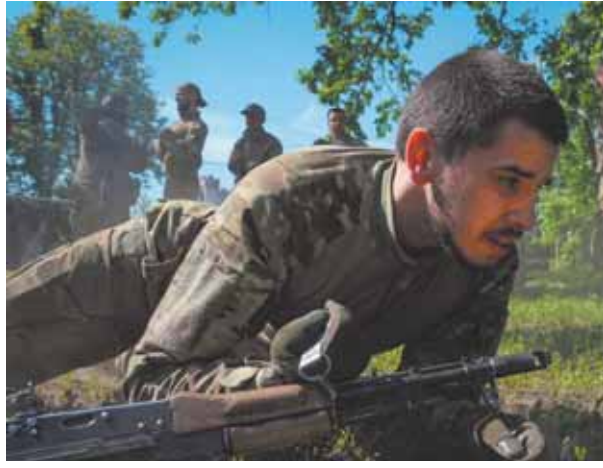
The measures reflect the growing strain that more than two

years of war with Russia has had on Ukraine's forces, who are trying to hold the front lines in fighting that has sapped the country's ranks and stores of weapons and ammunition.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also signed two other laws Friday, allowing prisoners to join the army and increasing fines for draft dodgers fivefold. Russia enlisted its prisoners early on in the war, and personnel shortages compelled Ukraine to adopt the new measures.

Russian troops, meanwhile, are pushing ahead with a ground offensive that opened a new front in northeastern Ukraine's Kharkiv region and put further pressure on Kyiv's overstretched military.

After weeks of probing, Moscow launched the new push knowing that Ukraine suffered personnel shortages, and that its forces have been



Newly recruited soldiers of the 3rd assault brigade train in Kyiv, Ukraine on Friday. A divisive mobilisation law in Ukraine came into force on Saturday, as Kyiv struggles to boost troop numbers after Russia launched a new offensive. AP/PTI

spread thin in the northeast, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Friday during a visit to China that the Russian push aims to create "a buffer zone" rather than capturing Kharkiv, the local capital and Ukraine's second-largest city. Still, Moscow's forces have pummelled Kharkiv with

strikes in recent weeks, hitting civilian and energy infrastructure and prompting angry accusations from Zelenskyy that the Russian leadership sought to reduce the city to rubble.

On Friday, Mayor Ihor Terekhov said that Russian guided bombs killed at least three residents and injured 28 others that day.

Moscow denies deliberately targeting civilians, but thousands have died or suffered injuries in the more than 27 months of fighting.

The US last week announced a new USD 400 million package of military aid for Ukraine, and President Joe Biden has promised that he would rush badly needed weaponry to the country to help it stave off Russian advances.

Still, only small batches of US military aid have started to trickle into the front line,

according to Ukrainian military commanders, who said it will take at least two months before supplies meet Kyiv's needs to hold the line.

Thousands of Ukrainians have fled the country to avoid the draft since Russia's all-out invasion in February 2022, some risking their lives as they tried to swim across a river separating Ukraine from neighbouring Romania and Hungary.

Late on Friday, Ukraine's border service said that at least 30 people have died trying to cross the Tisza River since the full scale-invasion.

Romanian border guards days earlier retrieved the near-naked, disfigured body of a man that appeared to have been floating in the Tisza for days, and is the 30th known casualty, the Ukrainian agency said in an online statement. It said the man has not yet been identified.

Singapore seeing COVID-19 wave

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Singapore is seeing a new COVID-19 wave as the authorities recorded more than 25,900 cases from May 5 to 11 even as Health Minister Ong Ye Kung on Saturday advised the wearing of masks again.

"We are at the beginning part of the wave where it is steadily rising," said Ong. "So, I would say the wave should peak in the next two to four weeks, which means between mid- and end of June." The Straits Times newspaper quoted the minister as saying.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) said the estimated number of COVID-19 cases in the week of May 5 to 11 rose to 25,900 cases, compared with 13,700 cases in the previous week. The average daily COVID-19 hospitalisations rose to about 250 from 181 the week before. The average daily intensive

care unit (ICU) cases remained low at three cases, compared with two cases in the previous week.

The MOH said that to protect hospital bed capacity, public hospitals have been asked to reduce their non-urgent elective surgery cases and move suitable patients to transitional care facilities or back home through Mobile Inpatient Care@Home, an alternative inpatient care delivery model that offers clinically suitable patients the option of being hospitalised in their own homes instead of a hospital ward. Ong urged those who are at greatest risk of severe disease, including individuals aged 60 years and above, medically vulnerable individuals and residents of aged care facilities, to receive an additional dose of the COVID-19 vaccine if they have not done so in the last 12 months.



Trucks loaded with humanitarian aid from the United Arab Emirates and the United States Agency for International Development cross the Trident Pier before entering the beach in Gaza. AP/PTI

Flash floods kill 86 in Afghanistan

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

Flash floods from heavy seasonal rains have killed at least 68 people in Afghanistan, Taliban officials said Saturday, adding the death toll was based on preliminary reports.

Afghanistan has been witnessing unusually heavy seasonal rains.

In the hard-hit western province of Ghor, 50 people were reported dead, said Abdul Wahid Hamas, spokesman for the provincial governor. He also said the province has suffered significant financial losses after thousands of homes and properties were damaged and hundreds of hectares of agricultural land destroyed following Friday's floods, including the capital city Feroz Koh.

Meanwhile, 18 people in the northern province of Farayab were killed and two others injured on Friday, according to Esmatullah Moradi, the provincial governor's spokesman. Damages to property and land were reported across four districts and over 300 animals were killed, he added.

Slovak PM is stable after 'miracles' in hospital; suspect appears in court

AP ■ PEZINOK

Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico's condition was serious but stable Saturday as the man accused of trying to assassinate him faced his first court appearance.

Two hours of surgery Friday to remove dead tissue from Fico's multiple gunshot wounds led to a good prognosis for his recovery but he was still not well enough to travel to a hospital in the capital, Bratislava, government ministers said outside University F D Roosevelt Hospital in Banska Bystrica, where Fico was taken by helicopter after the shooting.

"Several miracles have occurred in Banska Bystrica in recent days coming from the hands of doctors, nurses and the personnel at the Roosevelt Hospital," Defence Minister Robert Kalinak said.

Fico, 59, was attacked as he greeted supporters following a government meeting Wednesday in the former coal mining town of Handlova. The suspect was tackled to the ground and arrested.

The update on Fico's health was issued as the man accused of attempting to assassinate him



A car supposedly carrying the suspect, in shooting of Slovakia's Prime Minister Robert Fico, arrives at court in Pezinok, Slovakia on Saturday. Officials in Slovakia say Prime Minister Robert Fico has undergone another operation two days after his assassination attempt and remains in serious condition. AP/PTI

suspect to his home in the town of Levice and seized a computer and some documents, Markiza, a Slovak television station reported. Police didn't comment.

With police remaining largely silent about the case, it was not clear how the suspect came to possess a firearm.

Slovakia has strict rules on firearms and gun owners must have a good reason to possess one and are required to pass a test.

As a consequence, Slovakia has one of the lowest gun ownership rates in Europe. It was ranked 23rd out of 27 European Union countries with a gun ownership rate of 6.5 per 100 people, according to the Association of Accredited Public Policy Advocates to the EU.

World leaders have condemned the attack and offered support for Fico and Slovakia.

Fico has long been a divisive figure in Slovakia and beyond. His return to power last year on a pro-Russia, anti-American platform led to worries among fellow European Union and NATO members that he would abandon his country's pro-Western course, particularly on Ukraine.

Malaysian man kills two cops

AP ■ KUALA LUMPUR

The man who attacked a Malaysian police station and killed two officers was a recluse and is believed to have acted on his own despite suspected links to the Jemaah Islamiyah extremist group, the country's home minister said Saturday.

The man stormed the police station in southern Johor state near Singapore in the early hours of Friday with a machete. He hacked a police constable to death and then used the officer's weapon to kill another. He wounded a third officer before being shot dead. Police initial-

ly said the man could have attempted to take firearms from the station.

Home Minister Saifuddin Nasution called it a "lone wolf attack" based on an initial investigation and said there was no threat to the wider public.

"We have established that the attacker acted on his own ... a lone wolf driven by certain motivation and his own understanding," Saifuddin said. "His action is not linked to any larger mission." Police have said the man's father was a known member of Jemaah Islamiyah, a Southeast Asian network linked to al-Qaida, and that

they found materials linked to the group in their home. Seven people including the man's parents and three siblings were detained and police said they were searching for some 20 Jemaah Islamiyah members in the state.

The incident sparked concerns over a possible wider threat, prompting Singapore to issue a warning to its citizens to be vigilant when traveling to Johor. Police initially said the attacker was 34, but Saifuddin later said he was 21 years old, with no criminal record. He said the man did not interact much with his neighbors.

Pakistan, IMF to hold talks on fresh bailout package

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan, seeking a fresh USD 6 billion to USD 8 billion loan package from the IMF, will hold talks with officials from the Washington-based lender to discuss the terms of the fresh bailout for the cash-strapped country, according to a media report on Saturday.

An IMF support team has reached Pakistan to hold talks regarding its request for a fresh bailout package under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF). Pakistan has made a formal request for a fresh bailout package of USD 6 to USD 8 billion under the EFF with the possibility to be augmented through climate finance. If successful, it would be the 24th IMF bailout programme

for the country.

"Right now, a mission team led by Nathan Porter, our Mission Chief, is meeting with the authorities this week to discuss the next phase of our engagement with Pakistan," International Monetary Fund's Communication Director Julie Kozack said on Thursday.

IMF's Resident Representative for Pakistan Esther Perez Ruiz said a team, led by Porter, would meet Pakistani authorities "to discuss the next phase of engagement".

She had further said that the aim of the negotiations was to "lay the foundation for better governance and stronger, more inclusive, and resilient economic growth that will benefit all Pakistanis", Geo News reported.

The team is expected to stay

in the country for more than 10 days and would receive data from different departments and would also discuss the upcoming budget for the fiscal year 2025 with the Ministry of Finance officials, Geo News reported quoting sources. Last Tuesday, Pakistan and the IMF started negotiations for a fresh bailout package to address the cash-strapped country's fiscal challenges and implement crucial reforms, media reports said.

Last month, Pakistan completed a short-term USD 3 billion programme with the IMF, which bailed the country out of any default.

It was unclear whether the IMF mission would end with a formal staff-level agreement for the next bailout package, according to The Express

Tribune newspaper.

The duration, instrument, and size of the next IMF programme were open to discussion, the report said, quoting sources.

Pakistan narrowly averted default last summer, and the economy has stabilised after the completion of the last IMF programme, with inflation coming down to around 17 per cent in April from a record high of 38 per cent last May.

