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EC shifts focus to urban voters today

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the sweltering heat and high-pitch political rhetoric and promises by contestants in the fray, over 8.95 crore voters in 49 Parliament constituencies spread in Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal will cast their vote in the fifth phase of polling on Monday. On the eve of phase five of Lok Sabha polls, the Election Commission on Sunday pointed out that Mumbai, Thane and Lucknow have shown apathy towards voting in the past and asked these city dwellers to turnout in higher numbers.

Low turnout of voters is expected on Monday due to extreme heat wave conditions in some States including Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. The poll authority noted that in the past these cities have "suffered" from urban apathy in voting. "The Commission specially calls upon these city dwellers to erase the stigma by turning out in higher numbers," it said. So far, the last four phases have registered a voter turnout of 66.95 per cent.

On May 3 too, while referring to voter turnout in phase two, the Commission had said it was "disappointed" with the turnout level in some metropolitan cities.

The EC had last month assembled many metro Commissioners here to work out a strategy to fight urban apathy.

Urban and youth apathy is described as a phenomenon when young voters and those living in metros fail to turn up at polling stations on election day. As summer is on peak, hot and dry weather is another factor which may impact the

STARS IN FRAY		
CONSTITUENCY	CANDIDATE	PARTY
Raebareilly	Dinesh Pratap Singh Rahul Gandhi	BJP Congress
Amethi	Smriti Irani Kishori Lal Sharma	BJP Congress
Lucknow	Rajnath Singh Ravidas Mehrotra	BJP SP
Kaiserganj	Karan Bhushan Singh Bhagat Ram Mishra	BJP SP
	Narendra Pandey	BSP
Hajipur	Chirag Paswan Chandra Ram	LJP (Ram Vilas) RJD
Saran	Rajiv Pratap Rudy Rohini Acharya	BJP RJD
Mumbai	Piyush Goyal	BJP
North	Bhushan Patil	Congress
Baramulla	Omar Abdullah Fayaz Ahmad Mir	National Conference People's Democratic Party
	Sajjad Gani Lone	People's Conference

seeking a second term, while KL Sharma, an aide of the Gandhi family, has been fielded by the Congress.

Among other prominent candidates in the fifth phase of Lok Sabha polls are several Union Ministers including Rajnath Singh (Lucknow, UP), Piyush Goyal (Mumbai North, Maharashtra), Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti (from Fatehpur, UP) and Shantanu Thakur (Bangaon, WB); LJP (Ram Vilas) leader Chirag Paswan (Hajipur, Bihar), Shiv Sena's Shrikant Shinde (Kalyan, Maharashtra), and BJP's Rajiv Pratap Rudy and RJD president Lalu Prasad's daughter Rohini Acharya (both Saran, Bihar).

Uttar Pradesh, which sends the largest number of MPs to Parliament, will see 14 seats voting in the fifth phase with the fate of five Union Ministers at stake. These seats include Congress pocket boroughs of Rae Bareilly and Amethi. Faizabad, which includes Ayodhya, the nerve centre of the BJP's Hindutva politics will also vote in this



voters' turnout in the fifth phase.

For Rahul Gandhi, Rae Bareilly will be the second seat from where he is contesting the national polls. The Congress scion has already contested from Kerala's Wayanad in the second phase.

Rae Bareilly is a Nehru-Gandhi family pocket borough that was represented by his mother Sonia Gandhi since 2004. The BJP has fielded UP Minister Dinesh Pratap Singh.

In Amethi, Union minister Smriti Irani, who had defeated Rahul in 2019, is

phase.

At the height of bitter political rivalry, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other BJP leaders tried to fend off the challenge posed by the INDIA bloc parties by raising the pitch on issues of appeasement, dynastic politics, Ram temple, Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), corruption and welfare initiatives taken by his government. PM Modi, while campaigning in Uttar Pradesh on Friday,

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Chopper carrying Iran President crashes, search on

Dubai (AP): A helicopter carrying Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, the country's foreign minister and other officials apparently crashed in the mountainous northwest reaches of Iran on Sunday, sparking a massive rescue operation in a fog-shrouded forest as the public was urged to pray. The likely crash came as Iran under Raisi and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei launched an unprecedented drone-and-missile attack on Israel last month and has enriched uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels. Raisi was traveling in Iran's East Azerbaijan province. State TV said what it called a "hard landing" happened near Jolfa, a city on the border with the nation of Azerbaijan, some 600 kilometers northwest of the Iranian capital, Tehran.

Details on Page 10

Maliwal assault could have been fatal: Cops

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

After a late-night hearing on May 18, a city court sent Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar to five days in police custody in connection with the alleged assault on AAP Rajya Sabha member Swati Maliwal. Meanwhile, a team of Delhi Police on Sunday seized a laptop and CCTV digital video record (DVR) from the residence of Kejriwal. Along with this, some documents were also taken away by the Delhi Police from the Chief Minister's residence in the alleged assault on May 13 when Kumar, allegedly attacked Maliwal. The Delhi Police, in its remand paper, has described the alleged assault on Maliwal by Kumar as a "serious case" involving a "brutal assault" that could have turned "fatal." During the hearing, the court observed that "the fact that



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar sent to five days remand by court

the video footage was not found in the pen drive provided to the investigating officer (IO) during the course of the investigation and the mobile phone was formatted by the accused speaks volumes." Magistrate Gaurav Goyal was hearing the application of Delhi Police which was represented by Additional Public Prosecutor Atul

Srivastava. The police had sought seven day custody. "Considering the submissions made on behalf of both the parties, I find there is a necessity of police custody remand in the present case. Accordingly, the application moved by the IO is partly allowed and the accused is remanded to police custody for five days," the court said in

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YouTube happy hunting ground for wildlife traffickers

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a crackdown on wildlife trafficking, the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) has removed 1,158 videos associated with the illegal trade, poaching, hunting, and cooking of protected animals, as YouTube becomes a favorite hub for tech-savvy wildlife smugglers. Sources in the WCCB said that this platform has been found to be facilitating the advertising and sale of contraband such as parakeets, rare turtles, and pangolins.

More such videos are under the scanner, said a senior official from the country's top wildlife crime control agency under the Union Environment Ministry. YouTube is the most popular social video platform. As of October 2023, India is the biggest market for YouTube with approximately 462 million active users followed by USA, Brazil and other countries.

Little wonder that many wildlife smugglers have started using this platform in a big way to earn easy money



through the sale of live and body parts of the wildlife species including the protected one in violation of the law.

In fact, once eligibility criteria of YouTube is met by their YouTube Channels, these wildlife perpetrators may apply for monetization scheme by joining YouTube Partner Program and can earn money through various monetization streams on YouTube such as revenue from advertisement, revealed Arvind K Chaurasia, Additional Commissioner at the WCCB. He said that the WCCB and

Traffic India, the Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network India that works in collaboration with WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), has also been on the trail of these offenders. According to reports, in at least five operations, pangolins and tiger skins were seized over the past one year following ti-off from the popular social platforms.

Talking about the modus operandi, the official said that often, WCCB volunteers go over the comments for clues in the posts uploaded on the YouTube that may lead to the identity of potential buyers. Sometimes, it doesn't take much - buyers and sellers leave their numbers in comments. "Till date in the last one year, WCCB has successfully removed around 1300 YouTube videos related to poaching, hunting, cooking and selling of wildlife on the basis of inputs shared by these Wildlife Cyber Warriors by sending a content removal

notice to YouTube Legal Support Team under Section 50(7) read with Section 52 of Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972," said the WCCB official. The wildlife crime control body has also launched "WILD NET", a program designed to track and check illegal animal trading online. Any suspicious activity online would send alerts to enforcement agencies in the country.

In 2019, TRAFFIC in collaboration with the Union Environment Ministry had held a meeting with online platforms like Google, Facebook, YouTube and e-commerce sites like IndiaMart and Flipkart to ensure that their platforms are not used for trading protected species. YouTube, in an official statement, said, "We take the safety of our online community very seriously. YouTube's policies prohibit graphic violence and animal abuse and we will quickly remove flagged content and terminate channels of repeat offenders."

Continued on Page 8

Vote First Everything else can wait

Today, on 20th May, do participate in the Fifth phase of the festival of democracy. As a responsible citizen, do not forget to cast your vote for the Nation's development and progress.

Your One Vote

Will strengthen our nation's fight against corruption, poverty and nepotism

Will move nation forward

Will make a viksit Bharat

To vote for Modi Ji

Press the Lotus button

Make BJP win

Phir Ek Baar Modi Sarkar

INDI Alliance a union of anarchy, corruption and curfew: Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

As the parliamentary election inches closer to the final phase, campaigning has gained momentum across the country despite the scorching heat. On Sunday, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath blasted a spectacular 'Superhit Six' of rallies for party candidates contesting from Azamgarh, Lalganj, Jaunpur, Pratapgarh, Phulpur and Allahabad Lok Sabha constituencies.

He urged people to defeat Samajwadi Party and Congress, which were opposed to Lord Ram and closer to Ravana in terms of deeds. He alleged that Congress and SP wanted to destroy Hindus. The chief minister mocked the SP, noting that 273 seats were needed to form the government, while the SP was contesting only 62-63 seats. He remarked that they won't be able to form the government, but would keep thumping their chests in the background.

Seeking support for Azamgarh MP and Bharatiya Janata Party candidate Dinesh Lal Yadav 'Nirahua', Chief Minister Yogi said that Azamgarh was considered a centre of terrorism

during the SP regime. He noted that Azamgarh used to be associated with terrorist blasts across the country, but there have been no such incidents in the last 10 years.

He added: "We still have to give a lot to Azamgarh and make it an 'industrial city'. Azamgarh will become the centre of Film City, from where many 'Nirahuas' and 'Amrapali Dubey's will emerge."

Criticising the SP, Chief Minister Yogi said that they were just visiting for a picnic and would head to England after the elections. He taunted that it is now the SP members, not Azamgarh, who are viewed with suspicion. "People believe that an SP supporter is likely to be a goon and a troublemaker, prompting searches to prevent potential trouble," he remarked.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said in the public meeting organised for Neelam Sonkar, the BJP candidate from Lalganj Lok Sabha constituency, in Phulpur Pawai, Azamgarh, that the INDI Alliance was a union of anarchy, corruption and imposing curfew.

"The Samajwadi Party and Congress governments do not empathise with the poor, Dalits,

women and youth. Their sympathies lie with the mafia and terrorists," he said.

Chief Minister Yogi said that Pakistan was unable to protect its own country, with continuous agitation, chaos and arson in Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir. He urged voters to give Prime Minister Narendra Modi a third term, promising that PoK would become part of India. The chief minister also mentioned that "goon-mafia leaders are complaining about Yogi's use of bulldozers". He assured that after the elections, the properties of the remaining goon-mafia would also be bulldozed.

Seeking support for BJP candidate Kripashankar Singh in Jaunpur, Chief Minister Yogi said that the demon of Ravana was still present in the form of SP and Congress and their actions resembled that of Ravana. "Lord Ram is not blessing them. Whatever Ram Lalla desires, is bound to happen and Ram Lalla has decided to hand over power to his devotee Modi for the third time," he stated.

The UP chief minister stated that the SP and mafia were closely connected and could



not be separated. He criticised the SP president for mourning the death of a notorious Purvanchal mafia leader. He vowed to eliminate Ram traitors, anti-India elements, and the mafia from Uttar Pradesh. The UP chief minister warned that the alliance between SP and Congress was a cause for concern, comparing it to a pair of troublemakers. He assured that the BJP will not

allow property surveys, the imposition of the Jizya tax, or any changes to the reservations for backward classes, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes. Addressing a public meeting in Rampur Khas in favour of Pratapgarh MP and BJP candidate Sangam Lal Gupta, the chief minister said that more than 400 seats for the National Democratic Alliance were a must to make Pakistan-occu-

pled Kashmir a part of India. "Congress and SP are becoming uncomfortable with slogans like 'Fir Ek Baar Modi Sarkaar', 'Abki Baar 400 Paar' as their goons in Prayagraj and Ghazipur have been reduced to dust. SP is a party friendly to terrorists," the chief minister said, adding that the INDI Alliance had no agenda of development. "Anyone who betrays Ram also

betrays the nation. They all share the same DNA, spreading anarchy and inciting riots like Tadka, Marich, and Subahu," he remarked.

Addressing a public meeting in Soraon in support of Phulpur MLA and BJP candidate Praveen Patel, Chief Minister Yogi stated that threats to the security of common people, daughters, businessmen, Dalits, and backward classes had been eradicated from Uttar Pradesh. While the state and country are pleased with this progress, the SP is mourning, he remarked. He criticised the SP's dark history, recounting an incident where the mafia killed a woman's husband from the Maurya family in Phulpur and seized 10 bighas of her land. He noted that their pleas were ignored until his administration restored their land.

He further accused SP chief Akhilesh Yadav of supporting the shooting of Ram devotees while simultaneously withdrawing cases against terrorists. By proposing an inheritance tax, he argued, Congress and SP have shown their intent to destroy Hindus by reviving the spirit of Aurangzeb. However, he assured that the

BJP will not allow this to happen. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath held a public meeting in Karchana in support of BJP candidate Neeraj Tripathi contesting from Allahabad Lok Sabha constituency. He criticised the SP for embracing the mafia, noting that even after the murder of MLA Raju Pal in Prayagraj, SP shamelessly supported the criminals. He urged the SP to refrain from politics for 25 years as a penance for their association with the mafia. He mocked the SP's poor turnout in Phulpur, mentioning that their leaders left due to the lack of public support.

Yogi Adityanath highlighted that next year's Mahakumbh in Prayagraj will see a transformed city, now a smart city with a police commissionerate. He assured that the construction of the Ganga Expressway, connecting to Delhi, will be completed before the Mahakumbh. He accused Congress and SP of neglecting Vindhyavasini Dham, Chitrakoot Dham, and other religious sites, claiming they are more focused on benefiting Pakistan and supporting terrorists.

Anand breaks silence; attacks Cong, BJP over free foodgrains

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samajwadi Party chief Mayawati's nephew Akash Anand broke his silence on Sunday after ten days. He attacked the Congress along with targeting the Bharatiya Janata Party.

It is a coincidence that a day earlier Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav had praised Akash Anand. On Sunday, Akash Anand kept silent on SP but attacked BJP and Congress. Mayawati had taken action against Akash Anand on May 7. Akash Anand remained completely silent for 48 hours after the action, but on May 9, while expressing his feelings on social media platform X, he praised his aunt and wrote: "You are our unanimously accepted leader and your orders are acceptable to me. I will keep fighting for Bhim Mission and my society till my last breath."

After the post made on May 9,

Akash Anand was neither seen in any public event nor did he post anything on social media. Now, after ten days, his first post has come on X on Sunday. Sharing a video of Rahul Gandhi, he wrote that even then they considered the public as slaves. "Even today they consider everyone as slaves. One (NDA) took away the job of 2.5 lakhs by giving 5 kg ration. The other (INDIA bloc) wants to get votes by luring 10 kg ration. Be careful."

In the video shared by Akash Anand, Rahul Gandhi is saying that Congress does not show favour, it gives rights to the public. The right to food was brought by the Congress and the UPA government. And, now we will give you twice the food grains than BJP - they give 5 kg, we will give 10 kg! It may be mentioned that in the first week of May, all the rallies of Akash Anand were cancelled. After this, on May 7, Mayawati removed Akash

Anand from the post of national coordinator and also withdrew the announcement of making him her successor. Mayawati withdrew the responsibilities calling Akash Anand "immature".

Now that Akash Anand's silence has broken again, many meanings are being drawn from it. Some people believe that Akash Anand can once again come into action for the remaining sixth and seventh phase of elections. Voting will be held on 27 seats of Purvanchal in both the phases. This is the area where votes are quite divided among small parties. Anupriya Patel's Apna Dal, OP Rajbhar's Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party, Sanjay Nishad's NISHAD Party are fighting in this area. In such a situation, even a slight change is expected to change the result. In the last election, BSP also performed very well in this area. The BSP had won Jaunpur, Ghazipur, Ghosi seats.

BJP going to win only one seat in UP: Rahul

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday claimed that the Bharatiya Janata Party was winning only one seat in Uttar Pradesh.

"Have you heard (Prime Minister) Narendra Modi is winning only one BJP seat of Kyoto (Varanasi) in Uttar Pradesh," Rahul Gandhi said while addressing a joint election meeting with Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav in Munger area of Karchana in Prayagraj on Sunday in support of INDIA bloc candidate Ujjawal Raman Singh.

"The fight is to save the Constitution. The Bharatiya Janata Party and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh are attacking it, and I want to tell them that no power can tear and throw the Constitution away," Rahul Gandhi said while waving a copy of the Indian Constitution. He reiterated the promises made by the Congress and appealed to vote for the party's

candidate. Rahul Gandhi said that "Narendra Modi has made 22 people billionaires. So now we are going to make crores of lakhpatis. A list of crores of people will be made. The name of one woman will be selected from every poor family. We will put one lakh rupees a year in the accounts of crores of women in a quick manner".

Rahul said, "We are going to pay the farmers of India for their grains, sugarcane, cotton. We are going to give Rs 8,500 per month in the account of unemployed and graduate youths."

"We will disband the Agniveer. MGNREGA workers are now getting Rs 250; we will give them Rs 400. ASHA and Anganwadi workers will be given double income," said and asked the crowd to make the INDIA bloc candidate from here win by five lakh votes.

Speaking before Gandhi, Akhilesh Yadav alleged that the BJP was after people's lives and the Constitution.

STAMPEDE-LIKE SITUATION IN PHULPUR

Rahul, Akhilesh leave stage without addressing rally



PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A stampede-like situation prevailed in the rally of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav in Phulpur, on Sunday, forcing them to abandon the joint poll meeting without delivering speeches as their supporters broke through barricades trying to reach the dais.

The supporters became uncontrollable as Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav reached the stage. They broke the security cordon and started moving towards the stage. When the police tried to stop

them, they started pushing each other as a result of which several people were injured. When the police used sticks, a stampede-like situation erupted there. Many supporters were also injured.

Akhilesh Yadav, sitting on the stage, appealed to the supporters to remain calm, but no one listened to him. The crowd remained uncontrollable for about 15 minutes.

Along with Akhilesh Yadav, Rahul Gandhi also raised his hand and appealed to the people to remain calm.

When the supporters of the two leaders did not listen, Akhilesh became angry and left the

stage. The leaders present on the stage tried to stop him, but he walked towards the helipad behind the stage.

Along with Akhilesh Yadav, Rahul Gandhi also stepped down from the stage and both the leaders left without addressing. Akhilesh and Rahul had come to Padila to campaign for SP candidate Amarnath Maurya from Phulpur. The Bharatiya Janata Party has fielded Praveen Patel against him.

SP's MLC Dr Man Singh Yadav alleged that police force was not deployed for the rally as part of a conspiracy and this had led to the stampede-like situation.

PoK belongs to us, will take it back: Shah

PTI ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday asserted that Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) belongs to India, and "we will take it back".

Shah was addressing an election rally in Prayagraj to seek votes for BJP candidate Neeraj Tripathi.

"Farooq Abdullah and Mani Shankar Aiyar say give respect to Pakistan because it has atom bomb... Rahul baba, today from the sacred land of Prayagraj I will say this PoK is ours, will remain ours, and we will take it back," he said while referring to Aiyar's atom bomb remark that has sparked a political row. Shah also said that the opposition alliance has been wiped

out in the four phases of Lok Sabha polls.

"Four phases of polling have been completed. In these four phases, the INDI Alliance has been wiped out and Modi ji is rapidly moving towards crossing 400 (Lok Sabha seats)," he said.