The country is still dealing with a high fiscal shortfall, and while the external account deficit has been controlled through import control mechanisms, it has come at the expense of stagnating growth, which is expected to be around two per cent this year compared to negative growth last year.

Yemen's Houthi rebels claim shooting down another US MQ-9 Reaper drone

AP ■ DUBAI

Yemen's Houthi rebels on Friday claimed to have shot down an American drone, hours after footage circulated online of what appeared to be the wreckage of an MQ-9 Reaper drone.

Early Saturday, a vessel also came under attack in the Red Sea.

The two incidents likely represent just the latest attacks by the Houthis as they press their campaign over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. Houthi military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree claimed that rebels shot down the Reaper on Thursday with surface-to-air missile.

He described the drone as "carrying out hostile actions" in Yemen's Marib province, which

remains held by allies of Yemen's exiled, internationally recognised government.

The Houthis later released footage they claimed showed the surface-to-air missile being launched at night, along with night-vision footage of the missile hitting the drone.

A man, whose voice had been digitally altered to apparently prevent identification, chanted the Houthi slogan: "God is the greatest; death to America; death to Israel; curse the Jews; victory to Islam."

Online video showed wreckage resembling the pieces of the Reaper on the ground, as well as footage of that wreckage on fire.

The US military did not respond to a request for comment from The Associated Press over the Houthi claim.

While the rebels have made claims about attacks that turned out later not to be true, they have a history of shooting down US drones and have been armed by their main benefactor, Iran, with weapons capable of high-altitude attack. Since the Houthis seized the country's north and its capital, Sanaa, in 2014, the US military has previously lost at least five drones to the rebels.

Reapers, which cost around USD 30 million apiece, can fly at altitudes up to 50,000 feet and have an endurance of up to 24 hours before needing to land.

The drone shutdown comes as the Houthis launch attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, demanding Israel ends the war in Gaza, which has killed more than 34,000

Palestinians there. The war began after Hamas-led militants attacked Israel on October 7, killing 1,200 people and taking some 250 others hostage.

The Houthis have launched more than 50 attacks on shipping, seized one vessel and sunk another since November, according to the US Maritime Administration.

Early Saturday, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre said a ship came under attack off the coast of Yemen's port city of Hodeida.

The captain "has confirmed sustaining slight damage after being struck by an unknown object on his port quarter," the UKMTO said. "The vessel and crew are safe and continuing to its next port of call."

Man gets 30 years in prison for attack on Pelosi's husband

AP ■ SAN FRANCISCO

The man who broke into the home of then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi seeking to hold her hostage and bludgeoned her husband with a hammer was sentenced Friday to 30 years in prison.

But prosecutors later filed a motion saying the court failed to offer the defendant, David DePape, an opportunity "to speak or present any information to mitigate the sentence" as required by federal rule.

They asked the court to reopen the sentencing portion to allow him that option. The court did not immediately respond.

A jury found DePape, 44, guilty in November of attempted kidnapping of a federal official and assault on the immediate fam-

ily member of a federal official. Prosecutors had asked for a 40-year prison term.

The attack on Paul Pelosi, who was 82 at the time, was captured on police body camera video just days before the 2022 midterm elections and sent shockwaves through the political world.

He suffered two head wounds including a skull fracture that was mended with plates and screws he will have for the rest of his life. His right arm and hand were also injured.

Judge Jacqueline Scott Corley sentenced DePape to 20 years for attempted kidnapping and 30 years for the assault, the maximum for both counts. The sentences will run concurrently. He also was given credit for the 18 months he has

been in custody.

In its afternoon motion to the court, the US attorney's office said DePape was not given the opportunity by the court to speak before being sentenced and that could present an issue.

DePape's defence, however, said they opposed bringing back their client to court and filed a notice of appeal, according to the filing. Prosecutors and defence counsel did not immediately respond to emails seeking comment late Friday.

The court has 14 days to correct a sentence resulting from error, prosecutors said.

DePape stood silently as he was sentenced and looked down at times. His public defence attorneys had asked the judge to sentence him to 14 years, pointing out that he was going

through a difficult period in his life at the time of the attack, had undiagnosed mental health issues and had no prior criminal history.

At trial, DePape testified that he had planned to wear an inflatable unicorn costume and record his interrogation of the Democratic speaker, who was not at her San Francisco home at the time of the attack, to upload it online.

Ahead of the sentencing, one of his defense attorneys, Angela Chuang, told the judge to consider the prison terms being given to those who participated in the January 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol.

"The five most serious sentences for people who were convicted of seditious conspiracy, of literally conspiring to

overthrow the government, range from 15 to 22 years," Chuang said.

Corley said the January 6 analogy didn't adequately reflect the seriousness of breaking into an official's private home. The attack may have a chilling effect on people seeking office in the future, she said.

"They have to think not only, Am I willing to take that risk myself, but am I willing to risk my spouse, my children, my grandchildren?" the judge said.

Prosecutors asked for the maximum sentence on each count and for DePape to serve 10 years concurrently, giving him a 40-year prison term.

Before sentencing, Christine Pelosi read her father and mother's victim statements, explaining how the violent

attack changed their lives. In Paul Pelosi's statement, he explained that 18 months after the attack, he still gets headaches and vertigo and has fainted and fallen twice at home.

"Once you are attacked in such a public and political manner, with such threatening language, you always have to fear a copycat," Nancy Pelosi said in her statement. "When I encourage people, especially women to consider running for office, physical threats to the family should not even be a factor, but they are."

Both Paul and Nancy Pelosi said there are still bloodstains on the floor and other signs of the break-in at their home.

"Our home remains a heart-breaking crime scene," Nancy Pelosi wrote.

Nepal bans sale of Indian spice-mix

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

After Singapore and Hong Kong, Nepal has also banned the sale and import of certain spice-mix products manufactured by Indian brands over alleged quality concerns.

Four spice-mix products by MDH and Everest were banned in the Himalayan nation from Friday due to suspected ethylene oxide or EtO contamination, according to the Department of Food Technology and Quality Control here.

Under this, Madras Curry Powder, Sambhar Mixed Masala Powder, Mixed Masala Curry Powder of MDH and Fish Curry Masala of Everest have been banned in Nepal.

"As residue contents of ethylene oxide are found to be exceeding the prescribed limit in these four products, the import and sale of these products are banned within the country as per Article 19 of the Food Regulation 2027 B.S.," the department said in a notice issued on Friday.

"Our serious attention has been drawn towards media reports about the sale of these sub-standard products in the market, and they are harmful for consumption," it said.



RCB PIP CSK, QUALIFY FOR IPL LAST FOUR

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Royal Challengers Bengaluru defeated defending champions Chennai Super Kings by 27 runs to secure the fourth and final play-off spot in the Indian Premier League here on Saturday. Kolkata Knight Riders, Rajasthan Royals and Sunrisers Hyderabad had already qualified for the play-offs. Sent into bat, RCB posted a challenging 218 for five against CSK in their must-win. CSK needed 201 runs to qualify for the playoffs on account of a better run rate even if they lose, but could only manage 191 for 7. Rachin Ravindra scored 61

off 37 balls, while Ravindra Jadeja and Ajinkya Rahane made 42 not out and 33 respectively. Towards the end, the legendary Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who could have probably played his last IPL match, scored a 13-ball 25-run cameo. But it was not enough. Yash Dayal kept his cool in the last over and returned with figures of 2/42 for RCB. Earlier, Royal Challengers Bengaluru's top-order, led by skipper Faf du Plessis, fired in unison as they posted a solid 218 for five. Du Plessis hit three fours and three sixes on his way to a 39-ball 54, his fourth fifty of the season, while Virat Kohli (47 off 29 balls), Rajat Patidar (41 off 23 balls) and



Cameron Green (38 not out off 17 balls) also went on a six-hitting spree to put RCB on solid ground. According to the playoff qualification scenario, RCB, who made a fairytale turnaround with a five-match winning streak, needed to win by 18 runs at least to make the cut. CSK, however, would qualify if they scored more than 200 at the expense of RCB even if they lost the game or if the match was washed out. In the battle for the last available playoffs berth, opener Kohli and du Plessis began on a positive note and were 31 for no loss when there was a short rain interruption, causing a 40-minute delay.

However, on resumption, CSK pressed the spinners into the attack. With the ball gripping and turning, spin duo of Maheesh Theekshana (25/0) and Mitchell Santner (23/0) troubled the batters as RCB reached 42 for no loss at the end of the Powerplay. Kohli brought out his slog sweep to clobber two more sixes before holing out to Daryl Mitchell off Santner as RCB slipped to 78 for one in 10 overs. Ravindra Jadeja (40/0 in 3 overs) was however slaughtered by du Plessis, who blasted a four and two sixes to pile up 20 runs off his third over and then completed his 35-ball fifty. Rajat Patidar (41) then got into the act, depositing

Theekshana for a maximum. In the 13th over, du Plessis was unfortunately run out at the bowler's end but Patidar continued his onslaught, smashing Simarjeet Singh for a four and a six, while Thakur conceded 17 with Green thumping one over long-on to bring up the 150. Green was, however, dropped by Gaikwad in the deep but Patidar continued to put the bowler under pressure as he smoked Deshpande for two sixes. Green then picked up successive sixes off Thakur, who had Patidar caught at the other end but it was too late as cameos from Dinesh Kartik (14) and Glenn Maxwell (16) swelled the total.



I did not live up to standard but overthinking was not an option: Rohit

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India skipper Rohit Sharma acknowledged that he could not match the expected batting standards in the ongoing IPL but instead of indulging in overthinking, his endeavour was to stay in the right zone and keep working on his flaws. The five-time IPL winning skipper endured a wretched form in the second-half of the season, struggling to cross even a score of 20 in six matches for Mumbai Indians. "As a batter, I know I didn't live up to the standard. But, after playing for all these years, I know that if I overthink, I won't play well," Rohit said on JioCinema Match Centre Live. He returned to form with a 38-ball 68 in their last match against Lucknow Super Giants but MI ended up on the losing side and finished the season at the bottom of the table. "All I try is to stay in a good mindset, in the right zone, keep practicing, and improve on all the flaws in my game. That's all I kept doing. "Our season didn't go according to plan. We blame ourselves for this because we made too many mistakes during the season. We lost many games that we should

have won, but that's the nature of the IPL. You get a few chances and when those chances come, you must grab them." **"70 PER CENT OF T20 WC PLAYERS HAD CLARITY":** The Indian skipper said they knew what their T20 World Cup-squad would be like and 70 per cent of the players had clarity about their roles going into the IPL. "We thought a lot about the team we ultimately selected for the World Cup. The spinners, seamers, batters, and keepers, we knew before the IPL who we would take to the World Cup. "The IPL performances for everyone can be up and down, so we didn't focus too much on that. We needed to see the performances of certain players, but it was important for us to give everyone the clarity they needed. "Everyone going into the IPL needed clarity of whether they would participate in the team and what their role would be so they could practice and play accordingly. All of these indicators we had shared with 70% of the team before the IPL." India begin their T20 World Cup campaign against Ireland in New York on June 5.