The main contest in Allahabad is between BJP's Neeraj Tripathi, son of former Governor of West Bengal and Speaker of UP Legislative Assembly Keshari Nath Tripathi, and Ujjawal Ram Singh, son of former Samajwadi Party leader and Rajya Sabha MP Reoti Raman Singh.

Claiming that opposition leaders did not attend the consecration ceremony of the Ram temple in Ayodhya as they

were afraid of losing their vote bank, Shah said those in the BJP do not fear anyone. Shah said the ongoing election is a battle between "those who opened fire on the devotees of Lord Ram and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who built the Ram temple".

"The Congress-SP kept the Ram temple (matter) pending for 70 years. The SP government opened fire on kar sevaks. You made Modiji the prime minister for the second time, he won the court case for the Ram temple, performed the 'bhoomipujan' (ground-breaking ceremony) and also the 'pran pratishtha' (consecration) of the temple," he said.

Even after the temple trust members invited Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and

Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party (SP) leaders Dimple Yadav and Akhilesh Yadav for the consecration ceremony, they did not take part in it as they were afraid of losing their vote bank, the senior BJP leader claimed.

"Do you know who their vote bank is? You are not their vote bank. Infiltrators are their vote bank. But we in the BJP are not afraid of anyone. Modiji not only built the Ram temple, but also decorated the 'darbar of Kashi Vishwanath, which was broken by Aurangzeb, and the Somnath temple is being built of gold."

"On one side, there are people who fired at the devotees of Lord Ram, on the other side, there is Narendra Modi, who built the Ram temple. The

election is between these two. This election is to decide the future of the country, make it secure, end terrorism, Naxalism and poverty. This is an election to build a great India," he said.

The January 22 consecration ceremony was led by Modi, who also gave a clarion call to go beyond the temple's construction to build the foundation of a "strong, capable and divine" India of the next 1,000 years.

Scrapping Article 370 of the Constitution that bestowed special rights on Jammu and Kashmir, building a grand Ram temple in Ayodhya and implementing a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) across the country have been the BJP's poll plank for decades.

UP ATS arrests ISI agent

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The sleuths of the Anti-Terror Squad (ATS) of Uttar Pradesh Police claimed to have arrested an agent of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence who was leaking confidential and sensitive information and documents related to the Indian Navy to his Pakistani counterparts. According to an official communiqué, the UP ATS was receiving intelligence that under a conspiracy, agents of Pakistani intelligence agency ISI were obtaining confidential and sensitive information and documents related to the Indian Navy by luring Indian Navy employees and private persons working in shipyards under pseudo names. The ISI agents were luring them with money and sending money through various means.

When this intelligence was developed by the ATS, it came to light that Ram Singh, son of late Jai Singh and resident of village Ramvapour under Pipraich police station of Gorakhpur, was in contact with a Pakistani woman spy.

The Pakistani agents were continuously depositing money in Ram Singh's bank account and Ram Singh had provided money to the associates of Pakistani agents who were giving confidential information about the Indian Navy and Army to Pakistani agents. Ram Singh was arrested after interrogation on Sunday. During interrogation, Ram Singh disclosed that for almost three years he was in touch with the so-called Pakistani female spy, Kirti Kumari (pseudonym), through Facebook and WhatsApp. Ram Singh, as a part time worker at Goa Shipyard Naval base, used to work on applying insulation to Indian Navy's warships. Many Navy warships like INS Vikramaditya, INS Vikrant and others used to come to the shipyard. Ram Singh sent the photographs of Indian Navy's warships to the Pakistani agent. Kirti Kumari deposited a huge amount of money in Ram Singh's bank account and he transferred the deposited money to the bank accounts of agents working for ISI on the instructions of the Pakistani agent.

STF busts gang duping medical aspirants

Lucknow (PNS): With the arrest of two miscreants, a team of STF Uttar Pradesh claimed to have busted a gang involved in duping innocents for admissions in MBBS and other medical studies course at different medical colleges of country and abroad.

The accused identified as Sachin Mani Tripathi of Deoria and Shivanand Verma of Gudamba were arrested on a tip off from near Pharmacy Council Lekhraj Market on Saturday.

The team recovered Rs 22,000 in cash, a luxurious car, a smart watch and a heap of documents on adhaar card, PAN card, laptops, three mobile phones and counterfeit marksheets, certificates and degrees issued from different colleges.

As per reports, the STF was working on a gang involved in preparing fake certificates on D Pharma, B Pharma and acad-

emic marksheets/certificates which they used in facilitating admissions to gullible in medical colleges of the country and in abroad.

On Saturday the team was tipped off about the presence of miscreants at a place near the pharmacy council office and a team laid the trap. Soon as the miscreants passed the trap, the team netted them.

They confessed to their crime and said they also extracted money from gullibles for facilitating them to open drug store or clinics ran by quacks.

They disclosed that they were members of a gang which was in this crime for a long time and their job was to trap the innocents and realise the money from them. They said some employees of Pharmacy Council of India were involved in the crime of fleecing innocents for admissions in medical courses including the MBBS.

They said one Hari Shanker of Bareilly used to prepare marksheets and certificates of D Pharma and B Pharma and get it attested with the help of Employee of Pharmacy Council of India and later this helped the 'customers' to get licenses for opening drug stores issued to them. They said Harishanker charged Rs 5 lakh for the above said work and gave them Rs 1 lakh only as their share.

EXTORTION

Unidentified callers extorted about Rs 70,000 from a woman by threatening to make her morphed obscene photos viral on public platforms, abduct and kill her brother and defame her among her relatives, in Indira Nagar. In her complaint, the victim stated that on May 9 she was forced to pay Rs 8,700, Rs 26,500 and Rs 34,500 to the miscreant for leaving her in peace.

इंडियन बैंक		Indian Bank	
ALLAHABAD			
Zonal Office Lucknow, New Building, 2nd Floor, Hazratganj, Lucknow-226001, Ph. 0522-2286272, 2287283, Fax: 0522-2288033, E-mail id: zolucknow@indianbank.co.in			
DEMAND NOTICE			
NOTICE U/S 13 (2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002			
Whereas the undersigned being the Authorized officer of Indian Bank (erstwhile Allahabad Bank) Issued Demand Notices under Section 13 (2) of SARFAESI ACT 2002 to the Borrower/s/Guarantor's herein below mentioned, Consequently upon the dispatch of such Notices through Post And returned Bank undelivered from the Borrower/s/Guarantor's addresses. Through this Publication they are hereby called upon to repay the amount within 60 days from the date of publication of said notice failing which the bank will take the possession of the immovable and movable property will sell it through the process in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 8 & 9 of the security interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.			
Sl. No.	Name & Address of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/Date of Demand Notice	Outstanding Amount	Description of the Property
Branch : Gauriganj			
1.	M/s Maa Ambe Glass House And Hardware Paints (Borrower), Near H.P. Gas Agency Raibareilly Sultanpur Road Gauriganj Amethi 227409	Rs. 16,04,696/- as on 20.04.2024 + interest & other charges	Gata No 84 Raibareilly Gauriganj Road Senipur Amethi 227409 Area 1125 Sqft in name of Mr Brijendra Kumar S/o Mr Krishna C Agrahari sale deed no 1355 dated 23.01.2014, Boundaries as per sale deed- North- Raibareilly Sultanpur Road, South- Land Of Railway, East- House Of Raja Ram, West-Plot Of Sushila Devi
2.	M/s Singh Marble & Tyles (Prop. Mrs Shakuntala Singh W/O Mr Dharmendra Singh (Borrower), Address: Gauriganj Amethi Main Road Near Alok Dhaba Gauriganj Amethi 227409	Rs. 23,91,867/- & Rs. 1,22,097/- as on 20.04.2024 + interest & other charges	Khata No 236 MI Khata No 111 Situated At Village Pachehari Post Gauriganj Pergana Amethi Tehsil Gauriganj Amethi, 1000 Sqft. In The Name Of Mrs Shakuntala Singh Sale Deed No 1845 Dated 18.05.2017 Boundaries as per sale deed- North- Land Of Prashant & Daspur Chauda Kachcha Rasta, South- Navodaya Vidyalaya Ki Boundary, East- Land Of seller, West-Plot Of Gudda Singh
Date: 20.05.2024 Place: Lucknow Authorised Officer Indian Bank (erstwhile Allahabad Bank)			

City gears up for polling today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

All arrangements are in place for the free, fair, peaceful and transparent conduct of the fifth phase of the Lok Sabha election in Uttar Pradesh on Monday. The Election Commission of India said 14 of Uttar Pradesh's 80 Lok Sabha constituencies would vote in the fifth round of the seven-phase parliamentary elections on Monday. Polling for the by-election to Lucknow East assembly constituency will also be held on Monday. Polling will commence at 7 am and conclude at 6 pm. UP Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa said here on Sunday that 144 candidates were in the fray for 14 Lok Sabha seats, including 131 males and 13 females. In the fifth phase of polls the maximum 15 candidates are contesting election in Fatehpur and the lowest from Kaiserganj. The constituencies going to polls on Monday are Mohanlalganj, Lucknow, Rae Bareilly, Amethi, Jalaun, Jhansi,



Hamirpur, Banda, Fatehpur, Barabanki, Kaushambi, Faizabad, Kaiserganj and Gonda. Prominent candidates in the fray in the fifth phase of election include Union ministers Smriti Irani and Rajnath Singh, and ex-Congress chief Rahul Gandhi. Karan Bhushan Singh, the son of Kaiserganj MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, is also in the fray,

replacing his father as the Bharatiya Janata Party nominee. Besides Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Union Minister of Women and Child Development Smriti Irani, those in the fray are Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs Kaushal Kishor (Mohanlalganj) and Minister of State of Consumer Affairs Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti (Fatehpur). Rahul Gandhi is in

the fray from Rae Bareilly, which was represented by his mother and former Congress president Sonia Gandhi earlier. The total number of voters in 14 Lok Sabha seats in fifth phase are over 2.72 crore which includes 1.44 crore males and 1.27 crore females. In terms of number of electorate Mohanlalganj (SC) is the biggest constituency while Banda is the smallest con-

stituency. In Lucknow East assembly seat the number of voters is 4.64 lakh. For the fifth phase of polls the Election Commission of India has set up 17,128 polling stations and 26,688 polling booths. As many as 4,232 polling booths have been identified as critical. For keeping close watch on the polling process the ECI has deployed three special observers, 14 general observers, nine police observers and 15 expenditure observers. Besides 2,416 sector magistrates, 327 zonal magistrates, 549 static magistrates and 3,619 micro observers have been deployed. Besides this, the ECI has planned for live webcasting of polling processes in 50 per cent polling booths, to be monitored at levels of district, chief electoral officer Lucknow and Election Commission of India at Delhi. At 4,199 polling booths, the ECI has planned for videography. For the fifth phase polls, 35,684 EVM units, 36,089 ballot units and 37,565 VVPATs have been provided by the poll panel.

DM urges voters to exercise franchise without fear, greed

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A total of 39 lakh voters are set to exercise their franchise in Lucknow on Monday. According to a senior district administration official, there are 3,768 polling booths and 1,544 polling stations in the district. The electorate includes 18.8 lakh female voters, 21.16 lakh male voters, and 158 third-gender voters. District Magistrate and District Election Officer Surya Pal Gangwar urged voters to exercise their franchise and encourage friends and relatives to do the same. "You should vote without fear and without any greed or pressure," he said. Voter information slips, distributed by BLOs, provide essential

details such as polling booth location and voter serial number. A photo ID is required for voting, with acceptable forms including the EPIC card, Aadhaar card, PAN card, and driving licence. Government employees can use their identity cards. Voting is scheduled from 7 am to 6 pm, with public transport, auto-rickshaws, e-rickshaws, and buses available on polling day. Voters are permitted to bring private vehicles within 100 meters of polling booths due to the hot weather. Divisional Commissioner Roshan Jacob emphasized the importance of voting, calling it both a right and a responsibility. She highlighted Lucknow's intellectual heritage and urged all citizens, including the elderly and

youth, to participate in the electoral process. In the Lucknow district, there are 26,801 voters with physical disabilities, 376 overseas voters, 3,812 male service voters, and 467 female service voters. The district includes 205 voters aged 100-119, eight voters over 120 years old, and 149,008 voters over 85 years old. For the Lok Sabha polling on Monday, there will be 4,185 ballot units, control units, and VVPATs, supported by 46 Zonal Magistrates and 224 Sector Magistrates. The Lucknow Lok Sabha constituency has 1,895 polling booths and 456 polling stations, with a total of 2.12 million voters, including 1.14 million male voters and 1.023 million female voters, and 92 third-gender voters.

'Bulawa tolis' to invite voters to cast votes

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In an attempt to ensure good turnout of voters and motivate the electorate to cast their votes, the Election Commission of India had adopted the innovative idea of inviting the voters to polling booths through 'Bulawa tolis'. The 'Bulawa tolis' (invitation teams) will invite the people to polling stations and they will work during the remaining three phases of Lok Sabha elections ending on June 1. The 'Bulawa tolis' will include booth-level officers, local level ASHA and Anganwadi workers, Yuva Mangal Dal and panchayat-level personnel. In addition, the 'Bulawa tolis' will be activated in the control rooms established in the district and the booths with low voting percentages in the MPS

app. It is noteworthy that Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently encouraged workers in Varanasi to increase the voting percentage through 'Bulawa tolis'. For the remaining three phases, the Election Commission of India has issued directives to ensure fear-free, fair and peaceful voting. The district election officers have been provided necessary guidelines for this purpose. Uttar Pradesh Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa said that instructions had been given to the officials concerned to increase voter awareness activities and programmes in Lok Sabha constituencies where polling was to be held to increase voting percentage and 'Bulawa tolis' were part of this initiative.

It is noteworthy that PM Narendra Modi recently encouraged workers in Varanasi to increase the voting percentage through 'Bulawa tolis'.

bands or relatives would not replace them. He said voters who had not received voter information slips for any reason could check their names in the available voter list at the polling station. Polling parties and sector magistrates have been instructed not to send back voters on voting day if they did not bring their voter information slip for any reason. Voters who bring slips issued by political parties should also be allowed to vote. Polling parties have been instructed to ensure that voters having minor differences in identification documents provided by the voter and the details mentioned in the voter list, were allowed to vote. The chief electoral officer said that there should be proper signage regarding information

about each polling booth, water facilities, toilets etc. at the entrance of the polling station. Each polling station should have at least the minimum necessary facilities available and there should be arrangements of shade for voters queuing up at the polling stations. He said there should be no disruption in power supply on the day of polling so that the voting process is not affected. Furthermore, to protect people from heat stroke, each polling station should have paramedics and ASHA workers with enough ORS and medical kits available. The sector team should also have a paramedic available for use if needed. Additionally, all polling stations should have cool drinking water, toilets, and facilities like wheelchairs and chairs for the elderly and disabled.

इंडियन बैंक
(भारत सरकार का उपक्रम)

इलाहाबाद

Indian Bank
(A Govt. of India Undertaking)

ALLAHABAD

POSSESSION NOTICE (for Immovable Property)
[Under Rule-8 (1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002]

Whereas, the undersigned being the authorised officer of the Indian Bank under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002, (Act 54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3, 8 and 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice as detailed here in below calling upon the borrower to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The Borrowers/Guarantors having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers/ Guarantors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of the powers conferred on him/her under section 13(14) of the said Act read with Rule 8 and 9 of the said Rules. The Borrowers in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charges of the Indian Bank.

The Borrower's / Guarantor's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

This Possession Notice is being served to the Borrower (s), Guarantor (s) & Mortgagor (s) to deposit the said dues. Details as under:

S. N.	Name & Address of the Borrower (s)/ Guarantor (s)/ Proprietor / Mortgagors	Description of the Immovable Property	Dt. of Demand Notice Dt. of Possession Outstanding Amount
Branch: Rajkamal Road			
1.	M/S R Enterprises, (Pro- Mrs Deepa Joshi W/o Bhupendra Joshi) (Borrower), Add-1: Nabiganj, Pathari Chauraha, Faizabad Road, Barabanki 225001. Add-2: Plot no- 7 (House no- ANR/426), Mohalla Ashutosh Nagar, Ward- Chitra Gupt Nagar, District- Lucknow, Pin- 226023	All that part and parcel of the property consisting at Khasra No 2 1 7 4 / 1 3 / 1 m 1, 2188/1/2m1, 2188/2/3, Plot no 7 (House No ANR/426), Mohalla Ashutosh Nagar, ward Chitra Gupta Nagar) Vill Kanousi, Pargana, Tehsil and District Lucknow, Area 227.69 Sq Mtr in name of Mr Bhupendra Kumar Joshi. Bounded by- North: 12 Ft Lane, South: 60 Ft Wide Road, East: Plot No 8, West: Plot No 6	19.02.2024 15.05.2024 Rs. 33,31,001.00 and interest thereon
	2. Mrs Deepa Joshi W/o Bhupendra Joshi (Guarantor & Legal Heir of Bhupendra Joshi), Plot no- 7 (House no- ANR/426), Mohalla Ashutosh Nagar, Ward- Chitra Gupt Nagar District- Lucknow, Pin- 226023		
	3. Mr Bhupendra Joshi s/o Nand Kishore Joshi (Deceased) (Guarantor), Plot no- 7 (House no- ANR/426), Mohalla Ashutosh Nagar, Ward- Chitra Gupt Nagar District- Lucknow, Pin- 226023		
	4. Mr Dushyant Joshi S/o Bhupendra Joshi (Guarantor & Legal Heir of Bhupendra Joshi), Plot no- 7 (House no- ANR/426), Mohalla Ashutosh Nagar, Ward- Chitra Gupt Nagar District- Lucknow, Pin- 226023		
	5. Mr Bhupendra Joshi s/o Nand Kishore Joshi (Deceased) (Mortgagor), Plot no- 7 (House no- ANR/426), Mohalla Ashutosh Nagar, Ward- Chitra Gupt Nagar District- Lucknow, Pin- 226023		

Date : 20.05.2024 Place: Lucknow Authorised Officer Indian Bank

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VOTE FOR CONGRESS

Braving the heat, BJP leaders continue poll campaigning

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Braving scorching heat, the public representatives, party office-bearers and workers of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) knocked on the doors of voters to increase the voting percentage in Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency and seek the support of the voters in favour of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with record votes. UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) Ravindra Jaiswal contacted the voters door to door in Akatha, Dhelwariya, Chokaghat etc areas of his City North assembly here on Sunday and motivated people to increase the voting percentage. He said that the BJP governments have done the work of providing good governance in the country and state.

Another local UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) Dr Dayashankar Mishra 'Dayalu' contacted the voters door to door in Sujabod booth numbers 387 and 391 of Karmadeshwar Mandal under Rohaniya assembly area and discussed the public welfare schemes and achievements of the central government. Former Minister and City South MLA Dr Neelkanth Tiwari went door to door knocking the voters in Ghasiyari Tola ward under Kashi Vishwanath Mandal of City South assembly area. In this sequence, Varanasi Cantt



UP Minister Ravindra Jaiswal contacting people in favour of BJP candidate and PM Narendra Modi in Varanasi on Sunday.