Rajasthan aim to snap losing streak, secure second spot

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Rajasthan Royals will be desperate to snap their four-match losing streak and finish in the top two when they meet table toppers Kolkata Knight Riders in an important IPL game here on Sunday. Having secured the playoff berth with 16 points, Royals have started floundering at the business end of the tournament losing four matches on the trot. Their batting flair has eluded them as they have not managed to cross the 150-mark in their last two matches, and with their star England opener Jos Buttler returning home for national duty, the Royals have big shoes to fill. Their top three batters Yashasvi Jaiswal, skipper Sanju Samson and local hero Riyan Parag will have to shoulder additional responsibilities if they are to snap the losing streak and head to the playoffs finishing in top-two, that will give them two cracks to reach the final. KKR (19 points), on the other

hand, have already assured themselves a table top position after a washout against Gujarat Titans in Ahmedabad in the previous round handed them one point. They will be high on confidence but at the same time they may have to guard against complacency. Since their win in the return leg clash against Mumbai Indians at Eden Gardens on May 11, KKR have not played any match with the washout in Ahmedabad. Travelling to Ahmedabad and then back home in Kolkata for a day's practice and again heading to Guwahati for the final league clash could be quite frustrating and break their rhythm of four-match winning streak. It remains to be seen if the Gautam Gambhir-mentored side manage to hold on to the winning momentum without appearing to be rusty. In between, they have lost their in-form opener Phil Salt, their second leading rungetter this season as the Englishman is back home for the series against Pakistan in the build up to T20 World Cup next month.



Salt and Narine, the two KKR openers, have scored 897 runs with seven fifties and one century between them at strike rate of 182-plus each. The duo's top form has been a key element in KKR's journey to their first playoffs since 2021. Rahmanullah Gurbaz will be a

like-for-like replacement for Salt but expecting him to make an impact like Salt straightway will be unrealistic. The Afghan wicketkeeper-batter, who played 11 matches in 2023, has not played any match this season and his last outing was way back on March 18 in a

T20I versus Ireland. As KKR will be keen to keep their rhythm intact, the onus will be on the likes of skipper Shreyas Iyer, finishing duo of Rinku Singh and Andre Russell to fire in unison. There is also some rain forecast as conditions are likely to be on the slower side

and in the last match between Rajasthan Royals and Punjab Kings the ball seemed to stop. **TEAMS (FROM):** **Kolkata Knight Riders:** Shreyas Iyer (c), KS Bharat (wk), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Rinku Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Sherfane Rutherford, Manish Pandey, Andre Russell, Nitish Rana, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Ramandeep Singh, Varun Chakravarthy, Sunil Narine, Vaibhav Arora, Chetan Sakariya, Harshit Rana, Suyash Sharma, Mitchell Starc, Dushmantha Chameera, Sakib Hussain, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Gus Atkinson and Allah Ghazanfar. **Rajasthan Royals:** Sanju Samson (c), Abid Mushtaq, Avesh Khan, Dhruv Jurel, Donovan Ferreira, Kuldeep Sen, Kunal Singh Rathore, Nandre Burger, Navdeep Saini, Ravichandran Ashwin, Riyan Parag, Sandeep Sharma, Shimron Hetmyer, Shubham Dubey, Rovman Powell, Tom Kohler-Cadmore, Trent Boult, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Yuzvendra Chahal, Tanush Kotian

Impact Player rule has disrupted balance of game: Virat Kohli

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Echoing India skipper Rohit Sharma's sentiments, star batter Virat Kohli has criticised the Impact Player substitution rule and said it is "disrupting the balance" of the game. "The mid-innings substitution rule, adopted in the previous edition of the IPL, has sparked a row with Rohit expressing his displeasure in a podcast last month. Now, Kohli has urged for a rethink of the rule. "I agree with Rohit. Entertainment is one aspect of the game but there is no balance," Kohli said on Jio Cinema. "I think it has disrupted the

balance and a lot of people are feeling this way, not just me," he said. Kohli in the podcast had said, "I'm not a big fan... It's going to hold back all-rounders. Cricket is played by 11, not 12 (players)." Punjab Kings set the record for the highest successful chase in T20 history when they overhauled Kolkata Knight Riders' 262 with eight balls to spare. Sunrisers Hyderabad also smashed the record for the highest-ever total in franchise cricket by posting 287/3 against Royal Challengers Bengaluru. This edition has witnessed eight 250-plus totals and Kohli



felt the bowlers' pain. "Bowlers are feeling like what they should do," Kohli said. "I have never experienced anything like it where bowlers think they will concede four or a six on every ball. "Not every team has a Bumrah (Jasprit) or the mystery of Rashid Khan," he said. "I am telling you, with one extra batter there is a reason I am playing with 200-plus strike rate in the powerplays. I know there is a batsman waiting at No. 8 as well. "We are playing a high level of cricket and it should not be that dominant in my opinion. There is a beauty about having an equal balance between bat

and ball," Kohli added. BCCI secretary Jay Shah has said that the Impact Player rule is a "test case", implemented to give two Indian players opportunity in a game. He has also indicated that they would talk to the stakeholders for using it in future editions of the IPL. "I am sure Jay (Shah) bhai has mentioned it already that they will review it and I am sure that they will come to a conclusion which brings the game into balance," said Kohli. "As a batsman, I can say this rule is good but the match should be exciting. Only fours and sixes are not exciting in cricket. Exciting is that you can defend 160 as well," Kohli said.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai Indians coach Mark Boucher really felt bad watching skipper Hardik Pandya face hostile reactions and boos from the fans throughout the disastrous IPL campaign and admitted that it did affect the star all-rounder, something that the management would need to address in coming days. Pandya, after two successful seasons as Gujarat Titans skipper was brought back as captain of Mumbai Indians, removing five-time champion skipper Rohit Sharma, a decision that didn't sit well with legion of fans. "It wasn't great hearing all the boos. I felt sorry for Hardik as well. It's never nice to have to go through something like that," Boucher said after MI lost their last league game to Lucknow Super Giants by 18 runs. "I do think that there are certain things that did affect individuals, which ultimately did affect the team," Boucher said after MI finished last for the second time in three years.

Felt sorry for Hardik, never nice to go through something like that: Boucher on boos

Boucher felt the underwhelming performances and outside pressure did cloud his judgement. "There's a lot of stuff going on around him that, maybe, clouded his thoughts every now and again, which is tough for him as a leader as well. He certainly had a lot of support within our dressing room as well and guys trying to help him out as well. But it's a tough thing to go through as a player," he said. Boucher said if any off-field issues are hampering the team, they require attention from management. "Those are the sort of things that, yes, we do need to sit down and address and hopefully make some good calls going forward, to address the off-field stuff that we can get it right on the field,"

he added. "Ultimately, this is a professional unit and players and staff and everyone alike gets judged about the performance that they put on the field. If there's stuff that's happening off the field which is hampering that, then we need to address it," he said. Boucher backed Pandya to continue as MI skipper even though he admitted a thorough review of the team's abysmal performance would be assessed but no emotional decisions must be taken. "I think so. As I said, we haven't had discussions. Everything's been about the cricket stuff at the moment. Going forward, I'm sure that he is the guy that the franchise would like to take forward. We'll wait and see. We'll have these conversations



at a later stage," he said. When asked if Boucher felt Mumbai Indians franchise should have handled the leadership change any differently, the South African agreed. "To be honest, I haven't really chatted to a lot of team

management about that decision," Boucher replied when asked if the captaincy change could have been handed differently. "Now is not probably the right time. Everyone is very disappointed and emotional, so no good decision will get

made in the nearest time, which is now in a week's time." "We need to evaluate exactly what's going on, things that we need improvement on, whether it be on the field or off the field stuff. We've got some great heads within the management team as well," Boucher said. "We'll sit down and we'll find a way on how to make it better, ultimately, for the players to come out and produce the sort of cricket that I think we know that these players can produce, which was under par this season," the head coach added. Boucher said Pandya did find form as a bowler but a lot was left to be desired as a batter. "If he was here (at the press conference), he'd also (say that he was) disappointed in his performance. From a captain

perspective, I thought he had some good games," he said. Boucher said Pandya would emerge as a stronger leader from this experience. Pandya was booed twice on Friday -- once he walked out to bat and once after he was dismissed. "A lot of the stuff that he's going through is, personally, maybe a little uncalled for. It'll certainly be a learning curve for Hardik as his growth in leadership. "While times are tough now, a couple of things will pass and it'll make him a tougher leader and it'll certainly grow him in the role as well," he said. Boucher said one of the reasons why Pandya failed as a batter was also due to the change in role from Gujarat Titans to Mumbai Indians. Pandya was 10th among MI batters with a mere 216 runs

from 14 matches at an average of 18 with no fifties. Boucher felt that Pandya has only been effective as finisher when someone else has fired for MI at the other end and mostly during successful years, it was Kieron Pollard. "When Hardik was playing for Mumbai Indians, he was a finisher. He was playing in that sort of role with Polly (Kieron Pollard). He then went to (Gujarat) Titans and he was batting in a completely different scenario," Boucher said. "He was batting up front. There were slight technical adjustments that he had to make to his game in order to face a newer ball and the different lengths when you're facing a new ball as well. "He made himself aware of that as well. Throughout the whole season, it was a work in progress trying to get him back to the new role that he was playing now, more as a finisher, batting in the back end of innings as well," Boucher said, adding that Pandya needed to rediscover his hitting power.

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"We are what our thoughts have made us; so take care about what you think. Words are secondary. Thoughts live; they travel far"
— Swami Vivekananda



The future of education in India isn't just about doing well academically, it's about empowering kids to follow their passions and create their own paths to success. And that journey is definitely worth talking about, ADITI SHARMA



CANVAS OF CHANGE

**TRANSFORMING
EDUCATION
WITH CREATIVITY**

When I was a child, for me the world was a blank canvas, ready to be filled with colors. Each brushstroke was like a step towards understanding everything around me. Art was just more than a hobby for me, it was a way of expressing myself and finding escape in midst of chaos. But as I grew older, societal expectations started weighing me down. My parents and teachers believed that success only came from excelling in traditional subjects like math and science, leaving no room for the creativity that fueled my soul. Elders often believe that stress and pressure are exclusively their burdens to bear, yet who acknowledges that even toddlers struggle to take their first steps and teenagers face immense pressure to prove their worth to the world. This is where schools step in, recognizing the importance of nurturing not just academic growth but also the social and emotional well-being of children. Through socio-emotive learning, students develop vital skills such as problem solving, effective communication, conflict management, and self-care. These abilities enable them to understand and manage their emotions, build supportive and cooperative communities, and ultimately help both themselves and others thrive. One particular innovation that has impressed me is the use of Emotion Charts in schools. These charts have pictures of faces showing different emotions such as sadness, anger, surprise, silliness, fear, excitement, and embarrassment. Children can use these charts to express how they feel each day. The efforts made by schools to incorporate emotional learning are not only effective but also incredibly beautiful! This new approach to education is producing adults who are better at handling stress, managing their emotions, and controlling themselves.