MLA Saurabh Srivastava took out a Prabhav Pheri in the morning from Batuk Bhairav to Rathayatra and then went door to door in Shivdham Apartment and Surya Vishal Colony and motivated the voters to increase the voting percentage. District BJP president and MLC Hansraj Vishwakarma along with both presidents and workers contacted the beneficiaries at booth numbers 312, 315 of Saghat and Panditpur villages under Rohania assembly area. He discussed the change in his life after getting the benefits of the

schemes. Besides, a conference of advocates residing in Cantt assembly was organised at the BJP office in Ravindrapuri. The chief guest was Cantt MLA Saurabh Srivastava and it was presided over by Central Bar Association president Murlidhar Singh. Speaking on the occasion, the MLA said Cantt Assembly is also known as Mini India where people of every religion and sect like Bengali, Marathi, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu etc live, hence we have to choose a PM for Vishva Guru India. He said in such a situation the advocates should motivate people for 100 per cent voting.

Muralidhar Singh presided over the conference. The vote of thanks was proposed by programme coordinator Harishankar Mishra Manchal. The conference was mainly attended by Kamlesh Pal, Abhishek Mishra, Madan Mishra, Shashank Shekhar Tripathi, Madan Mohan Pandey, Saurabh Pathak, Amit Srivastava etc. Earlier, in the meeting held at Nishi Bagh office of City South assembly, the MLA Dr Neelkanth Tiwari said as the election date is nearing we will have to speed up our contact campaign and will have to reach every house. Dr Tiwari said the wave of the PM is going on in the entire country and the opposition leaders are speaking out of frustration. The meeting was presided over

by city president Vidyasagar Rai. In another meeting held at the City North office at Gulab Bagh, UP Minister Ravindra Jaiswal alleged that corruption increased in the country when ever the Congress government was formed. He accused the SP of 'creating' goons and mafias in the state. In the meeting held at the election office of Cantt assembly in Ravindrapuri Colony, MLA Saurabh Srivastava said we should be proud that we are the soldiers of the world's largest political party and it is time to break all the past records by taking each and every voter to the booth. In the meeting organised at the Assembly Election Office of Rohania, the chief guest and UP Minister of Dayalu, while enumerating the achievements ranging from Ram Mandir to Mudra Loan, Digital India, Make in India and bringing 25 crore people out of the poverty line, said that once again the time has come when we all should engage whole heartedly in fulfilling the important responsibility of building a developed India by ensuring the victory of BJP. The meeting was presided over by district president and MLC Hansraj Vishwakarma. In the meeting held at the election office of Sewapuri assembly, MLC Dharmendra Rai said today we all should ensure that not a single voter from any family is left out.

Ajay: Truth of Varanasi can be seen by visiting PM's adopted villages

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Congress candidate, supported by INDIA Bloc, Ajay Rai asked the social media to bring the reality of development in Varanasi and criticised the Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi for 'misleading' the people on the development and employment issues. Addressing a meeting of social media warriors at his Lahurabir located election office here on Sunday, he said the truth of Varanasi can be seen by visiting the villages adopted by the PM.

Besides, he said social media can highlight the reality of inland water transportation from Varanasi to Haldia, port built in the city, food processing unit, the reality of Namami Gange project, Amul plant etc. "In fact, Banaras is a colonial place for the PM and



Congress candidate Ajay Rai addressing social media warriors in Varanasi on Sunday.

his main objective is to snatch away all the contracts and employment opportunities and give them to Gujaratis," he alleged, appealing to the social media also to expose the reality of the mainstream media of the country because today the people have more trust and confidence in social media.

The meeting was presided over by Prof Satish Rai who, in his address, said as social media is an important weapon today

we have to use it strongly and make the important issues reach the people. The meeting was coordinated by Congress social media convener Vineet Choubey. On the occasion, coordinator of the Social Media Cell of Chhattisgarh Manish Tiwari, city Congress president Raghavendra Choubey, Dilip Choubey, Dr Om Prakash Rai etc were also present.

Earlier Ajay Rai started his public relations campaign from Shaheed Udayan where he appealed to the morning walkers to vote in favour of INDIA Bloc and flayed the Modi government for not being concerned with the basic facilities and needs of the people. "Inflation has made life difficult for the people. The issues of bread, education, health and unemployment have created an uproar in the entire country, including Kashi", he said.

Earlier, Ajay Rai addressed a meeting of intellectuals held under the conensorship of Bharat Bhushan Yadav in Sarangnath Colony, Sarnath. Rai said Kashi has been recognised in the field of spirituality, culture, civilisation, literature etc since time immemorial and appealed to the participants to guide the young generation to know the truth.

Meanwhile, on the instructions of founder of Lok Bandhu Party and former MLA from Hata Kuber Bhandari, national secretary of party and Uttar Pradesh in charge Guru Prasad has extended his support to INDIA Bloc, including Ajay Rai from Varanasi parliamentary seat in the Lok Sabha elections. Guru Prasad Singh reached Ajay Rai's residence in Lahurabir and handed over the party's letter of support to him.

Second randomisation of EVMs conducted

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In the presence of General Observer Amit Singh Negi, District Magistrate/ District Election Officer S Rajalingam and candidates/ their representatives contesting from Varanasi parliamentary constituency, the second randomisation of EVMs was conducted in the Commissionerate Auditorium here on Saturday.

In the second randomisation, a total of 2,346 EVMs were allotted booth-wise, including reserve for a total of 1,909 polling booths of the five assemblies of Varanasi parliamentary constituency in which 455 EVMs were allotted for Assembly Sewapuri, 488 for Rohania, 504 for Varanasi Cantonment, 496 for City North, 403 for City South.

On the occasion, the

DM/DEO informed the present candidates/representatives about the protocols of the Election Commission related to the security, maintenance and transportation of electronic voting machines.

General Observer Amit Singh Negi laid emphasis on ensuring strict compliance of the guidelines of the Election Commission of India (ECI) for free and fair elections by the

contesting candidates/their representatives. On the occasion, Additional District Magistrate (ADM/Administration)/ Deputy District Election Officer Bipin Kumar, ADM (F/R) Vandita Srivastava, District Informatics Officer Prasanna Pandey, ADIO NIC Avinash Sharma, contesting candidates/their representatives and other officers concerned were present.

Bansal: PM did many things for women empowerment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

National General Secretary of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Sunil Bansal hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the remarkable work done for women empowerment during the last 10 years. He was addressing the meeting of state, regional, district, city, Mandal and office-bearers of party's Mahila Morcha and women corporators organised at the BJP's Central Election Office of Varanasi Lok Sabha seat in Mahmoorganj on Saturday. Bansal said after the election results on June 4, the role of all the Mahila Morcha workers working with full devotion to ensure a big victory of the PM will be discussed everywhere and appealed to the participants to make the proposed Matrishakti Sammelan to be addressed by the PM at



BJP general secretary Sunil Bansal addressing women workers in Varanasi on Saturday.

Sampurnanand Sanskrit University on May 21 a success. He said that during his 10 years in office, the PM did many things for women empowerment and honouring the half population. "To make the Nari Shakti Samvad (Matrishakti Sammelan) to be organised as per the wish of the PM, all the women workers should ensure their participation and contact the women of every section and invite them to come to the pro-

posed programme", he said. He gave five tips to make Nari Shakti Samvad successful. The first task is that before the women workers' conference, make a list of all those women who were earlier associated with BJP and were active. "According to the list, by activating all those former women office-bearers and workers through contact and dialogue, invite them to attend the PM's Nari Shakti Samvad programme and hand over the responsibility", he said. Bansal said the second task is to prepare a team of 10 women at every booth and take special care that out of the total 1,909 booths of Varanasi Lok Sabha, teams of women from at least 1,800 booths should participate in Modi's programme. According to him, the third task is to invite various social organisations, including Bhajan Mandali, Kamal Sakhi Group

and others and the fourth task is to contact the women working in government jobs and also include professionals like doctors, engineers, advocates, teachers and invite them to attend the programme. He said the fifth task is that special care should be taken to ensure maximum participation of women from every category in the Nari Shakti Samvad programme. In the meeting Varanasi Lok Sabha in charge Satish Dwivedi, state BJP secretaries Archana Mishra and Meena Choubey, Zila Panchayat Chairperson Poonam Maurya, regional president of Mahila Morcha Namrata Chaurasia, city president Kusum Singh Patel, district chief Vinita Singh, Nirmala Singh Patel, former Mayor Mridula Jaiswal, Ranika Jaiswal, Rekha Chauhan, Rachna Agarwal, Asha Gupta, Aparajita Sonkar and many others were present.

Youth killed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A youth was killed after he fell into a pit along with his bike near Bawan village under Sajeti police station area late on Saturday night. After sustaining serious injury, the police sent him to Ghatampur CHC where the doctors declared him dead. Tilak Singh, father of Sachin (28) of Surajpur, Sajeti, had died of cancer on Saturday morning. Kin along with relatives had gone to Ghat for performing the funeral. They returned home at night. After returning home, Sachin had gone to drop some relatives in Nauranga village. When he was returning from there late in the night, he suddenly fell into the pit near Bawan village turn and was seriously injured. The passers-by informed the police which rushed to spot and sent him to Ghatampur CHC where he was declared dead by the doctors. The Sajeti SO said after informing the kin of the deceased, body had been sent for autopsy.

CAC's operational preparedness appreciated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

General Anil Chauhan PVSM UYSM AVSM SM VSM, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) & Secretary Department of Military Affairs (DMA) visited the Prayagraj based Central Air Command (CAC) on Sunday. The CDS was received by Air Marshal RKG Kapoor PVSM AVSM VM, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of CAC. During the visit, the CDS was given a briefing at the Headquarters related to operational aspects of the Central Air Command of the Indian Air Force (IAF).

The briefing was attended by senior officers of Indian Air Force and Indian Army and nearby Army and Air Force Stations. In his address, the General emphasised on maintaining the desired standards of readiness and alertness. He underlined requirement for strengthening jointmanship and fostering an environment of synergy in the armed forces. The address by CDS was tele-



cast live at all the Air Bases of the CAC through their in-house virtual platform SAM-VAD. The CDS also interacted with senior officers and appreciated the operational preparedness of CAC. This is the second visit of the CDS to Prayagraj in last seven months. The last time he visited the place was during the 91st Annual Air Force Day Parade conducted at Air Force Station, Bamrauli, on October 8 last year.

DRIVE: The Directorate of Career Planning & Counseling, Sam Higginbottom University of

Agriculture, Technology and Sciences (SHUATS) organised a campus placement drive for the students with three recruiting companies, IndiaMart Inter Mesh Ltd, Jubilent Food Works Ltd and Talent Serve here on Sunday. A total 68 students have been selected in these three companies. Director Career Planning and Placement Prof Ashok Tripathi highlighted the importance of organising campus placement drives in university, especially for the professional academic programmes. Vice Chancellor, Prof Rajendra B Lal congratulated the selected students.

Fire breaks out at bank

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Baroda Gramin Bank in Uttarapuri under Bilhaur Kotwali police area suddenly caught fire early on Sunday morning. On seeing the fire, the villagers informed the local police and fire brigade which rushed to the spot and toiled hard to extinguish the fire. Police have started probe in the matter. Due to electric short circuit, the bank caught fire on Sunday morning. The police rushed to the spot and contacted the bank manager Gyanendra Rajput for the keys to open the branch. With the permission of the bank manager, the police got the locks broken and the fire brigade extinguished the fire. Meanwhile, bank officer Manoj Katiyar, cashier Kapil Danoj, and field employees arrived there and found that the computer on the cash counter, chair, cash counting machine, some files, cash book, fan etc. were gutted in fire. After the fire was brought under control the officers opened the cash room and checked the status of its goods and vault etc. As the fire did not spread up to the cash room, everything, including the cash, was found safe and in tact there. Police have now started investigation in the matter. Inspector Bilhaur Keshav Kumar Tewari said the bank is situated in the house of Ramasrey in Uttarapuri.

WOMAN DIES: A woman was killed under the wheels of a train while crossing the Delhi-Howrah railway track in Khamhaila village under Mangalpur police station area of Kanpur Dehat on Sunday morning. Her body was recovered on the rail track. The police rushed to the spot and carried out investigation. Resham Devi (55) of Khamhaila village had left the house on Sunday morning for easing

herself. While crossing the railway track, she was hit by the speeding train and succumbed to her injuries on the spot. Her body was recovered near pole No 1077/15 on the track. The trackman informed the station master, Jhinhak, about the recovery of a body. Jhinhak rushed to the spot and sent the body for an autopsy after identification by the kin of the deceased. He said on receipt of autopsy report, further action will be initiated in the matter.

Meanwhile, a youth was knocked down by a speeding train in Patara of Ghatampur police station area. As a result he lost his left arm and leg. On getting information the RPF cops sent him to the Patara community health centre (CHC) from where after first aid he was referred to the LLR (Hallet) Hospital, Kanpur, where he succumbed to his injuries during treatment. After informing the kin of the deceased, the police sent the body for autopsy. Manish (25) of Jarailapurwa under Sheoli police station area of Kanpur Dehat, was in a private job by living on rent in Ghatampur with wife Kanchan and two children. On Saturday morning he was found injured between pole No.1401/06 and 1401/07 on the railway track on Kanpur-Banda railway line. The train driver informed the station master about the incident. Immediately the RPF cops with the help of ambulance sent him to the Patara CHC from where after first aid, the doctors referred him to the Hallet Hospital. Late in the evening, he succumbed to his injuries during treatment. Ghatampur inspector Pradip Kumar Singh said he was informed about the incident. After informing the kin of the deceased, the body had been sent for an autopsy.

Groundbreaking research paper awarded

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A groundbreaking research paper titled 'Study on the Metallurgical Characteristics of Seasonal Goods Recovered from Bihar and Jharkhand in India' has been honoured as an outstanding paper at the Spring Academic Conference, 2024 held in Korean Institute of Metals and Materials. The prestigious award was presented by the institute's Chairman, Dr Ju Se-Don, highlighting the exceptional quality and significance of the research.

This remarkable study is a collaborative effort between researchers from India and South Korea, spearheaded by Dr Sachin Tiwari of the Department of AIHC and Archaeology at Banaras Hindu University (BHU) and Prof Nam-Cheol Jo of National Kongju University, Seoul, South Korea. The research team includes Ji-Su Shin (National Kongju University), Min-Soo Han (Korea National University of Cultural

Heritage), Yong-Hyun Yoon (National Science Museum) and Yong-Jun Kim (Korea University). The research focuses on the ancient iron smelting techniques practiced in northern India, particularly in Bihar and Jharkhand. By analysing the metallurgical characteristics of artefacts from these regions, the study provides invaluable insights into the technological advancements and cultural practices of early iron-smelting communities. This project is part of the ongoing research granted under the scheme 'Potential Geoheritage of Eastern Kaimur: Insights from Archaeometallurgical Approach', funded by the Scheme for Promoting Trans-Disciplinary Research in BHU under Institute of Eminence (IoE).

In January 2023 the research team visited BHU, where they collaborated with Dr Sachin Tiwari and Dr Virag G Sontakke to organise a workshop at the Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) Centre of IIT-

BHU. Dr V Ramanathan, the coordinator of the IKS Centre hosted the lecture there. The workshop, titled 'Scientific Research on Traditional Iron Smelting and Archaeological Materials of Early Iron Age in Northern India', gathered experts to explore the historical and scientific aspects of ancient iron smelting.

During their visit, the team also studied the Asur tribe in Jharkhand, known for preserving ancient iron smelting techniques. The Asur tribe continues to practice traditional iron smelting on special occasions, offering a living link to historical methods and enriching the research context. This recognition underscores the importance of international collaboration and the profound impact of studying ancient technologies to understand human history and cultural heritage. The award highlights the dedication and innovative approach of the research team, setting a benchmark for future studies in the field.

Two day activity session ends

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A two day activity session titled 'Discover, Debate, Delight' concluded at Bharat Kala Bhavan in Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in collaboration with INTACH Varanasi on the occasion of International Museum Day on Saturday. The event aligning with the theme of museum education and research, aimed to engage educators and students in thoughtful discussions and activities.

The second day of the session was dedicated to teachers from nine schools across Varanasi. The day featured a spirited debate on the topic: 'Can virtual museums ever

fully replace the educational value of visiting a physical museum?' The session brought together a distinguished panel of speakers who presented well-rounded arguments both for and against the proposition.

The event was conceptualised by Deputy Director Bharat Kala Bhavan Dr Jasminder Kaur and convener of INTACH (Varanasi) Ashok Kapur. On the occasion the important dignitaries who were also present were Dr Suresh Nair (associate professor, Faculty of Visual Arts), Mandan Kushwaha (life member, INTACH, Varanasi), Dr Devendra Bahadur Singh, Deepak Bharathan Alathur, Dr

Swatantra Kumar Singh, Jawa Madhur and staff members of Bharat Kala Bhavan.

BHAN FELLOWSHIP: Dr Prajival Pratap Singh, a research scientist in the Department of Zoology at Banaras Hindu University (BHU), has been awarded the esteemed Dr MK Bhan Young Researcher Fellowship by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India.

This fellowship aims to inspire and support young and talented researchers in advancing their careers and promoting high-level research in the country post-PhD.

Faculty dev programme on mgmt concludes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A three-day Faculty Development Programme (FDP) on qualitative techniques for management and social science research concluded at the Institute of Management Studies, Banaras Hindu University (IM-BHU) on Saturday. The programme aimed to equip the researchers with advanced tools and methodologies to enhance qualitative research and analysis in their respective fields. This FDP was attended by 60 participants from various reputed institutes in different states of India, giving it national representation. During the FDP, the expert sessions were delivered by Prof Hamendra Kumar Dangi from the Department of Commerce, University of Delhi, Dr Arun Kumar Deshmukh and Dr Vishal Kumar Laheri from IM-BHU.

IM-BHU Director Prof Ashish Bajpai shared the concluding message with the audience, appealing to use the knowledge gained in their career to make the learning meaningful. The detailed FDP report was presented by Dr Vishal Kumar Laheri. Based on an excellent performance in a test and three-minute research proposal competition, all participants were awarded a certificate of completion by the Director and the Dean of the institute. Dean Prof HP Mathur proposed a formal vote of thanks and emphasised the importance of organising more such FDPs in the future to enhance the quality of research.

Man drowns in Ganga

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A man was drowned in the Ganga at Khereshwar Ghat in Shivrajpur police station area on Sunday morning. The divers recovered the body in the presence of the police and it was sent for autopsy. Mayank Tewari (30), son of Ashok Kumar Tewari of Ram Nagar, Bithoor, along with wife and children had gone to Khereshwar Ganga Ghat for a bath there on Sunday morning. While taking a bath, he slipped into the area where water was deep and drowned. The police rushed to the spot and pressed the divers who recovered the youth in an unconscious state after some time. He was taken to a private hospital where the doctors declared him dead. The police sent the body for autopsy.

YOUTH FOUND DEAD: a youth was found dead near a petrol pump in the Bilhaur police station area on Sunday. His friends rushed to the spot and identified the body and informed the kin of the deceased. The police have started a probe in the matter. After seeing an unidentified youth lying in an unconscious state near a petrol pump in Ashiqbagh Mohalla of Bilhaur, the passers-by informed the police. He was sent to the CHC where the doctors declared him dead. On hearing about the incident, his friend Sushil Kumar Yadav, son of Jairam Singh of Kharakpur, Indergarh, Kannauj, rushed to CHC and identified the body as of Rishi Srivastava, son of Padam Sahai Srivastava, of Ratania Purwa, Kanpur. He said the deceased was engaged in playing keypad in cultural programmes. Presently, the deceased was engaged in playing keypad in a 'Bhagwat Katha' programme being organised at

Jakhai Baba Ashram in Dharmpur village under Rasoolabad police station area of Kanpur Dehat. On feeling unwell, he had left for home on Saturday evening. The police said there were no injury marks on the body of the deceased. A probe was on in the matter. On the basis of autopsy report, further action will be initiated in the matter.

In another incident a mentally deranged youth and five goats were charred to death when a hut caught fire from the spark of chulha in Harnu village of Shivrajpur police station area on Sunday morning. In the incident, many other adjacent huts were also gutted in fire. On getting information fire brigade rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control in the presence of the district administration and police officials. For the past around seven years, about a dozen Mahut families belonging to Ghumantu community live in huts in the outskirts of Harnu village. On Sunday morning, from a spark of chulha during cooking at Jahira's house, the hut caught fire which soon assumed ugly turn and engulfed around half-a-dozen other huts into it. Villagers informed the fire brigade and local police when the former rushed to spot and brought the fire under control. However but by then, household goods of half-a-dozen families were gutted in fire. In the incident, a mentally deranged youth present in a hut and five goats were also charred to death. Police have started probe in the matter. Meanwhile a retired armyman was killed after falling from a tree on Sunday morning. The incident took place when he had climbed a tree to pluck mangos and suddenly fell on the floor when one of its branches suddenly broke.

CISF to take over counterterrorism role at Parliament as CRPF withdraws

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

More than 3,300 CISF personnel will take over the complete counterterrorism and anti-sabotage security duties at the Parliament complex from Monday following the withdrawal of over 1,400 CRPF staff from the country's most important symbol of democracy, official sources said.

The parliament duty group (PDG) of the CRPF wound up its entire administrative and operational paraphernalia -- vehicles, weapons and commands -- from of the complex on Friday and its commander, a deputy inspector general (DIG)-rank officer, handed over all the security points in the complex to the incoming CISF group, the sources said.

A total of 3,317 Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel are being inducted for securing both the old and new Parliament buildings and the associated structures in this complex located in central Delhi after the govern-

ment directed it to take over the task from the CRPF following the December 13 security breach incident of last year, a senior officer told PTI.

In a major security breach on the anniversary of the 2001 Parliament terror attack, two persons jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber from the public gallery during Zero Hour on December 13, 2023, released yellow smoke from canisters and shouted slogans before being overpowered by MPs. Outside the Parliament premises around the same time that day, two other persons sprayed coloured smoke from canisters while shouting slogans.

Following this incident, a committee under the chairmanship of CRPF DG was set up to look into the overall security issues of the Parliament complex and make suitable recommendations.

The CISF counterterrorism security unit will take over the full charge of the Parliament complex from 6 am on Monday, May 20, the officer



said, requesting anonymity.

It has deployed its staff to guard all the flap entry gates of the complex, posted canine squads, fire fighting personnel along with fire tenders, manpower at CCTV monitoring control room and communication centre apart from the pass section, watch towers apart from specialists to undertake anti-sabotage checks and other operations at the Parliament complex, he said.

With this, the CRPF PDG, Delhi Police (about 150 personnel) and the parliament security staff (PSS) who jointly secured the Parliament till now, stand withdrawn, a senior CISF officer said.

He said the CISF personnel have been undertaking familiarisation exercise of the complex for the last 10 days and the men and women personnel of the force who will man reception areas have been given light blue full sleeved shirts and brown pants apart from safari suits as their new uniform. The first officer quoted above

added that the PDG unit is expected to be merged with the six battalion strong VIP security wing of the CRPF, while the PSS staff could be tasked afresh for rendering security and protocol duties at other central government installations.

Some PSS staff could be retained for manning the lobbies of the house for marshal duties but a final decision is yet to be taken, he said.

The CISF contingent, according to sources, has been deployed on a temporary manner called the 'internal security duty pattern' and it is expected that it will be granted a full-fledged sanction as new government assumes office after the ongoing general elections, sources said.

The CISF personnel have been imparted refresher training in baggage screening, personal frisking, bomb detection and disposal, quick reaction terrorist counter, sniper task and public interaction and courtesy before being sent for the Parliament duty.

They have also trained recently with the 'black cat' commandos of the National Security Guard (NSG) who were air-dropped from an IAF helicopter on the new Parliament complex to simulate a terrorist attack, the sources said.

A CRPF officer said PDG troops who left the Parliament complex on May 17 clicked selfies and took photographs as a token of remembrance of "efficiently" guarding the country's highest temple of democracy.

"During the 2001 terrorist attack, CRPF personnel showed extreme bravery alongwith personnel from other agencies to defeat the dastardly assault with one personnel laying down her life in the line of duty while some others receiving gallantry medals and in 2023 they were not responsible for the breach that took place."

"The PDG personnel felt sad that they had to surrender this duty despite giving their best," the CRPF officer said.

Ladakh at receiving end for past ten years, alleges Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A day before polling for the Ladakh Lok Sabha constituency, the Congress on Sunday alleged that over the last 10 years, the Union Territory has been at the receiving end of the Modi Government's "malicious and step-motherly treatment".

Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh said Ladakhis have been protesting in freezing temperatures over the lack of control over their land and water. "The protests have been ongoing for months, including all 8 tribes and over 30,000 people, coming together for hunger strikes and huge marches," he said.

The Modi government's only response has been continued silence and apathy, Ramesh claimed. In a social media post, the Congress general secretary noted that on May 20, Ladakh will go to the polls, and "over the last 10 years, Ladakh has been at the receiving end of the worst of



the Modi government's Anyay Kaal - from complete apathy to malicious and step-motherly treatment".

"In August 2019, the Modi government stripped all representation from the people of Ladakh by downgrading them to a Union Territory without a legislature," he said.

"The greed of the Modi Sarkar and its crony corporate friends is threatening Ladakh's fragile ecosystems. Corporates in sectors like mining have their eyes set on Ladakh's natural resources, and if the Modi Sarkar is allowed back into power, there is nothing stopping

them from extracting wealth from the land and the people," Ramesh claimed.

The entire region is being "remote-controlled" from Delhi through a lieutenant governor, he alleged. A huge influx of tourists and urbanisation is putting pressure on Ladakh's resources, creating water shortages, the former environment minister said.

"Further, the Modi government's weakness has caused great harm to Ladakh's security and economy: The Modi government's cowardice has allowed China to seize 2,000 sq. Km of land in Ladakh, taking away 26 out of 65

patrolling points," he alleged.

"The Chinese occupation has directly affected thousands of Ladakhis, particularly indigenous shepherds who graze their sheep and goats in the highlands near the border," he claimed.

Ramesh said the Congress 'Nyay Patra' has clearly promised Sixth Schedule status to the tribal areas of Ladakh, granting critical autonomy to the local people to protect indigenous culture and the region's fragile ecosystem. "We have also outlined a detailed plan to address environmental issues, climate change, and natural disasters. On June 4, Ladakh will begin the process of healing, and return to the path of prosperity and stability!" Ramesh asserted.

Ladakh, a sprawling cold desert region, holds the distinction of being India's largest constituency in terms of area. It has around 1.84 lakh voters -- around 96,000 in Kargil district and over 88,000 in Leh district.

46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting to begin in Kochi from today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting begins in Kochi on Monday under the shadow of the Ukraine-Russia conflict, an issue that has been affecting the discussions for the past two years.

The 10-day deliberations among signatory nations to the Antarctic Treaty are expected to focus on collaboration between parties on research and exchanging information on plans for sustainable management of resources in the icy continent.

Also on the agenda for the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) is the development of a framework for regulating tourism in Antarctica, given the pristine and delicate nature of the continent, and applications by Belarus and Canada for consultative status at the deliberations.

"We expect the Ukraine conflict to figure in the talks and we have to ensure that it



doesn't affect the meeting in a big way," a senior official closely involved in the ATCM's organisation said.

Russia and Ukraine have consultative status or full decision-making roles at the ATCM, which takes all decisions by a consensus.

Russia's increase in surveys of the Antarctic region for oil and gas reserves has also caused some anxiety among the partner nations, some of

which believe that Moscow may stake claim to large swathes of the continent.

Union Earth Sciences Minister Kiren Rijiju is scheduled to formally inaugurate the ATCM at the Lulu Bolgatty International Convention Centre in Kochi on Tuesday. The ATCM and the 26th Meeting of the Committee for Environmental Protection is hosted by the Union Ministry

of Earth Sciences through the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research.

The meeting is also expected to deliberate on the development of a framework for tourism in Antarctica -- the only continent without any indigenous population. For the 2022-23 season, the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators reported 32,730 cruise-only visitors, 71,346 landed visitors and 821 deep-field visitors.

The ATCM has 56 member-nations, of which 29 have consultative status or decision-making powers.

The remainder have non-consultative status. Canada and Belarus are seeking consultative status but their petitions have run into opposition.

Officials said the argument against Canada's candidature is that the North American nation does not have a research station in Antarctica while the scientific output of Belarus is not considered to be adequate for granting consultative status.

Global life expectancy to increase between 2022 and 2050: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The latest findings from the Global Burden of Disease Study (GBD) 2021, published in The Lancet, forecast that global life expectancy will increase by 4.9 years in males and 4.2 years in females between 2022 and 2050.

Increases are expected to be largest in countries where life expectancy is lower, contributing to a convergence of increased life expectancy across geographies.

The trend is largely driven by public health measures that have prevented and improved survival rates from cardiovascular diseases, COVID-19, and a range of communicable, maternal, neonatal, and nutritional diseases (CMNNS), said the study.

It indicated that the ongoing shift in disease burden to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) -- like cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and diabetes -- and exposure to NCD-associated risk factors -- such as obesity, high blood pressure, non-optimal diet, and smoking -- will have the greatest impact on disease burden of the next generation.

As the disease burden continues to shift from CMNNS to NCDs and from years of life lost (YLLs) to years lived with disability (YLDs), more people are expected to live longer, but with more years spent in poor health.

Global life expectancy is forecasted to increase from 73.6 years of age in 2022 to 78.1 years of age in 2050 (a 4.5-year increase).

Global healthy life expectancy (HALE) -- the average number of years a person can expect to live in good health -- will increase from 64.8 years in 2022 to 67.4 years in 2050 (a 2.6-year increase).



To come to these conclusions, the study forecasts cause-specific mortality; YLLs; YLDs; disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), or lost years of healthy life due to poor health and early death; life expectancy; and HALE from 2022 through 2050 for 204 countries and territories.

"In addition to an increase in life expectancy overall, we have found that the disparity in life expectancy across geographies will lessen," said Dr. Chris Murray, Chair of Health Metrics Sciences at the University of Washington and Director of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME).

"This is an indicator that while health inequalities between the highest- and lowest-income regions will remain, the gaps are shrinking, with the biggest increases anticipated in sub-Saharan Africa."

Dr. Murray added that the biggest opportunity to speed up reductions in the global disease burden is through policy interventions aimed to prevent and mitigate behavioral and metabolic risk

factors.

"This accompanying study found that the total number of years lost due to poor health and early death (measured in DALYs) attributable to metabolic risk factors has increased by 50% since 2000."

The study also puts forth various alternative scenarios to compare the potential health outcomes if different public health interventions could eliminate exposure to several key risk factor groups by 2050.

"We forecast large differences in global DALY burden between different alternative scenarios to see what is the most impactful on our overall life expectancy data and DALY forecasts," said Dr. Stein Emil Vollset, first author of the study who leads the GBD Collaborating Unit at the Norwegian Institute of Public Health.

"Globally, the forecasted effects are strongest for the 'Improved Behavioral and Metabolic Risks' scenario, with a 13.3% reduction in disease burden (number of DALYs) in 2050 compared with the 'Reference' (most likely) scenario."

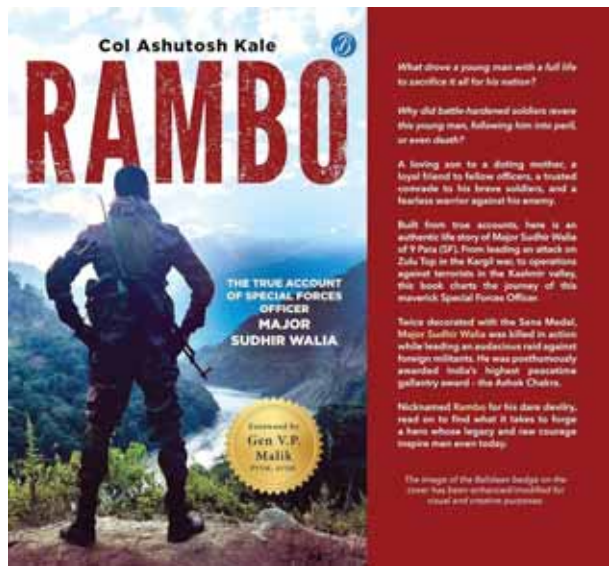
Book on life of martyr Major Sudhir Walia released

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Former Army chief General F V P Malik here released a new book titled 'Rambo' on the life of Major Sudhir Walia who was posthumously awarded nation's highest peace time bravery award Ashok Chakra.

Amongst a gathering of army veterans, Malik talked about the bravery of Walia, a Special Forces Officer, who had served as his ADC (Aide de Camp) when he took over as the Chief of the Indian Army.

In his foreword to the book, the former army chief writes, "My loss was personal." Written by Colonel Ashutosh Kale, who commanded the 3rd Grenadiers, the book is about



the daredevilry of Walia, attack on Zulu Top in the Kargil war and operations against terrorists in the Kashmir valley amongst other things.

The book offers readers an unprecedented look at the covert operations and the personal sacrifices of India's elite soldiers. It is a testament to the courage and dedication of Major Sudhir Walia, whose legacy continues to inspire Indians till now.

This is an in-depth look at Major Walia's various missions, from the jungles of Sri Lanka to the Lolab Valley and covert operations against Afghani terrorists. These operations, often shrouded in secrecy, are vividly recounted through firsthand accounts and meticulous

research.

Major Walia's daring actions, such as his final mission in the forests of Haphfruda in Kupwara, where he eliminated fifteen terrorists despite being gravely injured, underscore his indomitable spirit. His refusal to be evacuated and continued leadership until his last breath earned him the Ashok Chakra, India's highest peacetime gallantry award.

Gracing the book launch occasion were Lt General Pushpinder Singh, Colonel of the Parachute Regiment, Lt General Paranjit Singh Sangha, former Deputy Chief of Army Staff amongst many other notable personalities from the army and the media as well as Major Sudhir Walia's family.

Parade organised to mark successful training completion of Garud commandos

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

To mark the successful completion of training of Air Force Special Forces 'Garud' commandos, Maroon Beret Ceremonial Parade was held on Saturday at Garud Regimental Training Centre (GRTC), Air Force Station Chandinagar. Air Marshal PK Vohra, Senior Air Staff Officer, Western Air Command was the Reviewing officer for the parade, officials said here.

The Reviewing Officer congratulated the Garuds on successful completion of their training. He emphasised the importance of rigorous training and honing of Special Forces skills to keep pace with the changing security scenario.

He presented Maroon Beret, Garud Proficiency Badge and Special Forces Tabs to the successful Garud trainees and gave away trophies to the meritorious trainees. The best



all-rounder trophy was presented to Flight Lieutenant Shashwat Rana.

As part of the ceremony, Garuds demonstrated combat firing skill, hostage rescue, firing drill, assault explosives, obstacle crossing drill, wall climbing, slithering, rappelling and military martial

arts.

The Maroon Beret Ceremonial Parade is a significant event that marks the culmination of an extremely demanding training schedule. These newly passed out trainees enter the elite Garud force and add strength to the operational capability of IAF.

World Abdominal Cancer Day walk brings together thousands of people

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The International Multicity Awareness Walk held on Sunday brought together thousands of people across 25 cities worldwide including Mumbai, Bangalore, Surat, and Jaipur in India, as well as internationally in Oxford, London, Manchester, and New York.

However, the participants had the common message of promoting health and fitness to particularly keep the abdominal cancer at bay.

Organized by the Abdominal Cancer Trust in the national capital, the event featured prominent figures such as Dr Imroz Khan and Dr. Mukesh Kumar, Co founder of World Health and Wellness Fitness who joined in the walk to raise awareness about abdominal cancer prevention and early detection.

Dr. Sundep Jain, founder of Abdominal Cancer Trust, high-



lighted the significance of lifestyle choices in safeguarding one's health, emphasizing that a healthy lifestyle can significantly reduce the risk of abdominal cancer. The Trust is engaged in providing support including medication to the patients afflicted with abdominal cancer.

The 5th edition of the event was particularly special, with Jai Shri Perival praising the unique approach of raising cancer awareness through a walk. Participants were encouraged to stay vigilant about abdominal cancer symptoms and to seek medical consultation promptly.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

An intricate puzzle

Kejriwal aide's arrest sparks AAP-BJP war of words amid Maliwal's assault allegations

The alleged assault case involving former Delhi Commission for Women chief and AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal, in which she has named Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's PA Bibhav Kumar, keeps getting murky. The development came within days of Kejriwal's return to campaigning from Tihar Jail, where he had been incarcerated for his alleged role in the Delhi excise policy case. Now the arrest of Bibhav Kumar for the alleged assault has sparked a series of protests and political manoeuvres. The case centres around Maliwal who, interestingly, herself has been under scrutiny by the Anti-Corruption Bureau for alleged appointment irregularities in DCW. After first admitting to the assault, AAP now alleges that Maliwal was blackmailed with the fear of arrest in the case. Bibhav's arrest is linked to this ongoing investigation, adding fuel to an already volatile situation. In response to his aide's arrest, Kejriwal — accompanied by AAP MPs, MLAs and supporters — led a protest march to the BJP headquarters to show solidarity with Bibhav and "expose" the BJP's political vendetta. In a video message to the Prime Minister, Kejriwal asked the latter to arrest all top AAP leaders at once instead of doing that one by one. Kejriwal also emphasised that the action against Bibhav and Maliwal were attempts to stifle AAP's efforts to combat corruption and improve governance. On the other hand, the BJP has asserted that the law against corruption is being followed diligently. Its leaders argue that investigation is a necessary step in ensuring transparency and accountability in public offices. Interestingly, the Congress has chosen to remain silent on this issue. This non-committal stance could be seen as a strategic decision to avoid getting embroiled in the confrontation between AAP and BJP, both of whom are its political rivals in Delhi.

Timing is everything in politics; the cauldron is coming to a boil with less than a week to go for voting in Delhi on May 25. Meanwhile, the ongoing tussle between AAP and BJP is emblematic of the larger power struggle between the parties. This incident is likely to have ramifications beyond immediate political dynamics, potentially influencing voter perception and future elections. It would not be wise to assign motives to Maliwal at this point; besides, the case is now sub judice but one can safely say from experience that several of her past statements have been rather awkward. Once she tweeted she was a "proud daughter" and, on another occasion, said she was sexually abused by him when she was a child. The situation also brings to the fore issues of misuse of investigative agencies and the limits of political accountability. As both parties continue to trade barbs, the people of Delhi watch closely, hoping for resolutions that prioritise effective governance and justice over political expediency. As Buddha once said, three things cannot be hidden for long — sun, moon and the truth! We would know soon whether it was a political conspiracy or really a assault by her own party members!

PICTALK



Women carry staltice flowers in bamboo baskets, in Senapati district of Manipur

Promise and challenges of drones in agriculture

Drone technology shows promise in agriculture, offering efficiency and cost savings. Yet apprehensions galore hinder its adoption

Drone technology has gained popularity in the agriculture industry in recent years. Drones provide farmers with several advantages, such as higher yields, lower costs, and enhanced efficiency. However, there are worries that farmers would be hesitant to use drone technology because they don't know enough about it or are afraid of losing their jobs. We may examine the advantages of drone technology for the agricultural industry as well as any obstacles that might be preventing farmers from implementing it. Drones' advantages in the agriculture industry



In the agricultural industry, drones may be utilised for a variety of purposes, such as insect control, crop mapping, soil analysis, and irrigation. The following are the main advantages of drone use

1. Increased efficiency: Farmers can collect data and monitor crops more successfully because of drones' ability to cover huge expanses of land swiftly and efficiently. Early problem detection can result in quicker and more efficient responses.