When I was in 3rd grade, my mother always stressed about my exams and expected me to score a perfect 20 out of 20. This pressure pushed me into an exhausting race for marks. I believe children should be exempted from exams during their primary years so they can enjoy a stress-free childhood and focus on developing their creativity and skills. The new education system has introduced a change many of us wished for as children, which is no exams until 3rd grade. This shift creates a less pressured environment, allowing children to learn at their own pace without worrying about marks or grades. By eliminating early testing, we can cultivate a love of learning in a calm, supportive atmosphere, free from the anxiety of exams. When my parents were in school, the main focus was on academics. When I was a student, we had academics as well as co-curricular activities and sports. But now, education has evolved even further. It includes subjects and activities like yoga, meditation, journal writing, and mindful coloring. This shift in education has had a significant positive impact on children. It has helped them in several ways with, aggression management, emotions regulation, making thoughtful decisions and better communication in relationships. Back in my teenage years, the school syllabus was synonymous with exams. Schools viewed exams as a method of assessment, but to me, they were more like photographs. Students needed to memorize information and reproduce it exactly in their answers. It felt as though we were being asked to take a screenshot of our textbooks and paste it directly onto our exam sheets. Traditionally, assessments focused purely on memory recall. However, today's educational landscape has evolved significantly. Modern assessments extend beyond paper and pencil, embracing practical, hands-on experiences and field experiments. These contemporary methods provide a more comprehensive evaluation of a student's understanding and skills, offering a richer, more meaningful approach to learning and assessment. Back in my 10th-grade days, I vividly remember yearning to choose subjects like English, Biology, and Fine Arts.

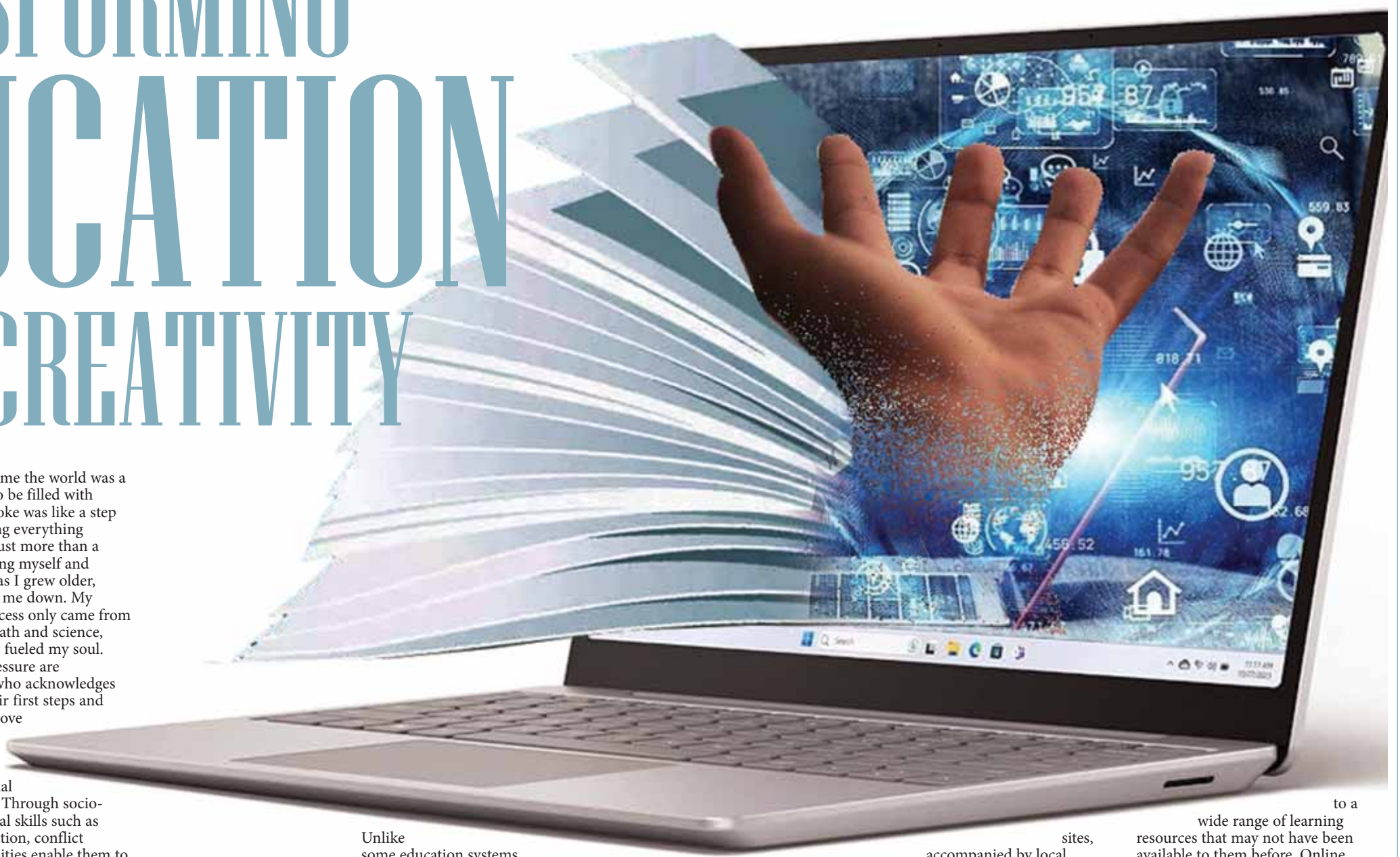
BOARDS! THE WORD ITSELF FEELS HEAVY WITH PRESSURE, EVEN THOUGH I NAVIGATED THEM LONG AGO. THE PRESSURE OF BOARD RESULTS WAS SUCH THAT, THOSE TIMES WERE SO STRESSFUL THAT EVEN A PEACEFUL BREATH FELT IMPOSSIBLE, AND MY ANXIETY WAS AT ITS PEAK

Unlike some education systems abroad, Indian education didn't grant us the freedom to pick our own set of subjects. But now, with the advent of the new education policy, the landscape has undergone a dramatic transformation. It's surreal to think that students today have the liberty to tailor their education according to their interests and passions. Imagine a science student delving into the world of music or arts and it's truly an evolution! When I chose humanities, people often asked me what my future profession would be and if I could earn well with it. The rise in humanities enrollments has validated the importance of creative and critical thinking skills, fostering an environment that values artistic expression and cultural understanding. BOARDS! The word itself feels heavy with pressure, even though I navigated them long ago. The pressure of board results was such that, those times were so stressful that even a peaceful breath felt impossible, and my anxiety was at its peak. My parents often reminisced about facing board exams in 5th and 8th grades, but as a child of the 2000s, I thankfully escaped that additional stress. For me, board exams were a daunting once-a-year event in 10th and 12th grades. It was a struggle to cover entire textbooks, and while I managed above-average marks, the pressure was intense. However, the upcoming change to split exams into two sessions seems promising. This approach will distribute the workload more evenly, reduce stress and give students more time to prepare for the next session. This division will allow timely feedback on performance, identifying areas for improvement and providing support before the next session, ultimately enhancing student learning and performance. My personal favourite change that has ever been happened in the

Indian education system has been the thoughtful replacement of the word "fail" with "essential repeat" and "back" with "supplementary." This shift was crucial, as the harsh terms "fail" and "back" often demotivate students and heighten the fear of judgment. The new supportive terminology boosts self-esteem and encourages students to persevere, fostering a more positive and resilient mindset. Cross culture learning is also a major revolution which is crucial as it fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures, promoting empathy, respect, and global awareness among students. This inclusive approach not only enriches students' educational experiences but also equips them with the social and emotional skills necessary to navigate and contribute positively to a multicultural society. One of such is National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). NIOS offers flexible learning opportunities to students from diverse cultural backgrounds, including those from rural areas, tribal communities, and marginalized groups. Through its inclusive curriculum and open learning approach, NIOS promotes cross-cultural understanding by catering to the needs and realities of various communities across the country. In cultural exchange programs at my school not only exposed me to diverse perspectives but also highlighted the varied approaches to education around the world. Witnessing how children from different international cultures learn and left a profound impact, opens eyes to new possibilities in learning. My school had students from France and they spent a week immersed in the school's community. They also had the opportunity to explore Delhi's landmarks, museums, and cultural

sites, accompanied by local students who act as guides and ambassadors. In return, they organized reciprocal visits, sending groups of students to partner schools abroad to experience different culture. It is an enlightening experience that underscored the importance of fostering international and global understanding through education, revealing that cultural exchange is not just a leisure activity but an essential aspect of comprehensive learning. With years these programmes have lifted students with gain of first-hand exposure to diverse perspectives, traditions, and ways of life. This experience not only broadens their worldview but also cultivates tolerance, appreciation for diversity, and intercultural communication skills. In the past, they often overlooked the importance of sports and physical education, especially during the crucial 11th and 12th grades. Previously, schools often overlooked this aspect of holistic development. However, there has been a shift in perspective, with educational institutions now recognizing the importance of nurturing not only academic excellence but also mental and emotional well-being through sports and physical activities. Speaking of mental health, it's heartening to see prestigious institutions like IITs and IIMs taking proactive steps to address the issue of student suicides. Programs focused on mental wellness and weekly counselling sessions are now becoming the norm, with institutions like IIT Guwahati leading the way. Well on discussing mental health, pandemic has affected our minds and changed the way we view things around us. Were you a quarantine student too? Well I was. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Ed-Tech was the only way we could learn. With the introduction of EdTech, students now have access

to a wide range of learning resources that may not have been available to them before. Online platforms offer educational materials such as e-books, videos, and interactive tutorials, making it easier for students to explore different subjects at their own pace. Who would have imagined that tools like ChatGPT could handle assignments, develop content, and become indispensable aids? AI, VR, and AR have transformed education, especially in the arts, by creating exciting opportunities for creative expression and discovery. AI personalizes learning and provides intelligent creative tools, VR immerses students in virtual environments for hands-on artistic experiences, and AR overlays digital information onto the real world for enhanced visualization. Together, these technologies make art education more engaging, interactive, and innovative, fostering deeper creativity and understanding among students. **The education system is changing, and it's not just about academic freedom. It's also about unlocking creativity and supporting overall growth.** As someone who truly believes in the power of art, I'm excited to see more recognition of artistic and creative careers. It's no longer just about commerce and science. With the increasing popularity of vocational courses in fields like culinary arts, design, and interior decoration, India is on track to become a center of creativity and innovation. My passion for improving education comes from wanting to see every child bloom with their innovative and extraordinary minds. I wish to advocate for a system that not only keeps up with the times but also nurtures each person's unique talents and dreams. **The future of education in India isn't just about doing well academically, it's about empowering kids to follow their passions, express themselves freely, and create their own paths to success. And that journey is definitely worth talking about.**





TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF PRINTMAKING

An exhibition showcasing the past five decades of printmaking through the works of works of five acclaimed artists, highlights the profound impact and continued relevance of the medium in today's art world, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

The art world is a vast canvas, painted with vibrant strokes of creativity and innovation. Within this canvas, printmaking stands as a unique art form offering artists a medium to express their thoughts, emotions and perspectives in a distinct and appealing manner. Unlike painting or sculpture, where the final image is visible throughout the creative process, printmaking is a journey of revelation. The true image remains unseen until the very last stages adding an element of anticipation and surprise that makes printmaking so captivating.

The exhibition, *Rupantar Panch Dashak: Five Decades of Printmaking*, delves into this alluring world of inked narratives. The preview of the exhibition was held at the Visual Art Gallery. Curated by Alka Pande, this exhibition is not merely a showcase of exquisite artwork; it is a celebration of printmaking's enduring legacy and its transformative power. Organised by Members of Multiple Encounters, the exhibition brings together the talents of five renowned printmakers: Anandamoy Banerjee, Kavita Nayar, Moti Zharotia, Dattatreya Apte, and Sushanta Guha. Each artist, a master in his or her own right, explores the art of printmaking as a tool of personal expression, transforming the medium into a canvas for their unique visions. The show promises to be a celebration of exceptional talent, presenting various printmaking styles and expressions.

The exhibition's title, 'Rupantar', perfectly encapsulates the essence of printmaking signifying the transformative journey of an artist's work over five decades, highlighting the evolution and innovation inherent in their creations. Beyond the individual narratives, 'Rupantar' also offers a glimpse into the broader landscape of printmaking in India, showcasing its diversity, depth, and enduring relevance in the contemporary art scene.

Anandamoy Banerjee, a recipient of prestigious awards like the AIFACS annual

best exhibition award, views printmaking as a reflection of his life experiences, dreams and artistic journey. His work, a blend of drawing, painting, prints and experimental pieces tells a story with each creation. Abstract and introspective, his works often present a colourful combination of human forms intertwined with abstraction.

Dattatreya Apte, a founding member of the Indian Printmakers Guild draws inspiration from the world around him, the "reflections" and "impressions" that linger on surfaces. His prints whether painted, printed or physically cast, are a testament to his fascination with the art form's complex nature. Each piece showcases the evolution of his concept from an idea to the final artwork.

Kavita Nayar's art reflects a deep personal journey, likened to the process of giving birth. Her focus on nature, particularly flowers symbolises life's cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. Nayar's prints span five decades with works in oil pastels on paper and board. She also creates an installation with prints showcasing her diverse artistic expression.

Moti Zharotia, an artist with a visionary approach, uses printmaking to delve into the essence of life. His silkscreen prints beautifully blend masculine and feminine energies, as seen in his theme *Purusha & Prakriti*. In his wider collection, 'Impressions on Impression', Zharotia symbolises the harmonious interplay of life's core forces. His work not only showcases the harmony between humans and nature but also highlights their interconnectedness creating a profound sense of balance and unity.

Sushanta Guha, known for his socially conscious art uses printmaking as a tool to address pressing issues affecting humanity. His work vividly contrasts the rapid urbanisation seen in modern development with the simultaneous decline of human values, leading to increased individual suffering and identity crises. Through his impactful woodblock prints and



lithographs, Guha urges viewers to contemplate the complexities of the contemporary world. His art serves as a poignant reflection of societal challenges particularly highlighting issues like violence and religious extremism.

Alka Pande, the curator, describes *Rupantar* as an enlightening experience. Witnessing the development and transformation in the artist's practices over five decades offers invaluable insights for aspiring artists. Beyond showcasing finished works the exhibition sheds light on the "art of making" itself from the technical aspects of printmaking to the final artistic expression. *Rupantar* also bridges the gap between traditional printmaking and contemporary artistic practices. It

highlights how younger artists who may not specialise solely in printmaking, incorporate various printmaking styles into their mixed media creations.

The art world is a diverse and dynamic realm offering a medium through which artists can express their creativity. Among these, printmaking stands out as a unique and fascinating art form with a rich history and enduring appeal. Printmaking is the art of creating images by transferring them from a matrix or plate onto paper or another surface. This process allows for the production of multiple copies of an artwork making it an accessible and versatile medium for artists to explore and experiment with.

Ultimately, *Rupantar Panch Dashak: Five Decades of Printmaking*, is a multifaceted celebration. It celebrates the artistry and dedication of five master printmakers while also elevating the art form itself. It highlights the intricate techniques and rich history of printmaking while acknowledging its contemporary relevance. *Rupantar* invites viewers to delve deeper into the world of art and appreciate the story's work into every mark on the paper. This exhibition serves as a powerful reminder that printmaking is not merely a means of reproducing images; it's a dynamic and versatile art form capable of sparking introspection, igniting social commentary and revealing the intricate beauty of the artistic process itself.

The exhibition leaves behind a legacy of artistic excellence and imaginative exploration. It is not only a celebration of the talent but also highlights the importance of printmaking in the art world. It has shown us that printmaking is not just a technique; it is a form of expression that can convey deep emotions, tell compelling stories and provoke thought and reflection. Let us recognise the significance of printmaking in preserving cultural heritage, promoting artistic innovation and enriching our lives with beauty and meaning.

Laapataa Ladies Shines Bright

This Kiran Rao directed film is a must-watch for its engaging storyline, brilliant performances, and important social message, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Laapataa Ladies, is a perfect blend of humour, social commentary and a heartwarming storytelling. Marking Kiran Rao's return to the director's chair after several years, the film is a delightful surprise that resonates with the audiences. The original story by Biplab Goswami, screenplay and dialogues by Sneha Desai, along with additional dialogues by Divyanshi Sharma contribute to the film's cohesive and engaging narrative.

The film boasts a talented cast with Pratibha Ranta (Jaya), Nitanshi Goel (Phool Kumari), Sparsh Shrivastav (Deepak Kumar), Satendra Soni (Chhotu) and Chhaya Kadam (Manju Maai) along with the charismatic Ravi Kishan (Shyam Manohar). Each actor delivers a stellar performance, bringing their characters to life with finesse and authenticity.

The story unfolds with two young brides, Phool Kumari and Jaya, accidentally swapped during a train journey due to a veiled misunderstanding. As Phool's helpless husband, Deepak Kumar seeks help from a cop Shyam Manohar, a point when the journey of the perfect story begins.



Kiran Rao's storytelling is exceptional, seamlessly weaving together elements of amusement, emotion and social commentary. The film's storyline is compelling, offering a message about the importance of women's empowerment and identity in society. Rao adeptly employs humour and the motif of veiled identity (*ghunghat*) to illuminate the pervasive influence of patriarchy within society. The dialogue is witty and the humorous scenes are executed with finesse, keeping the audience entertained throughout.

One of the film's standout aspects is its emphasis on the importance of self-realisation and self-identity. Through the character's journeys, the audience is reminded that true happiness comes from within and that women are their own heroines. The film delivers this message with subtlety and grace, making it relatable to a wide audience.

The performances in *Laapataa Ladies* are superb, with Ravi Kishan stealing the show with his impeccable comic timing. His portrayal of Shyam Manohar adds depth to the film with his acting leaving a lasting impression. Chhaya Kadam's portrayal of Manju Maai is undeniably impressive. She delivers her dialogues with a powerful mix of conviction, truth and humour. Particularly noteworthy is her line, "A man who loves you has the right to hit you and one day I exercised my

right as well." This powerful statement serves as a slap in the face of patriarchal norms, forcing viewers to confront the harsh reality of domestic violence disguised as love. Manju Maai doesn't stop there. Her wisdom shines through another impactful line: "Being happy on your own is the toughest thing, Phool, but once you've mastered it, no one can bother you." This resonates deeply, highlighting the importance of self-respect and the empowering freedom found in self-sufficiency.

Pratibha Ranta and Nitanshi Goel shine in their roles, bringing depth and authenticity to their characters. Their fresh faces coupled with immense talent create magic on screen. Even actors with smaller screen time such as Satendra Soni as Chhotu, Durgesh Kumar as Dubeyji or Rachna Gupta as Deepak's sister-in-law deliver impactful performances showcasing the depth and richness of the film's ensemble cast.

The film explores themes of identity, self-discovery and empowerment. It highlights the strength and resilience of women showcasing how they navigate through societal expectations and find their voice in a male-dominated world.

Laapataa Ladies is a must-watch for its engaging storyline, brilliant performances, and important social message. Kiran Rao has once again proved her directorial prowess, creating a film that is both entertaining and thought-provoking. While viewers need to exercise patience as the film unfolds at a somewhat slow pace, this deliberate pacing contributes to the movie's beauty and its ability to make a significant impact on the audience. Despite its leisurely pace, the film's narrative depth and emotional resonance make it a worthwhile and memorable cinematic experience.