2. Increased agricultural yields: Farmers may discover areas that need care by using drones to collect data on crop health. Farmers may raise agricultural yields and profit margins by resolving these problems.

3. Lower prices: By locating farm areas that need maintenance, lowering the need for physical labour, and lowering the usage of pesticides and other chemicals, drones may help farms cut costs.

4. Increased accuracy: Farmers can observe their crops in detail thanks to the high-resolution photographs and data that drones can collect. This can assist in identifying problem areas and guaranteeing that solutions are focused and successful. Drone technology adoption challenges in the agriculture industry Although farms might profit greatly from drone technology, several obstacles may prevent farmers

ers from using this tool. These are a few of the main obstacles:

1. Fear of losing one's job: Since fewer people will be required to undertake physical labour on farms as a result of the adoption of drone technology, many farmers are worried about losing their jobs.

2. Lack of expertise: Farmers may lack the expertise or training required to use drones safely. They might not be confident in their abilities to utilize it, which might make it difficult for them to accept this technology.

3. Cost: Since drones may be pricey, many farmers might not be able to afford to invest in this technology.

4. Regulatory obstacles: Farmers may find it challenging to use this technology if there are regulatory obstacles to the usage of drones in agriculture. Drone technology usage in rural India's agriculture industry is still in its infancy. This technology is attracting curiosity, but there are also worries about job loss and a lack of education and training. Nonetheless, initiatives are being made to overcome these obstacles and

promote the use of drone technology. The Digital India programme is a major endeavour that seeks to furnish rural regions with digital infrastructure. The initiative's emphasis on education and training may aid in addressing farmers' deficiencies in knowledge and experience. Furthermore, several efforts and organisations are working to further the application of drone technology in agriculture. To promote precision agricultural technology, such as drones, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) developed the Centre for Precision and Farming Technology. Farmers may be reluctant to accept this technology, though, due to worries about job loss and a lack of education and training. Farmers must have the support and training; they need to use this technology efficiently, as well as an understanding of its potential advantages.

(The writer is an assistant professor of agronomy, college of Agriculture & environmental technology, Surajmal University, Uttarakhnad; view are personal)

India tactfully manages US-Iran tensions

As India forges a vital partnership with Iran through the Chabahar port agreement, it must adeptly balance its regional interests against the backdrop of American concerns



BHOPINDER SINGH

Iran has had an unwarranted grip on the sensibilities of the US administrations, irrespective of their partisan divide. The moment for the bilateral fracture in American imagination starts from the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and the subsequent US Embassy hostage drama. The wounded memory for the Iranians is deeper and traced to the CIA-aided coup against the popular Prime Minister, Mosaddegh, in 1953. Undoubtedly, the religious puritanism of Ayatollah Khomeini's regime after the revolution pitted it ideologically against the 'West', but the public memory of the US support to Saddam Hussein (later ousting him) in the decade-long Iran-Iraq war, is now conveniently forgotten by the duplicitous American regimes. Later, Americans linked Iran to 9/11 and the birthing of Al Qaeda/ISIL, even though Iran didn't have anything to do with either. If anything, Iran and its proxies fought ISIL in Syrian-Iraqi swathes and were instrumental in decimating the same, though later the Americans killed the Iranian General Qasem Soleimani. Because sectarian undercurrents and the chessboard of American 'allies' (Israel and Arab Sheikdoms) have a checkmate from Iran and its proxies in Syria, Lebanon and Yemen - the unjustified demonizing of Iran continues. While countries like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan have contributed far more towards religious extremism and terror, they continue to receive American support, while the Iranians face crippling sanctions. Americans had unilaterally reneged on the Iran Nuclear Deal even when all other signatories i.e., P+1 countries and the UN watchdog agency IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) had confirmed that Iran had complied with all provisions. Pressure from Israel and Sheikdoms ensured that Iran continued getting conflated with everything going wrong in the Middle East, even if Iran did, or did not have any role in the same. While the Hamas group was supported by Iran (as indeed by Saudia Arabia and others, till recently), there is no credible evi-



dence to link Iran with the planning or execution of the 7th Oct 2023 attack, but the phantom of Iran linkages persisted. Pushed to a corner to retaliate to salvage its sovereignty pride the Iranians did retaliate, albeit, after getting forced to do so after its senior military officers were killed in Syria, by Israelis. The much-needed justification to 'prove' Iran's purported machinations and belligerence was offered and the Americans lapped it up with both hands - that it is the election year and flexing muscles against the 'enemy' i.e., Iran, brings its electoral benefits, vitiates the situation even further. Now Joe Biden who had earlier come to power with the promise to restore the Iran Nuclear Deal torn by the unhinged Donald Trump, is all but a forgotten memory. Today, Biden is trying to outdo Donald Trump in 'taking on' the Iranians, with even more sanctions. The White House issued a Statement, "Less than a week ago, Iran launched one of the largest missile and drone attacks the world has ever seen against Israel. Together with our allies and partners, the United States defended Israel. We helped defeat this attack. And today, we are holding Iran accountable-imposing new sanctions and export



WHILE INDIA NEEDS TO MAINTAIN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE US TO COUNTERANCE THE CHINESE THREATS, IT ALSO HAS ITS REGIONAL CONCERNS WHICH REQUIRE DE-HYPHENATION FROM US CONCERNS WITH IRAN

controls on Iran". The import of the same goes beyond the USA as it now seeks to potentially sanction any country dealing with Iran e.g., India, which has recently signed a 10-year contract to manage the strategic Chabahar port in Iran. This gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics bypasses Pakistani land routes, offers an invaluable Indian footprint on the other side of Pakistan (counters China-developed, Gwadar Port, in Pakistan) and strengthens Indian ties with the civilisational land of Iran. With the Taliban in Afghanistan tiring of Pakistan and the Iranians signing this deal, Delhi is justifiably excited about the evolved prospects of countering the Sino-Pakistani assertions in the theatre. While India needs to maintain its relations with the US to counterance the Chinese threats, it also has its regional concerns which require de-hyphenation from US concerns with Iran. India cannot be a blind minion of the US as it has its own bilateral and regional imperatives that warrant 'strategic independence' in decision-making, as was done by buying Russian oil and maintaining cordial relations with Moscow, whilst nuancing concerns for

Ukraine. To be fair, the Americans have recognised the Indian positions and compulsions which are not aimed at diminishing the US interest, but only towards protecting its own, hence the restraint in actuality, even as the war of words persists. In any case, the Biden administration will be at its voluble worst and indulge in sabre-rattling (especially on matters about Iran) and therefore important to understand their compulsion of tonality. It is with this backdrop that the Statement of the US official must be understood, when pressed about the Indian agreement with Iran, "You've heard us say this in several instances, that any entity, anyone considering business deals with Iran, they need to be aware of the potential risk that they are opening themselves up to and the potential risk of sanctions". The Americans will say what they have to and the Indians will do what they have to, as it is a well-understood position on both sides. India's strategic equation with Iran is not designed to diminish the US interest. (The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FOLLOW THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Madam — Apropos the news article "Mamata Promises to back INDIA in Power," published on May 16. The Chief Minister of Bengal, Mamta Banerjee, had earlier decided to go solo in the elections. Even the ruling party Trinamool Congress's (TMC) leader's atrocities against women of the Sandeshkhali haven't lowered the spirit of Didi (Mamta Banerjee). Annoyed with the saffron party at the centre and blaming it for hatching a conspiracy in the Sandeshkhali incident, the chief minister has decided to support the INDIA bloc from outside if it comes to power in the centre. Accusing Narendra Modi of not fulfilling any of the promises to the nation, Didi said Publicity and lies are his two weapons. According to the chief minister, the PM is a prachar Babu who does only 'prachar' and nothing else. Using such terms against the PM of the nation is a violation of the code of conduct. All political leaders should maintain the sanctity of the Constitution and follow a code of conduct while speaking publicly.

Abhilasha Gupta | Mohali

CHABAHAR PORT PACT

Madam — It refers to the news article "India And Iran Sign Chabahar Port Pact," this is my response. The Chabahar Port is a cornerstone of India's regional strategy, offering several critical advantages. It serves as a vital gateway for expanding trade with Central Asia, providing a direct, cost-effective route to the region's abundant resources. Additionally, Chabahar acts as a strategic counterbalance to China's influence, particularly in light of China's control of Gwadar Port in Pakistan. The port also offers a reliable alternative trade route to Afghanistan, bypassing the often volatile land routes through Pakistan and ensuring uninterrupted trade and aid flows. This collaboration with Iran further strengthens India's diplomatic ties and bolsters its position in the Asian geopolitical landscape. India's commitment to the Chabahar

Cheetri retires



Apropos the news article, "Stalwart Chhetri announces retirement," published on May 17, this is my response. The news of Sunil Chhetri's retirement has hit the Indian football community hard. As the much-admired and treasured Indian captain announced his decision to step away from international football after the FIFA World Cup qualification match

against Kuwait on June 6, emotions ran high across the country. Chhetri was the face of Indian football in a remarkable career spanning over 20 years.

With a legacy that has left an indelible mark on Indian football, the 39-year-old maestro's journey has been an inspiration to millions, reshaping perceptions of this beautiful game in the nation along the way. Since his debut in 2005, Chhetri has amassed a multitude of accolades, including setting records for the highest number of appearances and goals scored for India. With 94 goals in 150 matches, Sunil Chhetri holds the third position on the list of most international goals, trailing behind only the two superstars, Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo. "A simple ball unites us all", the saying goes. Needless to say, Sunil Chhetri was a perfect example of this soccer quote.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

project, despite the potential risk of US sanctions, underscores its strategic autonomy. India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar defended the Chabahar Port deal with Iran despite US sanctions warning, emphasising its regional benefits. India views the port as crucial for accessing Central Asia while bypassing Pakistan. Despite US pressure, India asserts its strategic independence through the deal to counter China's influence in the region.

Amarjeet Kumar | Hazaribagh

CRUELTY AGAINST ANIMALS

Madam — Apropos the feature article, "Assault most foul for kindness to animals," by Hiranmay Karlekar, published on May 18, this is my response. Compassion for all living creatures has been the philosophy of India. In most Indian households, rural and urban, when people cook, they reserve a portion of the food for cows, dogs and birds. However, human beings, born as a superior species, consider themselves the sole claimant to this planet and its related div-

idents. Dog lovers aiding animals face assaults by impostors posing as human saviors, reflecting a concerning trend of violence.

Animals may be mute but we as a society have to speak on their behalf as animals breathe like us and have emotions. Even though India, with its population of over 1.42 billion, still faces significant challenges in addressing animal cruelty. Every minute, an animal in India faces abuse, despite existing laws like Sections 428 and 429 in Animal Laws. The State Government does not take animal abuse cases too seriously, making it difficult to calculate just how common they are. India was given a "C" under the Animal Protection Index (API) and is also a moderate performer under the Sanctioning Cruelty category. Unfortunately, these animal abuse statistics have shown, that animal cruelty is a real issue in India that takes millions of victims every year.

Abhijit Roy | Jamshedpur

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FIRST COLUMN

CONNECTING THE MIND AND BODY

Harnessing the potential of mind is the key to true happiness



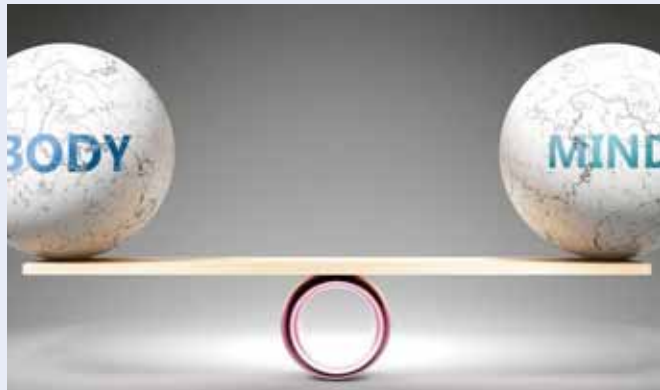
RAVI VALLURI

What is the difference between PK and PIKU? Two letters, 'I' and 'U.' I is us and U are them (an extra-terrestrial Aamir Khan). Their CPU is cerebral and our CPU is at the level of the abdomen. Or say for vast multitudes the focus is on the abdomen. It would be quite captivating to watch the main protagonists PK (of the eponymous movie) and Bhaskor (of Piku fame) sharing their thoughts and respective metabolisms in a spaceship. Food has a tremendous impact on our system, which we do not quite comprehend. Improper diet first takes a toll on the metabolism and then attacks other organs of the body. Simply put, the intake of toxic foods generates repugnant thoughts and results in a weak mind and body.

The human mind is an enigma and a reservoir of potential. But the moot question is how do we tap this potential? The mind is a movie theatre where we script and enact innumerable movies and soap operas. Technology alone cannot be a substitute for the enormous potential of the mind. It needs to be cultured, harnessed and harmonized with needs and wants.

We need to distinguish the brain from the mind. The brain is an organ that serves as the centre of the nervous system in all vertebrate and most invertebrate animals. Only a few invertebrates such as sponges, do not have a brain, diffuse or localized nerve nets are present instead. Mind on the other hand, is the faculty of consciousness and thoughts. It is an individual's intellect or memory of his attention span or will.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has captured it very succinctly. He says the mind is like the sky and thoughts are like clouds. Your thoughts make or mar the progress and development of the mind.



To be happy in life humans need to calm the obdurate and recalcitrant mind. Further keep reminding ourselves that we are blessed, grateful and have abundance in our lives. Life is full of valleys and peaks. It can never be a rising curve or a straight line permanently.

The human mind vacillates between the past and the future. In the past, the mind is regretful and if it is in the future, it is anxious. In either situation, the mind is not at peace or in the present moment and thus remains unhappy.

Incidentally, there is a deep connection between the stomach and the mind. That is why it is called the gut feeling or the sixth sense. Our solar plexus keeps sending us signals. It depends as to whether we are conscious and wakeful enough to grasp those signals.

Humans can truly celebrate only if we can silence our minds. There are techniques to do it and develop a relaxation room or space in our minds and harness the energy so that it does not get enervated. By practising Suryanamaskars and Padmasadhana as crafted by Gurudev we can enhance our Prana, (chi) or energy levels substantially.

This energy can be channelled in innumerable ways. There may be some who may practice meditation, breathing techniques or simply observe silence to quieten the mind. The path is chosen based on our personality type. Several others through unflinching prayers and reading inspirational literature can silence the mind. But the aim is to be in the present and lead a happy life. Let our minds not be judgmental and complain and cling to negativities. Willy-nilly we provide the hook to hang the coat of negativity.

"Life gives you plenty of time to do whatever you want to do if you stay in the present moment," writes Deepak Chopra.

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

Economic crisis takes a backseat in elections



SHIVAJI SARKAR

As India's election fever rises, the spotlight shifts from core economic issues to religious controversies and symbolic debates



In this dance of democracy, scarce resources are seemingly rambling over the election tempo. The religious slant on employment and siller issues like the mangal sutra raised are for diverting from the core issue that has as yet to be answered by the pre-poll slogan of "we are the fifth largest economy". Aren't we that large? Some stats say that but the country has tougher stats to counter like the difficult balance of payments and still grim, Manipur the embattled State, for the failure of the provincial Government has over 67000 people displaced during the last year because of the ethnic conflict. There are also reports that farmers plough into the Punjab BJP poll campaign and express similar wrath in Haryana as well. They tell a political party to be people-friendly as also kisans are not born for doles. And Agniveers on their death are not being given a salute is a national cry.

Jobs not being there is the reality. Urban joblessness has risen to 6.7 per cent from 6.5 per cent in March 2024. The men's unemployment has jumped to 6.3 per cent from 5.8 per cent. Periodic labour survey data is a pointer to difficult job scenarios. This is reflected in the elections by the Bihar caste survey that indicates more difficult situations for marginal castes, a detested reality. Caste denotes empowerment as well as deprivation.

Would a Congress manifesto professing over 50 per cent reservation serve the issue? The BJP contests it. It is accused of wanting to rob reservations. It is repeatedly denied by RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat. No party has answered if jobs are not there, how would a reservation help? National Commission for Backward Classes has warned West Bengal and Punjab Governments for not "fully using the space available under the 50 percent ceiling for reservations for scheduled castes, tribes and backward classes and OBCs". It asked Bengal to increase it by 5 per cent and Punjab by 13 per cent. It finds that



THE MAHANAVRATNA AND NAVRATNA INDUSTRIES WERE DOING WELL WHEN MOST OF THESE WERE AXED OR SABOTAGED, LIKE AIR INDIA AND HMT, TO FACILITATE THE GROWTH OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR, WHICH EARNED HUGE PROFITS BUT DID NOT CREATE JOBS

Bengal filled up 45 per cent of the quota and Punjab only 37 per cent. The worst may be Arunachal Pradesh. Yet another sex racket is busted with eight Government officials among 21 arrested. The International Labour Organisation finds 28 million men women and children are in forced labour due to a cycle of poverty. Of these 63 percent are in the private sector. Forced labour generates \$ 236 billion in illegal profits globally every year.

"We now know that the situation has only got worse. The international community must urgently come together to take action to end this injustice," said the ILO Director General.

The report, titled 'Profits and poverty: The economics of forced labour', also estimates that traffickers and criminals are generating close to \$10,000 per victim, up from \$8,269 (adjusted for inflation) a decade ago. The survey also said that forced commercial sexual exploitation contributes to more than two-thirds (73 per cent) of overall illicit profits, despite accounting for only 27 per cent of all victims in privately imposed work. "Total annual illegal profits from forced labour are highest in Europe and Central Asia (\$84 billion), followed by Asia, including India and the Pacific (\$62 billion), the Americas (\$52 billion), Africa (\$20 billion) and the Arab States (\$18 billion)," the report said.

The ILO cautions India. It also worked on conditions of Indian labour in the Arab countries. In a scenario, where people compromise with their dignity, the ILO doubts the figures on India's galloping progress. The supposed \$3 trillion economy, highly burdened

with debt, has an annual repayment of over Rs 10.4 lakh crore.

Economic issues remain at the forefront of the voters. Globally shrinking jobs, particularly in IT, has rattled many Indians. Political parties offering sops of reservations or apprenticeships of Rs 1 lakh a year (approx. Rs 8000 plus a month) sells well among the burgeoning numbers of jobless, who are already hit by one of the highest inflation of 55 per cent in ten years. It is not easy for them to manage it amid farmers' distress and the trade deficit widening to a four-month high at \$19.1 billion. Exports rise by one per cent to \$35 billion and imports by over 10 per cent to \$54.1 billion. This upsets the Government's calculations on the impending forex reserves.

How would the country improve the job scenario? The age-old move to wean the workers away from the farms has failed. Still, agriculture employs over 54 per cent of the Indian workers. The Nehruvian economy created robust public sector organisations. In 1994-2000, PSUs employed 19.4 million (about 2 crores) people or 69 per cent of the total employed. The other 31 per cent were employed in the central and State Governments. Some 3.4 million jobs were added to non-farm payrolls and unemployment at 5.6 per cent had fallen from 6.6 per cent.