Brett Lee bats for Australian Avocados

BY GYANESHWAR DAYAL

Avocados Australia recently launched in the Indian market with Cricket Legend Brett Lee as its brand ambassador. Soon Australian avocados would be available in India. The Australian exporters are upbeat about the Indian market as they feel it is the place where they would have first mover advantage and would be able to appeal to Indian consumers with their superior quality. Avocados are to the West what mangoes are to Indians. Avocados, often hailed as a superfood, are not just delicious but also incredibly nutritious. Native to Central America, these green fruits are packed with healthy fats, fibre, vitamins, and minerals. They're particularly rich in monounsaturated fats, which are beneficial for heart health. Avocados are incredibly versatile and can be enjoyed in various forms: sliced on toast, mashed into guacamole, blended into smoothies, or even used as a substitute for butter in baking. In fact, Brett Lee was seen making a few of avocado recipes by himself. As he put it "for an athlete nothing better than having avocados for energy and



nutrition, just slice it and with a dash of lemon and salt and you have an excellent healthy snack." Their creamy texture adds depth to dishes while providing a host of health benefits. Beyond their nutritional value, avocados are also environmentally friendly. They require less water to grow compared to other fruits and can thrive in diverse climates. Avocados Australia Limited, representing the Australian avocado industry, has officially entered the Indian market, unveiling cricket icon Brett Lee as their brand ambassador. This collaboration signals a significant milestone for both Australian avocados and the burgeoning Indian fresh fruit market. Renowned for their

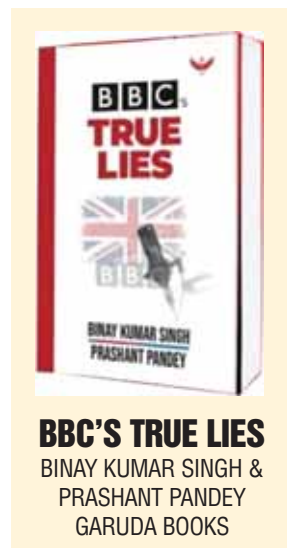
superior quality and health benefits, Australian avocados promise to tantalise Indian taste buds with a fusion of flavour, texture, and nutrition. With Brett Lee lending his endorsement, this launch aims to introduce a premium and healthy option to Indian households, advocating for the incorporation of avocados into daily meals and snacks. The avocado market in India is experiencing a notable uptick, mirroring a global trend of increased demand over the past decade. Avocados are hailed as a nutritious addition to all diets, particularly suiting vegetarian preferences. Australia's avocado industry is also on the rise, with production forecasted to surge from over 115,385 tonnes in 2022-23 to approximately 170,000 tonnes by 2026. Aligned with this growth trajectory, Australian growers are actively pursuing new overseas markets, including India, with increased exports crucial for the industry's long-term sustainability. So the next time you're craving something tasty and nutritious, consider reaching for an avocado - it's not just a delicious fruit but also a powerhouse of nutrients!

The real face of BBC's news coverage

BBC's True Lies is a signboard cautioning the common man about the dangerous acts perpetrated by the British Government owned media network, writes **KUMAR CHELLPPAN.**

There are enough laws in the Indian Penal Code to punish those involved in impersonation and cheating. Reports about fake physicians, engineers and lawyers getting caught and sent to prison are routine affairs in India. There are rules in the statute books to punish those engaged in food adulteration and marketing. There was an incident involving the Chennai Police arresting a Class VIII dropout by the name 'Professor Ravi Kumar Reddy' in 2015 who has been teaching advanced power systems at Saveetha College of Engineering for nearly three years. His colleagues and students never got a chance to doubt his credibility till one of the professors came across the real Prof Ravi Reddy who had been teaching at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. The Chennai 'Professor' turned out to be Ashok Kumar Choudhury from Guntur who was blessed with a photographic memory. We have legislations and provisions in the IPC to book such impersonators. Unfortunately, we do not have laws to prosecute fake journalists, the driving force behind media which is being flouted as the Fourth Estate of democracy. As on date most of the media and journalists act as propagandists while the line demarcating news and views have almost disappeared. There was a time when the English-speaking population

of Chennai woke up to their bed *Kaappee* and the morning newspaper which was known by the name *Mount Road Mahavishnu*. Not anymore. The moment readers understood that this *Mahavishnu* is feeding them fake and distorted news, they dumped the daily once and for ever. But the paper still survives because the minority community and Marxists believe only what is published in this newspaper. The story of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC World) is no different. The media house launched to disseminate to the world His Majesty's Voice (HMV) and counter the media blitzkrieg by Germany during the Second World War has degenerated into a fake news manufacturing plant. The last few decades of BBC's coverage of Asia and Africa speak volumes about its real intentions. The BBC is no more disseminating truths but specialises in spreading falsehood. There is a phrase which we regularly use; '*Suppressio Veri, Suggestio Falsi*' which means that suppression of truth is equivalent to suggestion of what is false. One need not elaborate on this as the term is self-explanatory. It may have a lot to do with the kind of statecraft and diplomacy being followed by the BBC. Author Binay Kumar Singh and columnist and Prashant Pandey, a seasoned journalist,



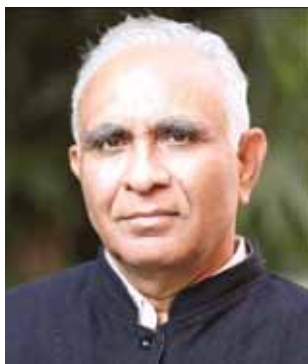
have come out with BBC's True Lies, a book which deals with the purpose for which the radio channel was launched, and its modus operandi. While in college, our teachers used to tell us to listen to BBC Radio news so that it would help us improve our English pronunciation. But I found the All India Radio's English news bulletins immortalised by the legendary Surjit Sen, always stand out. The day I started listening to the bulletins aired by the BBC, I could make out the distinct discrimination the channel had towards India. For the BBC editors, India was an uncivilized country of people believing in superstition and sorcery.

Although the Government of Britain claimed that they do not have any prejudice against India, the reality is quite the opposite. The authors explain how the BBC portrayed India taking over Goa as an armed attack on Portugal, a blatant case of misinterpretation of facts by the news channel. During 2023, student unions in Kerala were vying with each other in exhibiting the documentary film on Gujarat produced and aired by the BBC. The SFI students who always shunned the BJP were in the forefront of this campaign and made arrangements in campuses so that the gullible students could be fooled. Most of the viewers who sat throughout the documentary were in the dark about the facts that led to the riots. They were also ignorant about the Supreme Court verdict or the findings of the Special Investigation Team that interrogated Narendra Modi, the then chief minister of Gujarat for 19 hours. The BBC was rehashing and churning out charges levelled against Modi by TV journalists who had personal scores to settle with him. The most important thing to be borne in mind is that for the BBC, *jihadis* become terrorists only when they hurt British interests. All other *jihadis* are mere gunmen or liberators fighting against countries which Britain does not like. During the Cold War, Britain and the US had similar

criteria in identifying heads of nations. Those heading Communist/socialist/dictatorial regimes opposed to the then Soviet Union were friends of the US and UK. The best example was General Zia-ul-Haq, the Pakistani despot who perpetrated terrorist acts against India. There were many Latin American heads of nations for whom democracy was an alien word and who always were considered as friends of US and UK. The real face of BBC's news coverage came out in the open during the last 1970s when OP Tyagi introduced in Parliament a legislation named the Freedom of Religion Bill. The BBC started sounding alarm bells in its bulletins claiming that all religions other than Hinduism were in danger in India! Of late, there were allegations from various Hindutva forces that BBC was into religious conversion in a big way. It is for the BBC to prove that their hands are clean. Authors Binay Kumar and Prashant need to be appreciated for bringing out this book packed with explosive information. Since public memory is short, they are likely to forget what the media airs/publishes once they listen or read the contents. *BBC's True Lies* is a signboard cautioning the common man about the dangerous acts perpetrated by the British Government owned media network.

THE ENIGMATIC WORLD OF LEOPARDS

Leopards are the only large cat species with a widespread presence across the country, its conservation status and population dynamics serve as a barometer for the health of India's ecosystems



H S SINGH

The Indian leopard (*Panthera pardus fusca*), a sub-species of leopard out of nine sub-species of leopard in the world, is found throughout India from Jammu & Kashmir in the North-West Himalayas to Cape Comorin in the south and, from the Gir forest (Saurashtra) and thorn forest in the arid zone (Kachchh) in the extreme west to the moist forest of Myanmar in the east. Although the majority of them, about 95 per cent are confined to India, its small populations, about 5%, are also found in Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, east of the Indus River in Pakistan and a small area of southern China adjoining Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar. Out of eight subspecies of leopards in Asia, except the Indian leopard, none of the other subspecies of leopards in Asia, have a population above a thousand, and few of them such as the Amur leopard, and Arabian leopards are Critically Endangered. Only two sub-species, the African leopard and the Indian leopard still have viable populations and distribution ranges.

POPULATION STATUS

Hunting records and British Gazetteers reveal that India had a large population of leopards before the Second World War. It is stated in the publications that about 150,000 leopards were hunted during a span of 50 years (1875-1925). Perhaps, the leopard population was in the range of nearly one lakh hundred years ago. The population drastically declined and reached to lowest level in the 1960s when about 6000 to 7000 individual leopards were estimated in the Indian jungle by the famous naturalist E P Gee (1964).

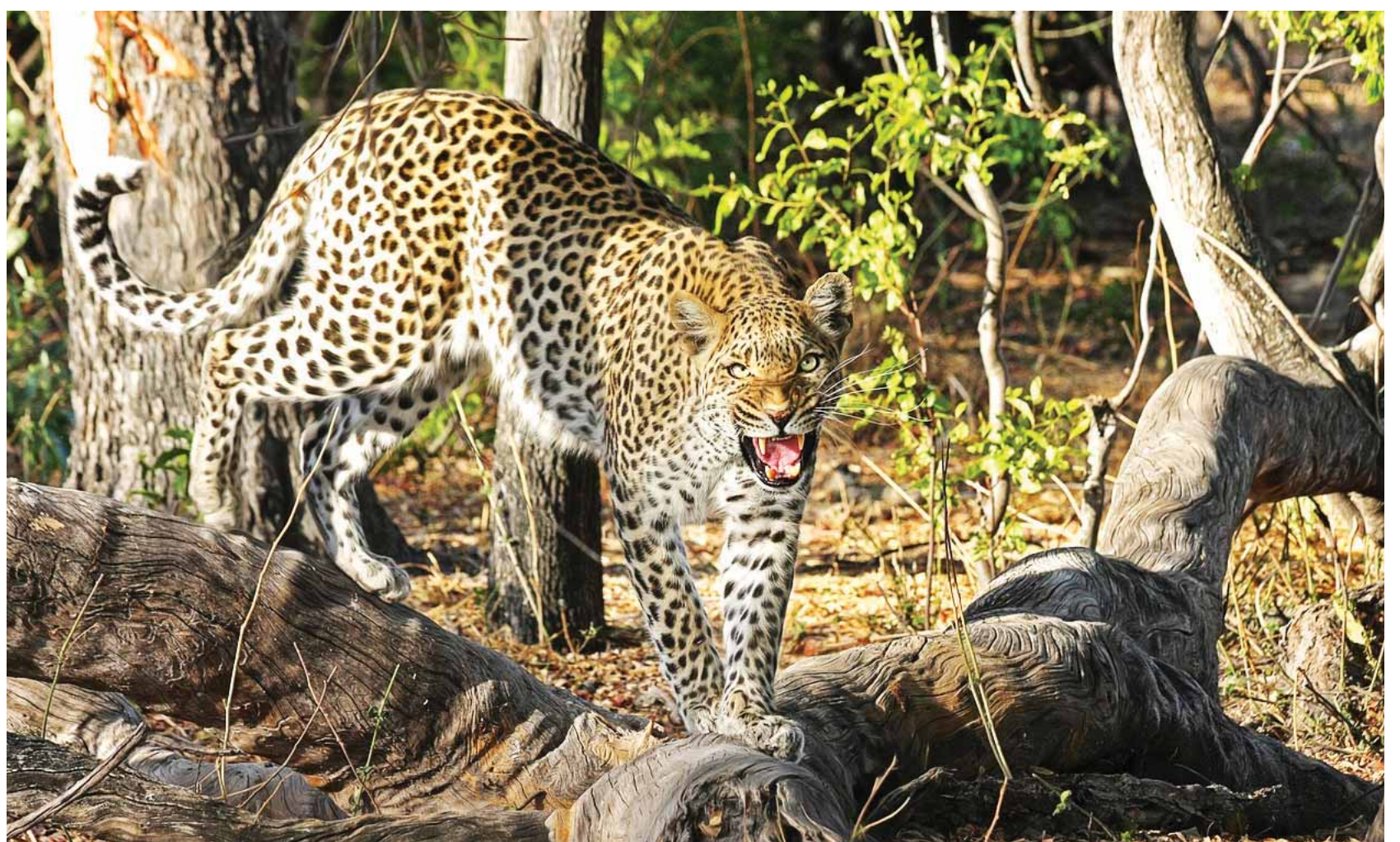
Protection and conservation measures by creating a network of Protected Areas and enacting laws have contributed to the leopard's recovery but the scale of poaching two decades ago slowed the recovery rate. When the scale of poaching declined, the population consistently increased in all leopard habitats, except Naxalite-affected states such as Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Telangana, Odisha and part of Maharashtra, and states in the North East of India. As per the report on the Status of the Leopard in India (2022), the overall leopard population in the tiger range landscape in 18 states of India was estimated at 13,870 subadult and adult leopards. In the tiger states also, the leopard-dominated area in Uttarakhand, major parts of North-East India and some other minor leopard habitats in those states were not covered in the survey. The Indian leopard occurs in 30 states and Union Territories whereas the population estimate in 2022 was only for major parts of 18 states.

Thus, the population declared in the leopard's report is only for two-thirds of the leopard distribution range, not for the entire India. Using data, as mentioned in the status report of leopard for leopard population in India by media and scientific communities is not correct. Major leopard states such as Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Haryana and major parts of Uttarakhand and North-East states are not covered in this report.

After accounting for all habitats, the leopard population was over 8,650 in the Central India Landscape covering eight states. The second major population block supporting over 4,600 leopards in northern India: the Himalayas-Shivalik (Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal, Uttarakhand, terai belt of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and the northern plains). The third major population block supporting about 3,600 leopards is the Western Ghats (Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala).

The North-East and Brahmaputra plains have extensive forests but moderate to poor wildlife, including the Indian leopard and a total number of smart cats may be in the range of about 1,000-1,100 leopards. Gujarat Forest Department counted 2,274 leopards in the state in 2023. Arid and semi-arid zones comprising Haryana, Punjab, Gujarat State, Dadara-Nagar Haveli and the Western Aravallis in Rajasthan support about 2,500-2,600 leopards.

Additionally, leopards are also found in small patches of forests, tea gardens, sugarcane fields, ravine areas and other such lands that are not surveyed.



Man-eater leopards

Stories of man-eating leopards and shunting of innocent ones in search of punishing the culprit have been repeated over centuries. During Jim Corbett's time also, hunters killed several innocent leopards while targeting a man-eater. Like criminals in human society, the man-eating leopard always harmed innocent leopards. When two man-eaters killed one and a half dozen people in Dhanpur taluka in Dahod district in Gujarat in 2003, the authority punished innocent leopards by eliminating 14 of them from the area. When three children were killed between Talala and Veraval in Junagadh in February 2003, a total of 11 leopards were punished by removing them from the wild.

When one or two leopards killed five people in Mandavi taluka in Surat districts in the post-monsoon and early winter in 2010, the situation compelled the Forest Department to engage several trap cages in the area. While hunting and trapping the man-eater, about two dozen leopards, including cubs were eliminated from the six villages in three months. When a leopard killed five people in Veraval in Junagadh in March 2012, a total of nine leopards were trapped and removed from the area. Similarly, when a leopard killed eight people in Visavadar and the surrounding area, about one and a half dozen leopards were captured and removed from the area in the year 2019. When leopards caused the death of human beings in the sugarcane belt in the fringe of Gir forests, over two dozen leopards were caged in 2023.

The situation in Uttarakhand was not different. There were cases when people retaliated and eliminated a large number of leopards in Uttarakhand, unnoticed by the department when the leopards killed human beings. When people were killed in Borivali National Park near Mumbai by one or two man-eaters, a total of 37 leopards were removed from the park in three years. In Ahmednagar division in Maharashtra, a total of 57 leopards were captured during 2001-05

RANGE OF LEOPARD'S HABITAT

The occupancy area of leopards in the forests is over 320,000 sq. km. Leopards also occupy sugar-cane fields, tea gardens and other such vegetation cover. About one-fourth of the leopard's habitat overlaps with habitats of super cats - tiger and lion where leopards manage to survive under the persecution of the

supreme cats. Seven states - Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh support about two-thirds of the total leopard population. These states are rich in livestock, especially sheep, goats and dogs. As per the Forest Survey of India Report (2021), the extent of forest cover is 713,790 sq.

km. in India. Of this, 684,000 sq. km. is in the states and Union Territories which support leopards. One-third of the forest cover in the leopard's states may not be suitable for leopards. Thus, potential leopard habitats may range over 450,000 sq. km. of forest cover to accommodate the growing population in the present occupancy areas of the leopards. How many leopards or tigers or Asiatic lions can be managed in the Indian forests is a million-dollar question. The big cats are on the path of recovery (about 700 lions, 3,680 tigers and over 20,600 leopards at present) in India but the dispersing big cats do not find proper habitats due to their fragmentations and absence of prey base. There is scope to accommodate the growing population of leopards in the forests which are devoid of leopards and wild ungulates, if herbivores are restocked by taking up long-term habitat restoration works.

HUMAN-LEOPARD CONFLICTS

Only about 35 per cent of the leopard population is found within national parks and wildlife sanctuaries and the rest were counted beyond the Protected Areas' boundaries. Leopards are also found in good numbers in extended habitats such as sugarcane fields, tea gardens, ravines, Prosopis thickets and other such non-forest areas. There are about three dozen Protected Areas or sites in the country where leopard density is high, over 10 adult and subadult leopards per 100 sq. km. and a few of them have very high concentrations, about 20 leopards or more per 100 sq. km. Dhanpur forests in Dahod district, Jambughoda forest in Godhra, sugar-cane belt in Mandvi taluka in Surat, some fringe areas around the forests of Gir and Girnar in Gujarat; Sanjay Gandhi National Park near Mumbai, some sites in the districts of Nashik, Ahmednagar and Gunnar in Maharashtra; Rajaji National Park, some areas in Pauri Garhwal, Teri Garhwal and Almora districts in Uttarakhand; Katarnighat forests in Uttar Pradesh and Kuno and Panna National Park in Madhya Pradesh, Sariska Tiger Reserve and a forest block adjoining Jaipur in Rajasthan; the Western Dooars in West Bengal and some open forest mosaics of central Karnataka have such high leopard concentration and human-leopard conflicts. Population management in the conflict areas is one of the key management strategies to avoid human casualties and, if it is not done, public unrest may start in a big way against conservation. High leopard density normally results in the depletion of prey and frequent leopard attacks in the villages, leading to the eruption of anger and public agitation. Since the leopard population has doubled in India during the last two and half decades and it is now no longer Endangered or Vulnerable, there should

not be any hesitation to remove problem animals from such areas, if the attack on human beings persists. In no case, density should be allowed to exceed 25 adult leopards per 100 sq. km., as serious conflict is unavoidable in such high-concentration sites.

The human death rate in India due to leopard attacks was 400-410 people/year during the first decade of the 20th century (The Indian Forester Jan 1907). It declined drastically after the Independence of the country. Annually, about 95 to 100 human beings were killed by leopards during the first decade of the 21st century. Subsequently, human casualties increased consistently during the last decade due to the leopard's recovery and its dispersion in new areas, including villages and towns. In Uttarakhand, 565 human - beings were killed at an average rate of 22 human deaths/year by leopards since the creation of the state.

During the last few years, the average human death rate was 18 human deaths/year in Maharashtra. Annual death rate was 13 human deaths/year in Gujarat during the last five years. The scale of human deaths in Madhya Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, West Bengal, Himachal, Uttar Pradesh, Assam and Karnataka is also close to the same range. Thus, annually, over a hundred people are killed and thousands injured by leopard attacks. If population management policy is not placed into operation, the human death rate due to leopard attacks may reach to the level that prevailed a hundred years ago. Since human-leopard conflicts are scaling up with the increase of the leopard population in many states, the management of dispersing leopards in villages and cities and increasing human-leopard conflicts are major management challenges.

The frequency of occurrence of leopard attacks on humans over a specific period should be mapped for the identification of conflict hot spots. The management should establish a Rapid Response Task Team with equipment and infrastructure to attend to cases without delay. A Rapid Response Team with the necessary equipment should be placed into operation in high man-leopard conflict sites. Tranquilizer gun, flashlights (to each member); first-aid Kits (one large kit to each team); mobile phones (to each member); reflector jackets (to each member) baffle shields and batons (to each member); public announcement system (one to each team); pamphlets and posters on 'Do's and Don'ts During Conflict Situations' (one set to each team) along with equipment as mentioned for RRT should be provided. Police Force should be integrated with the Task Force in high-conflict situations. (Dr H S Singh is a Member of the National Board for Wild Life, Gandhinagar; views are personal)





YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

Friends or relatives seeking financial assistance for personal events or needs. Given your current stability, you're well-placed to offer support, whether it be emotional or financial. Additionally, consider engaging in some charitable activities. As the week progresses, be wary of getting caught up in unrealistic dreams and desires. While it's natural to aspire for a luxurious life filled with fine dining, elegant apparel, and leisure, it's crucial to maintain clarity in your ambitions. Shifting goals too frequently can lead to confusion and a loss of true joy. Stay grounded and make firm decisions about what you truly want in life. With a realistic approach, you're more likely to achieve a sense of fulfillment. Embrace a positive outlook, as it will naturally attract good fortune, enhancing your overall well-being and prosperity.

Lucky number 7 | Lucky colour Turquoise
Lucky day Wednesday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

You have a natural inclination to lead and influence, often insisting on your own way of doing things. Your meticulous nature shines through in all your endeavors, and you infuse your surroundings with dynamism and responsiveness. Be aware, however, that an excess of intensity can sometimes lead to isolation or disputes, making interactions with colleagues and peers challenging. Situations may arise where differences in opinion could escalate into more serious disagreements. Channeling your robust energy into positive, constructive activities could be beneficial. You are endowed with a strong position and considerable influence, reflecting your hard-earned status. Despite your competitive spirit, fostering a more cooperative atmosphere could enhance your achievements even further. Remember, balancing your assertiveness can help preserve and build upon the successes you've worked so hard to achieve.