In sharp contrast, in 2021-22, PSU employment reduced to 8.61 lakh. And it is gradually reducing. According to official statistics, employment in the organized sector is now a mere 8.34 per cent, of which the public sector accounts for 5.77 per cent and the private sector only 2.58 per cent in the total employment generated.

The Government's massive infra investment of Rs 11 lakh crore this fiscal may have added some jobs in the construction sector but these short-term jobs are not considered quality work. Apart from infra investments are subject to erosion in many ways, right from excess cost estimation to longer gestation.

So the promise of reservation is a dream. According to CMIE, employment in India increased by a mere 5.8 million till March 2023. An additional 119 million people were not added to the potential labour force during the same. The estimates show that self-employment has been the chief driver of the Indian job market, which was hit hard by demonetisation crushing a parallel self-sustained economy.

Poll promises apart, the country is in the grip of a severe economic crisis. Ideally, more PSUs are required to stop labour exploitation in the private sector as well as their disinclination to create jobs. The Mahanavrata and Navratna industries were doing well when most of these were axed or sabotaged like Air India and HMT to facilitate the growth of the private sector, which earned huge profits but did not create jobs.

Reversing it would require revival and reforming the Planning Commission and reshaping the economy in the public sector where the private sector would have to compete on equal terms. Reservations to benefit the deprived castes then only would yield results. Would a revamp be possible?

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

Complex challenges necessitate consciousness and policy shift

India's pressing issues demand pragmatic action and a collective mindfulness shift for lasting, transformative change

India faces multitudes of challenges arising from different quarters. It is tempting to think of these problems as belonging to society, polity, economics etc. But essentially all problems have their roots in the mind of the human being and arise from a lack of adequate understanding of the self. The solutions therefore have to be both in the external and the internal domain. Let us look at the five major conflicts and challenges plaguing India. A vision for the future would involve constructively responding to these problems.

1. Climate Change
It is well-established that climate change is an anthropogenic phenomenon. Ladakh is already agitating about the palpable changes that climate change is inflicting on the



ACHARYA PRASHANT

region's ecology. Five years is too long a time if India does not immediately take corrective steps. There is a terrifying lack of public awareness on this issue leading to political inaction. How are we planning to deal with swathes of terrible heat waves that are going to engulf the country? What will diminishing crop yields and extreme weather events do to the poor? Do we not know the origins of the toxic air that we

are consuming or the water distress we are facing? We continue to wreck the Himalayas with deforestation and the construction of massive carbon-emitting infrastructure, despite knowing that this is causing erratic rain patterns, melting of the glaciers and eventual destruction of life as we know it.

Blind lust for consumption comes from the blind belief that consumption is an indicator of the fulfilment or success of one's life. The sheer size of our population coupled with this notion of consumerism is a recipe for self-destruction. In the next 5 years, we need education and mass-awareness programs on this biggest threat that mankind faces and also genuine efforts towards correcting the consumption-

based flawed philosophy of life, through programs on self-awareness.

2. Animal Rights
The same lust that threatens to destroy the planet also co-opts the rights of all living creatures on Earth. The problems of animal rights violations, ecology loss and biodiversity extinction - all arise from the same source. When we talk of animal rights, it is today unfortunately a struggle for the basic right to survive. Close to 50% of all living species on the planet have gone extinct in the last 50 years. Most of it is because of violent human action. 100-1000 species go extinct every day. Also, this is 100 to 1000 times faster than the natural extinction rate.

As Indians and as humans, we can survive either physically or

spiritually with the kind of carpet 'speciecide' we have launched against the entire planet. In its scale and brutality, it exceeds any act of violence the Earth has ever seen. It is especially lamentable to see that India, with its Ahimsa, is among the worst perpetrators of atrocities towards life-forms. Be it meat exports, the expansion of the dairy industry, or the organised destruction of animal habitats through so-called developmental activities, it only augurs doom for all.

In the next 5 years, I wish to see direct and strong action on this front, which can only result from an arousal of public consciousness.

3. Education
Public statistics on the State of India's education portray the

deep waters that the country is in. There are startling revelations on the basic quantitative and linguistic abilities of school students, not to mention the unemployability of college pass-outs. Compared to the developed world and the mass of developing countries, this highlights the utter lack of importance that Indian society places on education.

The problems of today can have only spiritual solutions and we have kept the young population oblivious of spirituality. Our education has become very dangerously anti-life. A human being is alive only if he can reflect and understand. There is a need to urgently ramp up the basic education infrastructure of the country and also to prioritize the integration of life

education into the modern education system.

In the next 5 years, we need to see an education system that places deep emphasis on both Vidya (knowledge of the self) and Avidya (knowledge of the world).

4. Protection of rights of the marginalised communities
More than half of the world's wealth resides in the hands of less than 1% of individuals. The situation in India is no different. When national resources are commanded by just a few individuals, the outcome is that much of the world is plagued by poverty, even starvation. The glamorization of wealth and the promise of pleasure has made the middle classes disconnected and indifferent to the stark realities of the world.

In the next few years, the rights of the vulnerable sections must be defended in all ways - through education, legal frameworks and socio-religious reform.

5. Creative and dignified employment for the youth
Work is not something that you can choose as per the prevailing norms in your academic institution family or community. I would want to see, in the next 5 years, the creation of an academic, social and economic environment that brings creative vocation to the youth, not just as a means of livelihood but as the fulfilment of life itself.

(The author is a Vedanta teacher, author and the founder of Prashant Advait Foundation; views are personal)



Sena Vs Sena on six seats as Maharashtra polls conclude today

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has recognised the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena as the "real" party, but a fierce battle is being waged between the "Asli" Sena and the "nakli" Sena - as Prime Minister Narendra Modi frequently ridiculed the Uddhav Thackeray-headed faction as in his election rallies in the state -- for six seats, as the 13 constituencies—including half a dozen seats in Mumbai -- go to the fifth and last phase of Lok Sabha polls in Maharashtra on Monday.

Being held under the shadow of the June 2022 vertical split in the Shiv Sena which spawned in a new outfit led by breakaway faction leader Eknath Shinde, Monday's polls are a litmus test for the "asli" and "nakli" Senas which will not only prove as to which is the "real" Sena in the eyes of people but it will also set stage for the crucial elections to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) which

incidentally is the richest and biggest civic body in Asia. Having absolute control over the country's commercial capital for governance at the Centre being the prime objective, both the ruling BJP-led MahaYuti and the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) have thrown everything into their respective campaigns in their desperate bid to capture all the seats in the "maximum" city and four adjoining constituencies - Thane, Kalyan, Bhiwandi, Palghar - in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR).

While there is a lot at stake for the ruling BJP and its ally Shinde-led Sena to pile up numbers for the ruling NDA in the polls, the Uddhav Thackeray-headed Sena (UBT) has worked in tandem with the Congress and Sharad Pawar-headed NCP to help the Opposition INDIA bloc turn the tables on the Narendra Modi-headed ruling front -- which looked invincible in the beginning but has weakened markedly in recent weeks. Unlike the four phases of the LS

polls in the state where the fate of contesting candidates in as many as 34 constituencies was sealed, the fifth phase is very crucial for both the ruling and Opposition formations as they may throw up a few surprises or upsets, notwithstanding the high-level of confidence displayed by the key players in the two feuding camps.

A staggering 2.47 crore voters in Mumbai North, Mumbai North Central, Mumbai North West, Mumbai North East, Mumbai South Central, Mumbai South, Thane, Kalyan, Bhiwandi, Palghar, Nashik, Dindori and Dhule constituencies will go to polls on Friday to decide on the fate of 264 candidates in the fray.

The Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena, which is taking on the Uddhav Thackeray headed rival Sena in all the six seats it is contesting, while its bigger brother BJP has fielded candidates in the remaining seven seats.

Apart from having a battle royale with the Shinde Sena in six constituencies, the Sena (UBT) is contesting two more



seats, while allies - Congress and Sharad Pawar-led NCP have put up candidates in three and two constituencies respectively.

The six most watched out constituencies where the two Senas are fighting each other are: Nashik, Kalyan, Thane, Mumbai north-west, Mumbai south-central and Mumbai south.

That the BJP is not taking any chances can be evidenced from the fact that its campaigner Narendra Modi held a roadshow and later addressed a

president Uddhav Thackeray were the key speakers. Interestingly enough, Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi did not campaign in Mumbai or the neighbouring areas.

Key contests are being witnessed in the constituencies like Mumbai north, where Union Minister and BJP leader Piyush Goyal is pitted against Bhusan Patil of the Congress, in Kalyan where chief minister Eknath Shinde's son Dr Shrikant Shinde - who is seeking election to Lok Sabha for the third consecutive term -- is taking on Vishal Darekar Rane of the Sena (UBT) and in Thane where Shinde's close aide Naresh Mhaske is slugging it out against two-time Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Rajan Vichare.

Renowned lawyer Ujjwal Nikam of the BJP—who functioned as the Special Public Prosecutor in the 26/11 Mumbai case and contributed to the hanging of the lone convicted accused Mohammed Ajmal Kasab— is fighting Mumbai Regional Congress Committee president Varsha

Gaikwad in Mumbai South, sitting Sena (UBT) MP Arvind Sawant, who had defeated former Union Minister and then congress leader Milind Deora, is pitted against Yamini Jadhav of the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena.

In Mumbai North-West, Shiv Sena's Ravindra Waikar, an MLA who recently joined the Shinde camp is locked in a fierce contest against Shiv Sena (UBT) nominee Amol Kirtikar, who incidentally is the son of sitting Shiv Sena two-time MP Gajanan Kirtikar. Sr Kirtikar continues to be in the Uddhav Thackeray-led Sena.

In Mumbai South Central constituency, sitting MP and Eknath Shinde Sena candidate Rahul Shewale is battling it out against the Shiv Sena UBT candidate and former MP Anil Desai.

The Mumbai North-East seat is witnessing a keen contest between Sanjay Dina Patil of the Shiv Sena (UBT) and Mihir Kotecha of the BJP.

In Bhiwandi constituency, the contest is between Kapil

Moreshwar Patil of the BJP and NCP (Sharad Pawar) nominee Suresh Mhatre.

In Palghar, BJP's Hemant Savara is pitted against Bharti Kamdi of the Shiv Sena (UBT). Given the prevailing situation in the constituency, Rajesh Patil from Bahujan Vikas Aghadi may cut into both BJP and Shiv Sena (UBT) vote banks.

A fierce contest is on between the MahaYuti and MVA candidates in three poll-bound constituencies of north Maharashtra - Dhule, Dindori and Nashik. Ramrao Bhamre of the BJP is fighting Shobha Bachao of the Congress in Dhule, while in Dindori, Murli Bhaskar Bhagare of the NCP (Sharad Pawar) is taking on Dr Bharati Pravin Pawar of the BJP. In Nashik, Hemant Tukaram Godse of the Shinde Sena is battling out with Rajabhau (Parag) of the Sena (UBT).

In Bhiwandi, sitting BJP MP Kapil Patil is involved in a fight against Suresh Gopinath Mhatre alias Balya Mama of the NCP (Sharad Pawar).

Former BJP sarpanch shot dead in Shopian

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

An ardent follower of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and a former Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) Sarpanch, who himself sowed seeds of peace and tranquillity and saw democracy flourishing in the areas which remained a 'hotbed of militancy', was shot dead from a close range by 'unidentified terrorists' inside his village home in the Heerpora area of Shopian late Saturday night. The deceased has been identified as Aijaz Ahmad Sheikh.

His brutal killing may once again trigger a 'wave of terror' in the rural pockets and may also cast a shadow on the ongoing Lok Sabha polls in the valley.

According to reports, terrorists barged inside the house of Aijaz Ahmad Sheikh around 10.00 p.m. on Saturday and sprayed bullets on him from a very close range. Critically injured Aijaz was immediately rushed to the nearby hospital where he succumbed to his fatal injuries.

The Kashmir Zone Police confirmed the attack in a post on the microblogging site 'X', stating, "Terrorist fired upon a person Aijaz Ahmad at Heerpora, Shopian. Injured evacuated. The area has been cordoned off. Further details to follow." They later updated, "He was removed to hospital but succumbed to grievous injuries during the initial treatment". In a separate attack, terrorists also targeted a tourist couple



from Rajasthan in the Yanner area of Pahalgam in Anantnag late Saturday evening. The injured tourists were immediately rushed to the hospital where their condition was stated to be stable. They have been identified as Farah Khan and Tabrez Khan of Jaipur in Rajasthan.

Meanwhile, several clips surfaced on various social media platforms soon after news of the targeted killing of a former BJP sarpanch was confirmed. In these videos, he can be seen talking about the transformation Kashmir Valley was witnessing under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

During one of these chats, he is also seen explaining various developmental schemes which have helped youth in the valley leading to peace. He is also heard explaining that he remained a stone pelted and now he is working passionately

to strengthen democracy at the grassroots. The stone pelting has vanished, the graph of terrorism is on the decline and through multiple schemes the issue of unemployment and job opportunities have been addressed by the ruling dispensation headed by Narendra Modi.

Condemning the brutal attack on a former Sarpanch Lieutenant Governor Jammu and Kashmir, Manoj Sinha in a statement said, "I am deeply shocked at the terrorist attack and the brutal killing of former Sarpanch, Aijaz Ahmad Sheikh. He was an exemplary grassroots leader and will be remembered for his selfless service to the people. My thoughts and prayers are with his family, friends and admirers".

He said the government has given a free hand to the J&K Police and security forces to crush terrorists and their associates. I have complete faith in the bravery of our personnel and the perpetrators of this attack will be punished soon. Our security forces will also hunt down those elements who are helping the terrorists and trying to disrupt J&K's developmental journey".

The heinous attack on tourists at Pahalgam is also distressing. I have already instructed the Administrative & Police officials to provide the best possible treatment to the injured couple.

"We strongly condemn the killing of ex-Sarpanch Aijaz Ahmad Sheikh in Heerpora, Shopian, South Kashmir, by terrorists today," a statement issued by the BJP media cell in Kashmir said.

"Aijaz Ahmad was a brave soldier of the Bharatiya Janata Party in Jammu and Kashmir. The BJP firmly stands with the family of Aijaz Ahmad, who lost his life in this terror attack".

BJP President, J&K Ravinder Raina said onward Pakistani terrorists once again bled the humanity in Kashmir and the Martyrdom of BJP Leader #Aijaz_Ahmad_Sheikh Sahib will not go in vain, culprits will be taken to task at any cost. Several Kashmir-based mainstream politicians including former Chief Ministers Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti also condemned the heinous attack targeting the former sarpanch at this crucial juncture. Dr Farooq Abdullah also demanded an immediate time-bound probe into the killing of

BJP Sarpanch and attack on tourists

Netizens too reacted sharply and condemned the targeted killing of a former BJP sarpanch.

The mortal remains of Aijaz Ahmad Sheikh were brought to his village home early Sunday morning where a large gathering of mourners had assembled to pay their tributes to him.

Irfan Ahmad Sheikh, a close relative of Aijaz Ahmad Sheikh Sunday morning informed media persons at his residence, "Around 10 pm, we heard the sound of shooting but we had no idea who it was and from where the sound came from. After 10-15 minutes, his mother said that somebody shot her son. We don't know from where the shooter came and where he went. After 10-15 minutes, Police and Army came here and we took him (Aijaz Ahmad Sheikh) to the hospital, the doctor declared him dead..."

The last rites were performed in the local graveyard of his village. BJP leaders of the Kashmir unit led by party spokesman Altaf Thakur staged a protest against the killing of BJP worker Aijaz Ahmad Sheikh and the alleged attack on tourists at BJP headquarters in Srinagar.

The protesters were carrying banners displaying slogans against Pakistan. The placards read 'Stop innocent killings'. The BJP leaders also demanded stern punishment for those involved in the killing.

Kochi Port turns green as LNG powered carrier sails across

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The Vallarpadom Container Terminal at Kochi, one of the biggest ports in Asia "turned green" on Sunday as 365 meter long container carrier sailed into the jetty to unload giant containers. It is not because of jealousy that the port turned green but the kind of fuel which is being used to power the ship's engines. Instead of conventional diesel, the ship is powered by LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) which is eco-friendly and fuel efficient, Captain Bhaskar Kunji, chief pilot of Kochi Port Trust, told the Pioneer.

Hitherto all ships that berthed in Kochi were sailing on diesel. "I will not say this is the first LNG powered ship that has called on Kochi as the LNG meant for the terminal near the Port have seen some containers that use the gas as fuel. But this is the first time a container powered by LNG calls on Kochi Port," said Bhaskar who led the ship from outer sea to the Port through the complex shipping channel.

The advantage with LNG is that it is fuel efficient as well as less polluting than diesel. "Moreover, the ships could switch over to diesel in the



eventuality of the LNG getting exhausted mid-way. We rate this as a game changer in global shipping business," said Bhaskar.

The Ship MSC ROSE (owned by Aponte family based in Italy and has headquarters in Switzerland) has the capacity to carry 15,500 TEU (Twenty Equivalent Unit, a measure of the cargo capacity used in shipping parlance).

One TEU means volume of a 20 foot long inter modal container (19.1 foot long and eight foot wide) metal box. "You are in for major surprises because much bigger container carriers are on their way to India since the last three-four years because of the changed economic scenario. India is a major player in global trade and it is the impact of the development that such carriers call on ports in India," said a shipping executive working with a foreign company.

Good reason for all to turn green and go green

CPI(M) accepts bete noire's prayer song and sings it too

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The obsession to emerge as a poet-cum-intellectual has put a CPI(M) leader in Kerala in major trouble. Deepa Nishanth, a junior lecturer in Malayalam in a government college in Thrissur was so thrilled by the Gana Geetham (official poem) of RSS, her party's bete noire, and published the same in her social media page as if she herself has written the same.

The poem in question was written by late P Parameswaran, RSS ideologist and was published as a tribute to the Sangh. "The poem is included in the book Gananjali (musical homage) and is always sung as a prayer in Sangh meetings. But as a convention, the names of authors are not published along with these poems," T G Mohan Das, a Sangh ideologist, who has been singing it in all meetings since 1969, told The Pioneer.

Deepa, who is already in the dock for copying and plagiarizing many poems, is on a trip to Britain, ostensibly on a personal mission though she is propagating the Kerala style Marxism among the former colonial masters of India. She had posted pictures of British landscapes and added the poem to impress her followers.

EC shifts focus to... YouTube happy hunting ground for wildlife traffickers

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also claimed that the Congress and the Samajwadi Party will run a bulldozer over the Ram temple if elected to power, prompting the Congress to complain to the Election Commission on Saturday. He also alleged that the opposition wanted to bring back Article 370.

The campaigning saw high-pitched rhetoric by both the BJP and the INDIA bloc. PM Modi also attacked Congress claiming that the UPA government had wanted to allocate 15 per cent of the budget to Muslims. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge widened the gamut of poll guarantees of his party when he promised 10 kg of free grains to the poor instead of the five kg being given at present. Modi on Sunday condemned West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's remarks against Ramakrishna Mission and Bharat Sevashram Sangha and said threats are being issued against these socio-religious organisations to "appease" one's vote bank. PM Modi vowed that he will not let the corrupt live outside jail after June 4. Addressing a public gathering in West Bengal's Purulia, the PM said that he had promised in 2014 and 2019 that action will be taken against the corrupt. "I am saying it now that I won't let the corrupt live outside jail... Modi said.

On Friday, Congress leader Sonia tried to strike an

emotional chord as she said at a rally that she is giving her son to the people of Rae Bareilly and "Rahul will not disappoint you." My everything is all given by you. So, brothers and sisters, I am giving you my son" said Sonia, as Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi Vadera stood by her side on the stage at the rally.