Lucky number 4 | Lucky colour Indigo
Lucky day Friday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

This week may bring some challenges to your health, possibly requiring a short period of medical attention. Despite this, it's a time rich with support and love from your partner, who will be by your side, offering care and comfort. Embrace this opportunity to deepen your spiritual connections; engaging in meditative practices can provide strength and restore balance. Allow yourself to lean into faith, embracing a path filled with love and compassion towards others. Family ties will strengthen as you find yourself sharing more with your partner. It's a perfect time for introspection and spiritual renewal. As the week progresses, you may find yourself drawn to peaceful retreats, which will aid in your recuperation. By week's end, expect to regain your usual pace, feeling refreshed and centered.

Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour Maroon
Lucky day Thursday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

This week, you may find yourself in a position of influence and responsibility, leveraging your strong communication skills and leadership qualities. Your ability to empathize with others enhances your reputation as a dependable leader in your professional environment. However, be aware that not everyone may appreciate your approach. Some individuals could feel threatened by your success and might attempt to undermine your efforts. It's possible that achievements you've been aiming for, such as approvals or successful interviews, could unexpectedly benefit someone else due to underhanded tactics from competitors. As the week progresses, the weight of responsibilities may leave you feeling exhausted. It's crucial to consider the benefits of sharing tasks. By delegating, you can ensure a smoother workflow and prevent burnout, making your efforts more productive and less stressful.

Lucky number 9 | Lucky colour Magenta
Lucky day Sunday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week ushers in a period of abundance and emotional satisfaction, with financial gains enhancing your sense of security and triumph. Enjoyment comes through entertainment and luxuries, enriching your family life and fulfilling personal desires. As the week advances, you may seek deeper emotional connections, possibly leading to significant romantic gestures. Mid-week, however, could bring a wave of uncertainty, with feelings of instability and a notable chill in personal interactions. By week's end, you'll find it necessary to adapt and reassess your beliefs. This reflective period emphasizes the importance of evolving with the times, encouraging you to adjust your lifestyle and mindset. Embrace these changes to confidently face upcoming challenges, recognizing that sticking to outdated norms may no longer serve you well.

Lucky number 41 | Lucky colour Oville
Lucky day Saturday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

This week, you may find yourself emotionally sensitive, facing challenges that don't align with your hopes, leading to significant emotional distress. Your intentions to provide care might be stifled by circumstances, including health concerns that amplify your worries. Financially, prudent management and budget control are essential. As the week unfolds, it's crucial to adopt a methodical approach to daily activities. A balanced diet and disciplined lifestyle will greatly benefit your well-being. By week's end, you'll see notable progress in your professional life, with financial improvements from various sources boosting your economic status. This period could also be favorable for significant investments or acquisitions, such as a property purchase, bringing you satisfaction and an enhanced sense of stability.

Lucky number 15 | Lucky colour Beige
Lucky day Monday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

Last week you may have reaped the rewards of your hard work, but this week calls for caution. You may encounter conflicts or disputes at your workplace. Expect to face opposition from a colleague who views themselves as superior, potentially leading to troublesome situations characterized by criticism, rivalry, and verbal disputes. Midweek, you might find yourself influenced by someone whose presence is less than positive, a person who may challenge your principles and push you towards actions that clash with societal norms. However, your determination remains unshaken. With confidence, you navigate through these challenges. Your steadfastness and commitment to integrity will not only see you through but will also bring you success by week's end. As you overcome these obstacles, you'll earn admiration and applause, enhancing your reputation and leaving you feeling validated and respected.

Lucky number 8 | Lucky colour Coral
Lucky day Monday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This week promises an enriching experience filled with enjoyment and recognition. Imagine being elevated to a place where success and joy are within easy reach, courtesy of your diligence and divine grace. You embody fairness, generosity, and a strong sense of justice, making you a natural leader whose guidance is sought after by many. Your pure intentions and ability to adapt gracefully to changes enhance your influence, helping you win admiration and respect in both personal and professional spheres. As you navigate through this period, your role as a pivotal figure is likely to be celebrated by your peers and loved ones. However, approach the weekend with caution; stay vigilant as there may be a minor financial setback or a health concern. Preparing ahead can help mitigate these risks, ensuring that your week remains largely positive.

Lucky number 5 | Lucky colour Teal
Lucky day Tuesday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

This week starts with tough decisions that might impact you or someone close to you; fairness and clarity are crucial. Aim for a low profile at work, as competition for roles increases—engaging in conflicts won't help. Embrace submissiveness as a theme. By midweek, challenging feedback from a superior might leave you disheartened. To counter this, practice meditation or yoga to restore confidence and mental equilibrium. This is also a time to refocus on your goals and aspirations. As the weekends, the atmosphere will improve. Tensions ease, setting the stage for positive developments in personal relationships, possibly involving a romantic or lifelong commitment, alongside encouraging news. Remain open and receptive to new beginnings and opportunities.

Lucky number 6 | Lucky colour Fuchsia
Lucky day Wednesday



CANCER June 21-July 22

This week begins with a burst of energy, prompting you to take decisive action rather than dwell on feelings. A significant work opportunity arises, requiring immediate attention and the honing of your abilities. Remember, nothing is achieved without effort. Improved efficiency and clear communication will be key to your success. Midweek brings a flurry of financial transactions; you may find yourself both donating to worthy causes and settling debts. Emotions might overwhelm you during this period, prompting a thoughtful reassessment of recent decisions. As the week closes, a new partnership agreement may be on the horizon, enhancing both professional and personal connections. Those in search of romance might find themselves ready to make meaningful gestures, potentially leading to new beginnings in love.

Lucky number 20 | Lucky colour Amber
Lucky day Saturday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

Lately, you may find yourself overwhelmed with increasing demands at work and in your studies. This surge in activity necessitates a period of rest to heal and replenish your energy. Without proper downtime, you might experience emotional and mental fatigue, which can lead to irritability. It's essential to focus on your health during this time. For women, particular attention should be paid midweek due to potential health sensitivities. Regular check-ups are crucial to maintain your well-being. At work, tensions may rise, potentially leading to disagreements with higher-ups. Managing your emotions and taking time to rejuvenate is key. If not, misunderstandings with authoritative figures in your life could escalate. Now is the time to balance your active life with moments of leisure to maintain harmony and effectiveness.

Lucky number 3 | Lucky colour Lavender
Lucky day Sunday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

This week, you possess a vibrant energy and remarkable work potential. However, without clear goals, your efforts may not yield the desired results. Set specific objectives and channel your creative energies constructively. It's crucial to give your family the attention and care they deserve. Ignoring any health issues could lead to significant financial losses, so taking precautions is wise. Some of you might face personal and financial challenges midweek, and relationships could become strained. Remember, your mental strength and inner fire are your greatest allies during tough times. Opportunities will present themselves towards the week's end, but you must stay alert not to miss them due to preoccupation. Engaging in meaningful conversations and embracing travel can enhance your emotional well-being. Love and mutual understanding are on the horizon for couples.

Lucky number 18 | Lucky colour Ivory
Lucky day Friday

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ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Watch and correct thought trends

What's wrong with our destiny indicators that there seems to be no end of our struggle. This, despite so many pujas suggested by pundits to ward off the evil. Why so? Is there no remedial measure that could grant us ease and comfort? My husband, the breadwinner of family, has been subject to unwanted twists and turn in career all through his life? So far, he lost his job nothing less than a dozen times. In between, many a times he remained jobless as well. He is honest, truthful, hardworking, and yet runs out of favour with related bearing on our life. His health too, becomes a matter of concern every now and then." A lady, concerned about her husband's ordeal came asking the other day. In the above context, let us first examine whether heavenly beings could grant boons in return for transactional pujas offered in their praise, to mitigate our sufferings. Experience suggests that had it been so, no resourceful person would have ever suffered in life. At the best, such pujas can bring in psychological satisfaction, which may help restore

your own faith. It may not be out of place to mention here that Vedas, which serves as the premise on which the Indian philosophy stands, does talk of various deities engaged in cosmic management. That, however, doesn't mean some heavenly form-beings like us, who could selectively respond to our prayers. They, in fact, symbolise various forces playing through the cosmos, vital to our life cycle, and available in equal proportion to all. It is difficult to digest that forces would be imbued with some mind-like organism to respond to our individual call, and that too mediated by pundits. What needs to be appreciated here that our lives are driven by cause-effect chain – "As you show, so shall you reap", which defines the course of our destiny. And it works in a self-automated mode, almost like a software programme. There is no scope for any external agency adjudicating our course of destiny. The question now is: How does destiny play upon in our lives? Going by Indian Philosophical concept, human life is structured in three layers –



Causal, Astral, and Gross bodies. On death, it is just the gross body that disintegrates. The causal and astral bodies that are pure energy platforms do not wither away. They carry over memory impressions pertaining to the past life and make it available to the freshly incarnated body as thought seeds. These thought-seeds set the trends of mind – indwelling desires, virtues & attributes, habits & attitudes, likes & dislikes, prejudices &

obsessions. They, however, do not define in finite term specific events due in emerging times. They rather just offer a lead to proceed with. Here it needs to be appreciated that unless ground suited to germination of seeds is available, they may never bear fruit bearing plants. Invariably, guided by indwelling desires, we take off in life. Their fruition, however, would need qualitative effort, which, in the first place, calls for creating the ground necessary for fruition. Second, assess the environmental constraints as well as challenges posed by competing interests. Accordingly, articulate ways and means to intelligently pursue the task in hand. The irony, however, is that our mind, blinded by indwelling desires, doesn't allow time and space to invoke our own empowerment tool – Buddhi – for due diligence, before taking the final call. And when we fail, instead of trying to find out our own fault-lines, we take refuse in our destiny. The most potent remedy, therefore, is that your husband reflects upon his own mind-trends and makes necessary amends. In this context, let us look at

astrological pointers of the man concerned. The main marker is his Sagittarius lagna. Its lord Jupiter, though in exaltation, but is placed adverse to Uranus, Sun, and Moon. It implies, in the first place an undiplomatic and a tactless person. He would be known for his indiscrete and ill-timed instinctive outbursts at times not even sparing the seniors. Second, he is headstrong and opinionated, who may try to force his viewpoint. Third, he has a swaggering ego, often out of touch with reality that makes him stuck to his self-beliefs and not open to look beyond to explore better options. The Sun also ill-disposed off to Moon makes him vulnerable to conflict and disharmony with others on the slightest pretext. Intelligence signifying Mercury sandwiched between headless Ketu and mischievous Neptune accounts for his inner confusions and insensible reasoning. And the result is there to see. The writer is an astrologer, vastu consultant and spiritual counsellor. Connect with him at Tel: 91-11-9818037273/9871037272 Email: bharatbhushanpadmadeo@gmail.com