Trinamool Congress chief Mamata ruffled some feathers in the INDIA bloc when she said her party would provide only outside support to the group if it forms the government though she later softened her stand.

Of the 49 seats, the BJP had won 32 in 2019, while the Congress got only Rae Bareilly. This time, the BJP is contesting in 40 seats while the Congress has limited itself to just 18 seats, leaving the rest to its allies.

"A total of 2000 Flying Squads, 2105 Static Surveillance Teams, 881 Video Surveillance Teams and 502 Video Viewing Teams are keeping surveillance round the clock to deal with any form of inducement of voters strictly and swiftly for the fifth phase of polling. A total of 216 international border check posts and 565 inter-state border check posts are keeping strict vigil on any illicit flow of liquor, drugs, cash and freebies. Strict surveillance has been kept at sea and air routes," the Election Commission said in a statement. Polling for 23 States and Union Territories, and 379 seats has been completed so far. Around 45.1 crore electors have exercised their franchise in the last four phases. As in February this year, the total number of voters stood at around 97 crore.

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However, in actuality, YouTube has been failing to combat the menace, Chaurasiya minced no words as he posted his views on a wildlife community platform WILDHUB.

He said that, "Wildlife traffickers are creating their YouTube Channels and posting videos of poaching/hunting, cooking etc. of protected species of wildlife. They are also using YouTube Channels for advertising protected wildlife species, their parts, articles, derivatives etc. for sale." After Facebook, YouTube is the most popular social media platform with 2.7 billion monthly active users. As per the WildEye data, wildlife crime continues to thrive, part of a global illicit wildlife trade estimated to be worth between USD 7 billion and USD23 billion annually, according to the World Economic Forum (though it's impossible to know the true value of wildlife trafficking that takes place online.) They are also using YouTube Channels for advertising protected wildlife species, their parts, articles, derivatives etc. for sale. But what is the matter of concern is that like any other social media platform, YouTube Algorithm also helps in widening the reach of such videos of poaching/hunting, cooking or illegal trade of wildlife by recommending them to the more and more audience who are interested in such videos.

These wildlife poachers may further widen their audience base by sharing the link of such YouTube videos on other social media platforms, added Chaurasiya.

To crackdown on the online wildlife perpetrators, the short-staffed WCCB is also

protected."

Asking the Investigating Officer to take Kumar into formal custody, the court directed his medical examination every 24 hours and said the investigating agency would not subject the accused to "any torture." It also allowed Kumar to meet his advocate and wife for half an hour each during the police custody.

Kumar's application for providing requisite medicines was also allowed. The proceedings which commenced around 9: 15 PM Saturday saw initial arguments by Srivastava following which the magistrate said, "I find force in the arguments of the APP (Additional Public Prosecutor) that there were sufficient grounds to arrest the accused without notice."

The police, through their counsel, had sought seven days of custody to question Kumar in connection with the assault case. It is alleged that Kumar, the personal assistant of Kejriwal, assaulted Maliwal at the CM's residence on the morning of May 13.

In the remand paper, signed by North District additional

deputy commissioner of Police Anjitha Chepyala, it was asserted that the assault on Maliwal was a "serious case" with the potential to turn "fatal." The document highlighted Kumar's alleged lack of cooperation with the investigation, saying that he had been evasive in his responses. This is a very serious case where a Member of Parliament, a public figure, has been brutally assaulted which could have been fatal. Despite specific questions, the accused has not cooperated in the investigation and has been evasive in his replies," said Chepyala.

Kumar's counsel, Rajiv Mohan, countered the arguments by stating that there was no record of Maliwal's visit to the CM's residence before May 13, nor did she clarify why the FIR was only registered on May 16. He mentioned that the FIR was registered at the Civil Lines police station and argued that Maliwal had visited the CM's residence without an appointment, accusing the Delhi Police of distorting facts. Mohan further argued that Maliwal did not seek any medical aid

after calling the emergency helpline number 112, nor did the station house officer prepare any medical sheet after meeting her. He alleged that Maliwal was politicising her injuries and making statements to the media.

According to the remand application, Maliwal's testimony before the magistrate was supported by medical evidence. The plea detailed Maliwal's allegations, including verbal abuse and physical assault, which reportedly occurred at the CM's residence.

According to Maliwal's allegations, Kumar screamed, threatened and used abusive language against her, besides being "brutally assaulting", dragging and banging her head on a centre table, the plea said. It said that the "most vital evidence" was the digital video record (DVR) of the spot but it was yet to be provided to the police.

According to the plea seeking police custody, a junior engineer in the CM's residence, after admitting that he did not have access to the place where the DVR and CCTV cameras were installed, provided a video of the dining

room but it was later found to be blank at the time of the alleged incident.

Crucially, the remand application emphasized the importance of obtaining digital evidence, particularly the digital video record (DVR) from the location. However, despite efforts, the requested evidence had not yet been provided to the police.

The plea also raised concerns about Kumar's continued presence at the CM's residence, suggesting a risk of tampering with evidence. It cited Kumar's previous termination as the CM's personal secretary and his alleged involvement in another assault case in Noida. His presence at the scene of the crime (SOC) raises a strong possibility of tampering with crucial evidence, including electronic evidence. The accused is an influential person and having worked more than nine years in an authoritative position can influence, and pressure the witnesses in the CM house," it said. Explaining the reasons for police custody, the application said after being terminated as the CM's

personal secretary in April 2024, Kumar was still working in the CM's residence and needed to be quizzed about the capacity and authority under which he was working. It said another case was registered against Kumar in Noida for allegedly assaulting an on-duty public servant. Moreover, the remand paper highlighted Kumar's recent actions, including the alleged formatting of his mobile phone in Mumbai, which authorities believe could contain crucial evidence pertinent to the investigation.

"Without the personal presence and assistance of the accused, as this instrument is password protected, the phone and its apps cannot be accessed. Also, he has to be taken to an expert to retrieve the mobile data and to ascertain the factum of formatting of the mobile phone of the accused, which is an important piece of evidence," the plea for remand said. It said that Kumar could threaten witnesses and tamper evidence as he was in a "position of command" and also had "access to the SOC"



Congress, RJD did not attend Ram temple consecration: Shah

PTI ■ BETTIAH (BIHAR)

Launching a scathing on LINDIA Bloc leaders, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday accused the Congress and RJD leaders of not attending the Ram temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya due to their 'Ghushpathiye' (infiltrator) vote bank.

Addressing an election rally at Bettiah in West Champaran district in support of BJP's Sanjay Jaiswal, who is seeking re-election from Paschim Champaran Lok Sabha constituency, Shah said, "Congress and RJD were against the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya from the very beginning. Invitations for the ceremony were sent to them, but they did not come because of their 'Ghushpathiye' vote bank." Shah accused Congress and RJD leaders of being scared that attending the ceremony would offend their vote bank. He also criticised the Congress-led opposition for raising fears about Pakistan's atomic power, stating, "Congress leader Manishankar



Aiyar and ally Farooq Abdullah tried to scare us by saying that we cannot take back PoK because Pakistan has atom bombs. PoK belongs to India. It will remain so. We will claim it back." Shah also accused Lalu Prasad-led RJD of joining hands with Congress, which opposed the Mandal Commission's recommendations, solely to make Lalu's son Tejaswini Yadav the

CM of Bihar. He praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for respecting people from backward classes and predicted a landslide victory for the NDA in Bihar. "The NDA under the leadership of Modi will win 400-plus seats. After four phases of polls, I can confidently say the NDA has already won more than 270 Lok Sabha seats. The RJD will not win even four

seats and Congress not even 40," Shah said. He added that Congress and RJD never worked for the development of poor people and cannot think of the betterment of Bihar. Paschim Champaran, Valmiki Nagar, Purvi Champaran, Sheohar, Vaishali, Gopalganj, Siwan, and Maharajganj will go to polls on May 25 (sixth phase).

Massive security bandobast in phase V polls in Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

After having conducted near-bloodshed-free elections in first four phases of general elections the Election Commission of India has prepared for a fool-proof security system ahead of the fifth phase requisitioning a whopping 80,000 central police personnel, sources said.

Bengal goes to fifth phase polling on Monday. Among the seven constituencies where elections would be held are Bongaon (SC) and Barrackpore in North 24 Parganas, Howrah and Uluberia in Howrah and Seerampore, Hooghly, and Arambagh in Hooghly districts. Following repeated appeals from the opposition parties the ECI has increased its forces from a stipulated 750 to 799 companies, sources said adding a large number of booths at Barrackpore, Uluberia, Howrah, Arambagh and Hooghly are sensitive. The BJP won four seats of Barrackpore, Bongaon, Arambagh and Hooghly whereas the TMC bagged the remaining three constituencies in 2019. The Left which too is a con-



tender in tri-cornered contests won non in the last general elections. Bengali film actor Debut Ghosh is contesting on a CPI(M) ticket with Congress support. A predominantly manufacturing belt — under the clutches of industrial recession for the past several decades — Barrackpore has been a home to numerous jute and textile mills, a defence manufacturing unit and of course Railways workshop. Dominated by a large number of Hindi-speaking and Muslim gentry, mostly comprising industrial workers Barrackpore,

once a strong Red citadel presents a cosmopolitan character. Arjun Singh considered a strongman wrested the seat from TMC's Dinesh Trivedi by a narrow 15,000 margin in 2019. Subsequently he went to the TMC before returning to the BJP early this year. Cut to Bongaon bordering Bangladesh from where BJP's Shantanu Thakur a junior Union Minister is competing against TMC's Biswajit Das. Bongaon has a good 21.7% SC Matua community which plays an important role in the elections. With the Union Government implementing the Citizenship Amendment Act to woo the Matua voters and Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee calling it a bluff to entrap the community that had come from Bangladesh it would be interesting to witness which way the Matua vote goes. Howrah on the other hand has 19 candidates vying for the Lok Sabha seat where sitting TMC MP is and former national footballer Prasun Banerjee who is a three-time MP is contesting against BJP's Rantidev Sengupta and CPI(M)'s young advocate

Sabyasachi Chatterjee. Howrah is likely to present a good tri-corner contest locals say. In Uluberia on the other hand TMC's Sajda Ahmed is pitted against Arun Uday Pal Chaudhary of BJP and Azahar Mollick of the Congress. The BJP is expecting a good show from the seat once held by CPI(M)'s Hannan Molla. This on account of an expected division of votes between the Congress, backed by the Left and the TMC — in the wake of the minority votes gradually deserting Mamata Banerjee. In Seerampore TMC's senior advocate and three time MP Kalyan Banerjee is engaged in a fierce tri-cornered contest with BJP's Kabir Shankar Bose — a former son-in-law — and CPI(M)'s Dipshita Dhar a JNU alumna. The neighbouring Hooghly seat which once housed the Tama Motors' Nano car factory before it was blasted off by the TMC Government in the wake of a Supreme Court order finds sitting BJP MP Loket Chatterjee an actress taking on Manadip Ghosh of CPI(M) and TMC's actor-turned politician Archana Banerjee.

Kalyan seat prestige battle for Maharashtra CM Shinde's son

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Shrikant Shinde had comfortably won the Kalyan Lok Sabha seat in Maharashtra in the last two elections, but the stakes are higher this time as his father, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, now heads a truncated faction of the Shiv Sena following a bitter split in the party.

The constituency, part of the Thane district and close to Mumbai, contains densely populated urban areas and industrial belts. It will go to polls on May 20. Shrikant Shinde entered politics in 2014, contesting as a candidate of the then undivided Shiv Sena and won with a margin of 2,50,749 votes. He increased the margin to 3,44,343 in the 2019 general elections.

But the political scenario has changed drastically since then, as his father rebelled against party chief Uddhav Thackeray and walked away to join hands with the BJP to

become chief minister in June 2022. Uncertainty surrounded Shrikant Shinde's candidature this time as the BJP sensed the possibility of contesting more seats in Maharashtra, and its leader and state minister Ravindra Chavan, MLA from Dombivli, was keen to fight from Kalyan.

Of the six assembly segments in Kalyan, three including Dombivli are with the BJP and one each with the Shinde-led Shiv Sena, Maharashtra Navnirman Sena, and NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar). As it has three MLAs in the region, the BJP pushed its claim for the Kalyan Lok Sabha seat, but Eknath Shinde remained firm that his party will not cede it.

The rival Shiv Sena (UBT) led by Uddhav Thackeray has fielded former corporator Vaishali Darekar-Rane against Shrikant Shinde. Rane had secured more than one lakh votes in this seat in 2009 as a Maharashtra Navnirman Sena candidate, though she lost.

Shrikant Kulkarni, a computer salesperson and resident of Dombivli, said the rapid population growth in Kalyan and Dombivli Municipal Corporation limits in the last two decades has put a lot of pressure on water supply and health services.

"Unfortunately, we have not received much of an infrastructure upgrade. There is no good government hospital which we realised during the COVID-19 pandemic. The railway stations used by lakhs of people daily are not big enough, and are never clean. Roads are narrow and vendors occupy footpaths," he said.

Suman Walecha, a resident of Kalyan city, claimed developmental works have picked up pace, and MP Shinde cannot be blamed for all the woes. "A strong government at the top is necessary to navigate people in the right direction. Things will eventually get better," she said. In February, BJP MLA from Kalyan East, Ganpat Gaikwad,

opened fire in a police station on a local leader of the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena, bringing to the fore the tensions between the two alliance partners in the region.

The rivalry between the local leaders of the two parties could be a cause of concern for Shinde. The constituency's demography is diverse. Dombivli has a sizable number of Maharashtrians and South Indians. Ulhasnagar is a predominantly Sindhi area, while Kalyan city and Kalyan rural assembly seats have Gujarati and Marathi-speaking populations. Ambernath has a mix of Sindhis, Gujaratis and Maharashtrians. Mumbra-Kalwa assembly seat, represented by the NCP(SP), has a large number of Muslims. Vaishali Darekar-Rane claimed people are upset with the present regime. "First and foremost, they are worried about the rising cost of living and behaviour of the current government at the Centre. Rampant abuse of power, induction of tainted

PM Modi slams Mamata for maligning RK Mission, ISKCON

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Religion continued to play a role in the electoral politics with Prime Minister Narendra Modi once again raising fire on Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for using bad words against some monks of Ramakrishna Mission and Bharat Sevashram Sangha orders — all to appease the minority voters.

The Prime Minister who addressed rallies at Purulia, Bishnupur and Midnapore said that Banerjee had stooped to such levels in pursuance of her vote-bank appeasement politics that she had no hesitation to attack even the monks of Ramakrishna Mission and Bharat Sevashram Sangha, the Prime Minister said. "Habituated in threatening the voters all these years the TMC has crossed all limits... the Chief Minister is openly threatening the monks of Ramakrishna Mission and Bharat Sevashram

Sangh and ISKCON (International Society of Krishna Consciousness)... this they are doing to appease their vote bank... without considering the fact that the these religious orders are known for their humanitarian services not only in India but all over the world" with millions of followers behind them. "So much of courage that the powers that be in the Bengal Government in their desperation are now targeting at these great religious organisations," he said.

Banerjee had earlier in a veiled attack on monks of the Ramakrishna Mission order had said that there were a few of them who were taking sides and were working at the instance of the BJP. Addressing an election rally at Goghat in Hooghly district Banerjee had on Saturday said that "some monks of Ramakrishna Mission and Bharat Sevashram Sangha are

working under the influence of BJP leaders in Delhi. Those who are looking after temples are doing great spiritual jobs, but everyone is not doing so. This is not done. We respect the monks... but when they take sides it is not welcome."

The TMC had invited large-scale criticism from the devotees of the Ramakrishna Mission when last year some of their leaders compared Banerjee to Holy Mother Sharada Devi the wife of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa the spiritual Guru of Swami Vivekananda who considered the Mother a "living Durga on earth." Banerjee also attacked the TMC for running a corrupt regime of the hooligans. "Huge amounts of money have been found at the houses of TMC which proves their level of corruption," the Prime Minister said adding a time had come when a last putch was required to pull down the TMC's citadel of terror.

33,000 security personnel for LS polls in Odisha

PTI ■ Bhubaneswar

Around 33,000 security personnel, including 102 companies of Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) and 66 platoons of Odisha Armed Police, have been deployed for the May 20 simultaneous Lok Sabha and assembly elections in the state. In the second phase, the fifth at the national level, five parliamentary constituencies — Aska, Kandhamal, Bargarh, Bolangir, and Sundargarh — and 35 associated assembly seats will vote. These are spread across nine districts, including Maoist-hit areas of Kandhamal, Boudh, Bolangir, and Baragarh.

The first phase of elections, covering four parliamentary and 28 assembly constituencies, was conducted peacefully on May 13. Despite six Naxal-hit districts falling within the polling zones, no Maoist-related violence occurred during the polls due to robust anti-Maoist opera-



tions and real-time intelligence, DGP Arun Sarangi said on Sunday. A total of 9,162 polling stations at 7,339 locations, including 556 booths in Maoist-hit areas, will be used. To ensure security, 102 CAPF companies and 66 platoons of Odisha Armed Police, supported by 47 additional SPs, 88 DSPs, 236 inspectors, and 2,000 sub-inspectors are on poll duty," Sarangi said.

Modi to start Punjab campaign from Patiala

PTI ■ Chandigarh

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will start his poll campaign in Punjab with his first rally in Patiala on Thursday, according to state BJP secretary Punjab BJP general secretary Rakesh Rathour on Sunday said the prime minister will address three public rallies in the state on May 23 and May 24. Modi will hold his first rally in Patiala on May 23, followed by rallies in Gurdaspur and Jalandhar the next day, Rathour said.

The BJP has fielded four-time MP Preneet Kaur from the Patiala parliamentary constituency. Sushil Rinku is the saffron party's candidate from Jalandhar while former MLA Dinesh Babbu has been fielded from the Gurdaspur seat. Polling for 13 Lok Sabha seats in Punjab will be held on June 1 in the last phase of Lok Sabha elections.

Lone Kashmiri Pandit candidate in Anantnag seeks justice for his community

PTI ■ JAMMU

Dilip Kumar Pandita, a lone displaced Kashmiri Pandit candidate contesting on the Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seat, is ramping up his campaign, promising to "reunite all Kashmiris through serious intra-community dialogue via civil society".

Pandita is among 20 candidates in the fray challenging prominent figures like PDP president Mehbooba Mufti and National Conference leader Mian Altaf Ahmad in the election slated for May 25. Pandita (56), who hails from a small hamlet of Ramhal in south Kashmir's Anantnag district, has been living in a government accommodation in Jagti migrant township with his family for several decades. Despite the prevailing heat-wave conditions in Jammu, he is vigorously campaigning with door-to-door interactions and corner meetings in Jammu, particularly in five



migrant camps to seek support of more than 35,000 voters of the community. "We have been displaced from our homes for 35 years without getting justice. I am contesting to fight for justice for Kashmiri Pandits and to create conditions for their safe return to the valley," Pandita told PTI at the Muthi camp. Running as an independent candidate under the symbol of a tube light, Pandita's manifesto emphasises reuniting all Kashmiris, both Pandits and

Muslims, through civil society dialogue. "If elected, my aim is to tackle unemployment and press the Indian government to maintain peace, and secure special employment packages for the youths of Jammu and Kashmir," he said. Pandita also pledges to restore statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, improve benefits for PM Package employees, and push for eco-friendly schemes to boost the local economy.

The people of his native Ramhal village, currently living in Jammu, have shown their support through a 'yagya', urging the community to vote for him. "We should support him so he can effectively work in his constituency. He is fighting for justice, and we should stand by him," villager Sunil Kumar said. "Villagers from my hamlet are performing a 'yagya' for my success. Kashmiri Pandits have faced severe hardships

over the last 25 years. I share their pain and appeal to them to vote for me, so we can achieve victory together," said Pandita, who is engaged in self-employment.

According to his election affidavit, Pandita has an income of Rs one lakh and assets worth Rs 17.5 lakh, with liabilities of Rs 14.7 lakh. He also faces charges related to criminal intimidation in Jammu.

The polling date for Anantnag-Rajouri was changed from May 7 to May 25. In this constituency, 18,30,294 eligible voters, including 9,30,379 males and 8,99,888 females, will decide the candidates' fate across 2,338 polling stations. The Anantnag-Rajouri parliamentary seat, reshaped by the delimitation commission in 2022, now includes 18 assembly segments across Anantnag, Shopian, and Kulgam districts in south Kashmir, as well as parts of Rajouri and Poonch districts in Jammu.

Kharge's posters defaced in front of Bengal Congress HQ after his snub at Adhir

PTI ■ KOLKATA

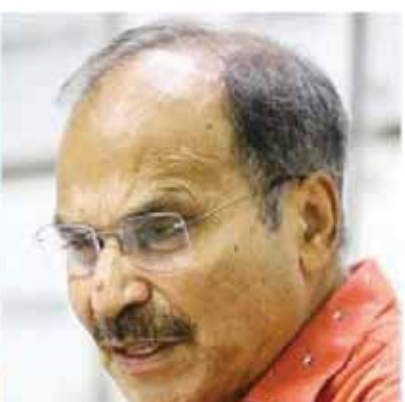
A day after he snubbed West Bengal Congress chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury for questioning TMC supreme Mamata Banerjee's loyalty to the INDIA bloc, several posters and hoardings of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge were defaced with ink in front of the party's state headquarters here on Sunday.

Unidentified persons also wrote 'agent of Trinamool Congress' on Kharge's posters and hoardings. Sources in the Congress said that Chowdhury, who is in his hometown

Baharampur, expressed displeasure over the incident and asked party workers to lodge a police complaint, which was registered, and the defaced posters were also removed.

"The incident might have happened on Saturday night. This is the handiwork of the TMC which wants to create differences between senior Congress leaders and Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury," a party leader alleged.

Kharge had on Saturday snubbed Chowdhury while responding to a query on Mamata Banerjee's comment that if the INDIA bloc forms the government, she would support it from outside, and



Chowdhury's remark that she cannot be trusted and that she might go with the BJP. "Mamata Banerjee is with the alliance. She has recently said that she will join the government. Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury will not take the decision. The decision will be taken by me and the high command and those who don't agree will go out," Kharge had said. He had also asserted that Chowdhury is no one to decide on whether Banerjee would be part of the INDIA bloc in the event of the anti-BJP alliance coming to power after the Lok Sabha polls. Chowdhury, while reacting to Kharge's

comments, had said, referring to the TMC supreme, "I cannot speak in favour of someone who wants to finish me and our party in Bengal politically. This is a battle for every Congress worker. I have spoken on their behalf. I don't want the state Congress to be used for her (Banerjee's) personal agenda and then finish the organisation." "If Kharge ji speaks against my views, I will continue to speak for Congressmen at the grassroots in the state," he added. The TMC is contesting the Lok Sabha elections alone in the state, while the Congress and the Left are jointly fighting the polls.

Airstrike kills 27 in central Gaza

AP ■ DEIR-AL-BALAH

An Israeli airstrike killed 27 people in central Gaza, mostly women and children, and fighting with Hamas raged across the north on Sunday as Israel's leaders aired divisions over who should govern Gaza after the war, now in its eighth month. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces criticism from the two other members of his War Cabinet, with his main political rival, Benny Gantz, threatening to leave the government if a plan is not created by June 8 that includes an international administration for postwar Gaza. US national security adviser Jake Sullivan was expected to meet with Netanyahu and other Israeli leaders on Sunday to discuss an ambitious US plan for Saudi Arabia to recognise Israel and help the Palestinian Authority to govern Gaza in exchange for a path to eventual statehood. Netanyahu opposes Palestinian statehood and has rejected those proposals, saying Israel will maintain open-ended security control over Gaza and partner with local

Palestinians unaffiliated with Hamas or the Western-backed Palestinian Authority. Gantz's ultimatum expressed support for normalising ties with Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries, but he also said "we will not allow any outside power, friendly or hostile, to impose a Palestinian state on us". Gantz's withdrawal would not bring down Netanyahu's coalition government but would leave him more reliant on far-right allies who support the "voluntary emigration" of Palestinians from Gaza, full military occupation and the rebuilding of Jewish settlements there. Even as discussions about the future take on new weight, the war rages. In recent weeks, Hamas militants have regrouped in parts of northern Gaza that were heavily bombed in the war's early days and where Israeli ground troops operated. The airstrike in Nuseirat, a built-up Palestinian refugee camp in central Gaza dating back to the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, killed 27 people, including 10 women and seven children, according to records at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in nearby Deir al-Balah, which

received the bodies. A separate strike on a Nuseirat street killed five people, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent emergency service. In Deir al-Balah, a strike killed Zahed al-Houli, a senior officer in the Hamas-run police, and another man, according to the hospital. Palestinians reported more airstrikes and heavy fighting in northern Gaza, which has been largely isolated by Israeli troops for months and where the World Food Programme says a famine is underway. The Civil Defence said the strikes hit several homes near Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahiya, killing at least 10 people. Footage released by rescuers showed them trying to pull the body of a woman out of the rubble as explosions echo in the background. In the urban Jabaliya refugee camp nearby, residents reported a heavy wave of artillery and airstrikes. "The situation is very difficult," said Abdel-Kareem Radwan, 48. He said the whole eastern side has become a battle zone where the Israeli fighter jets "strike anything that moves." Mahmoud Bassal, a spokesman for the Civil

Defence, said rescuers had recovered at least 150 bodies, more than half of them women and children, since Israel launched the operation in Jabaliya last week. He said around 300 homes have been completely destroyed. Israel launched its offensive after Hamas' Oct 7 attack, in which militants stormed into southern Israel, killing around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting some 250. The war has killed at least 35,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between combatants and civilians. Around 80% of the population of 2.3 million Palestinians have been displaced within the territory, often multiple times. "We need a decent life to live," said Reem Al-Bayed, who left Gaza City and is sheltering with thousands in the gritty coastal Muwasi camp in the south without basic facilities like wells. "All countries live a decent life except us." She gave herself a quick mouthful of bread before tearing the rest into pieces for half a dozen children, then poured them a can of beans.

Houthi rebels strike oil tanker in Red Sea with missile

Dubai (AP): Yemen's Houthi rebels hit an oil tanker in the Red Sea with a ballistic missile early on Saturday, damaging the Panama-flagged, Greek-owned vessel in their latest assault over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip, officials said. Though the Houthis did not immediately claim the assault, it comes as they claimed to have shot down another US military MQ-9 Reaper drone over Yemen and have launched other attacks on shipping, disrupting trade on a key maritime route leading to the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean Sea. The attack around 1 a.m. struck the oil tanker Wind, which was bound for China, the US military's Central Command said. Both China and Russia maintain ties over military equipment and oil to Iran, the Houthis' main benefactor. The missile strike "caused flooding which resulted in the loss of propulsion and steering", Central Command said on the social platform X. "The crew of M/T Wind was able to restore propulsion and steering, and no casualties were reported. M/T Wind resumed its course under its own power." The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre and the private security firm Ambrey similarly acknowledged the attack earlier Saturday. Ambrey said it caused a fire aboard the Wind. It can take the Houthi hours — or even days — to claim their attacks. The Houthis have launched attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, demanding Israel end the war in Gaza, which has killed more than 35,000 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. Houthi attacks have dropped in recent weeks as the rebels have been targeted by a US-led airstrike campaign in Yemen. Shipping through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden still remains low because of the threat, however.

Helicopter carrying Iran president crashes, rescue underway

AP ■ DUBAI

A helicopter carrying Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi suffered a "hard landing" on Sunday, Iranian state media reported, without elaborating. Some began urging the public to pray for Raisi and the others on board as rescue crews sped through a misty, rural forest where his helicopter was believed to be. The likely crash comes as Iran under Raisi and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei launched an unprecedented drone-and-missile attack on Israel just last month and has enriched uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels. Meanwhile, Iran has faced years of mass protests against its Shiite theocracy over an ailing economy and women's rights — making the moment that much more sensitive for Tehran and the future of the country as the Israel-Hamas war inflames the wider Middle East. Raisi was traveling in Iran's East Azerbaijan province. State TV said the incident happened near Jofa, a city on the border with the nation of Azerbaijan, some 600 kilometers (375 miles) northwest of the Iranian capital, Tehran. Later, state TV put it farther east near the village of Uzi, but details remained contradictory. Traveling with Raisi were Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, the gover-



nor of Iran's East Azerbaijan province and other officials and bodyguards, the state-run IRNA news agency reported. One local government official used the word "crash" to describe the incident, but he acknowledged to an Iranian newspaper that he had yet to reach the site himself. Neither IRNA nor state TV offered any information on Raisi's condition in the hours afterward. However, hard-liners urged the public to pray for him. State TV later aired images of the faithful praying at Imam Reza Shrine in the city of Mashhad, one of Shiite Islam's holiest sites, as well as in Qom and other locations across the country. "The esteemed president and company were on their way back aboard some helicopters and one of the helicopters was forced to make a hard landing due to the bad weather and fog," Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi said in comments aired on state TV. "Various rescue

teams are on their way to the region but because of the poor weather and foggy it might take time for them to reach the helicopter." He added: "The region is a bit (rugged) and it's difficult to make contact. We are waiting for rescue teams to reach the landing site and give us more information." Rescuers were attempting to reach the site, state TV said, but had been hampered by poor weather conditions. There had been heavy rain and fog reported with some wind. IRNA called the area a "forest" and the region is known to be mountainous as well. State TV aired images of SUVs racing through a wooded area. A rescue helicopter tried to reach the area where authorities believe Raisi's helicopter was, but it couldn't land due to the heavy mist, emergency services spokesman Babak Yektaparast told IRNA. Raisi had been on the border with Azerbaijan early Sunday to inaugurate a dam with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev. The dam is the third of that the two nations built on the Aras River. The visit came despite chilly relations between the two nations, including over a gun attack on Azerbaijan's Embassy in Tehran in 2023, and Azerbaijan's diplomatic relations with Israel, which Iran's Shiite theocracy views as its main enemy in the region.

2 dead, 5 missing in Danube River boat collision

Budapest (Hungary) (AP) Police say two people have died and five are missing following a boat collision on the Danube River in Hungary. Hungarian police received a report late Saturday night that a man had been found with a head injury on the shore of the Danube near the town of Verce, around 30 miles (50 kilometers) north of the capital, Budapest. The bodies of a man and a woman were later discovered nearby. Hours after police began their search, they discovered a damaged boat in the water, which they towed to shore. They are still searching for five adults — three men and two women — who they believe were on the boat. Police said they determined that a river cruise boat had been in the area at the time of the accident. They stopped a cruise boat with a damaged hull near the town of Komarom, more than 50 miles (80 kilometers) further upriver. Hungarian public television station M1 reported that the cruise boat, Heidelberg, is a 109-meter (357-foot) Swiss craft that can accommodate 110 people. No passengers on that boat sustained injuries, M1 said.

US national security adviser, Saudi's crown prince meet

AP ■ DUBAI

President Joe Biden's national security adviser met early Sunday with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to discuss what the kingdom described as the "semi-final" version of a wide-ranging security agreement between the countries. The announcement by the state-run Saudi Press Agency comes as the strategic deal had been updated after Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel that killed 1,200 people and saw 250 others taken hostage back to the Gaza Strip. In the time since, a punishing Israeli airstrike campaign and ground offensive there has killed over 35,000 Palestinians, endangering the security deal that had included Saudi Arabia diplomatically recognising Israel for the first time since its founding in 1948. Saudi state media released no images of Jake Sullivan and Prince Mohammed meeting in Dhahran, a city in the king-

dom's far east that's home to its state-run oil giant, the Saudi Arabian Oil Co. known as Saudi Aramco. "The semi-final version of the draft strategic agreements between the kingdom and the United States of America, which are almost being finalised — and what is being worked on between the two sides in the Palestinian issue to find a credible path — were discussed," the statement released after the talks said. That included "a two-state solution that meets the aspirations and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people" and "the situation in Gaza and the need to stop the war there and facilitate the entry of humanitarian aid," the statement added. Saudi Arabia has long called for an independent Palestinian state to be created along Israel's 1967 borders, with east Jerusalem as its capital. However, that likely may be untenable for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu,

whose government hinges on support from hard-liners who oppose a two-state solution and support Israeli settlements on lands Palestinians want for that state. The White House had acknowledged Sullivan's trip and that he would later head on to Israel, where he's scheduled to meet Netanyahu on Sunday. However, there was no immediate statement from the US on the discussions, other than to say they would be "including the war in Gaza and ongoing efforts to achieve a lasting peace and security in the region." Saudi Arabia has long relied — like other Gulf Arab nations — on the US to be the security guarantor for the wider Middle East as tensions over Iran's nuclear program in recent years have spilled over into a series of attacks. The proposal now being discussed likely would deepen that, and also reportedly includes access to advanced weapons and possibly trade deals as well.

ports on Wednesday outside a cultural centre in the town of Handlova, nearly 140 kilometres (85 miles) northeast of the capital, Bratislava. Video showed the Slovak premier approach people gathered at barricades and reach out to shake hands as a man stepped forward, extended his arm and fired five rounds before being tackled and arrested. On Friday, Fico underwent two hours of surgery to remove dead tissue from his gunshot wounds, but he was not healthy enough to be transferred to the capital, officials said Saturday. The country's Specialised Criminal Court in the town of Pezinok on Saturday ordered the suspected assailant, who is charged with attempted murder, to remain behind bars. Prosecutors said they feared he could flee or commit other crimes if freed, a court spokesperson said.

Slovak PM's condition serious

AP ■ BANSKA BYSTRICA

Slovakia's populist prime minister, Robert Fico, remained in serious condition on Sunday but has been given a positive prognosis four days after he was shot multiple times in an assassination attempt that has sent shockwaves across the deeply polarised European Union nation, the defence minister said. "The worst of what we feared has passed, at least for the moment. But his condition remains serious," Robert Kalinak told reporters outside the hospital where Fico is being treated. "His condition is stable with a positive prognosis." Kalinak added that the hospital treating the Slovak leader in Banská Bystrica, a former coal mining town of 16,000 situated 29 kilometres (17 miles) from where Fico was attacked, will continue to issue updates on his



health status. Milan Urbáni, deputy director of the hospital, told reporters that "Based on the doctors' morning consultation, we can conclude that the patient is currently out of a life-threatening condition. His condition remains very serious, and he needs a long time to rest to recover. We firmly believe that everything will go in a good direction." Fico, 59, was shot in the abdomen as he greeted sup-

ported on Wednesday outside a cultural centre in the town of Handlova, nearly 140 kilometres (85 miles) northeast of the capital, Bratislava. Video showed the Slovak premier approach people gathered at barricades and reach out to shake hands as a man stepped forward, extended his arm and fired five rounds before being tackled and arrested. On Friday, Fico underwent two hours of surgery to remove dead tissue from his gunshot wounds, but he was not healthy enough to be transferred to the capital, officials said Saturday. The country's Specialised Criminal Court in the town of Pezinok on Saturday ordered the suspected assailant, who is charged with attempted murder, to remain behind bars. Prosecutors said they feared he could flee or commit other crimes if freed, a court spokesperson said.

Congolese army foils coup

Kinshasa (AP): Congo's army says it has "foiled a coup" early Sunday morning and arrested the perpetrators, including several foreigners, following a shootout between armed men in military uniform and guards of a close ally of Congo's president that left three people dead in the capital, Kinshasa. At first, local media identified the armed men as Congolese soldiers but then reported they were linked to self-exiled opposition leader Christian Malanga who later posted a video on Facebook threatening President Felix Tshisekedi. Tshisekedi was reelected as president in December in a chaotic vote amid calls for a revote from the opposition over what they said was a lack of transparency. The Central African country has witnessed similar trends of disputed elections in the past. Congolese army spokesperson Brigadier General Sylvain Ekenge said on state television Sunday that the

Sunak faces revolt over Graduate Route visa plans: Report

PTI ■ LONDON

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is considering restrictions to the UK's post-study visa which allows graduates to stay on and work for up to two years after their degree course as part of efforts to curb soaring legal migration figures despite strong opposition from some of his ministers, a report claims on Sunday. According to 'The Observer' newspaper, Sunak is facing a Cabinet revolt over plans to scrap the Graduate Route scheme, the definitive factor for choosing UK universities among Indian students who have topped the tally of these post-study visas since it was launched in 2021. Downing Street is said to be considering "further restricting or even ending" the route despite the independent Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) declaring it was not being abused and that it should continue as it helps UK universities make up for financial losses on the domestic front. "Sunak is now

attempted coup d'état was "nipped in the bud by Congolese defence and security forces (and) the situation is under control." He did not give further details. This also came amid a crisis gripping Tshisekedi's ruling party over an election for the parliament's leadership which was supposed to be held Saturday but got postponed. Clashes were reported Sunday between men in military uniform and guards of Vital Kamerhe, a federal legislator and a candidate for speaker of the National Assembly of Congo, at his residence in Kinshasa, about 2 kilometres (1.2 miles) from the presidential palace and where some embassies are also located. Kamerhe's guards stopped the armed men, Michel Moto Muhima, the politician's spokesperson said on the X social media platform, adding that two police officers and one of the attackers were killed in the shootout that started around 4:30 a.m.

finding himself caught between the demands of right-wingers with one eye on the Tory leadership and Conservative moderates who fear the consequences of a lurch to the right on the party's reputation and election chances," claims the newspaper, quoting sources close to ministers who oppose scrapping the visa. Sunak's Education Secretary, Gillian Keegan, Chancellor Jeremy Hunt and Foreign Secretary David Cameron are



among those in the Cabinet said to be leading a revolt over the issue. It comes as university and business chiefs have warned that any curtailment of the post-study offer would make the UK less attractive to overseas students, including Indians. Studying at university is one of our biggest export successes. Attracting international students boosts local economies and losing competitiveness would put support for undergraduate teaching

Musk launches Starlink in Indonesia

DENPASAR

During the ceremony, Musk took a speed test of the Starlink internet service with several health workers in Indonesia's remote regions, including in Aru, one of Indonesia's unserved and outermost islands in Maluku province. "This can make it really a lifesaver for remote medical clinics, and I think it could be a possibility for education as well," Musk told reporters. "If you can access the internet and then you can learn anything and you can also sell your business services worldwide. So, I think it's going to be incredibly beneficial," he said. He also signed an agreement on enhancing connectivity in the country's health and education sectors. Details about the agreement between the Indonesian government and Musk's SpaceX, the aerospace

company that operates Starlink services, were not provided. Launching the service at a health clinic aligns with Starlink's broader mission of providing affordable access to high-speed internet services, particularly in underserved and remote regions, said Coordinating Minister of Maritime and Investment Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan. "Our remote regions need Starlink to expand high-speed internet services, especially to help with problems in the health, education and maritime sectors," Pandjaitan, a close ally of Indonesia's President Joko Widodo, told reporters. He held separate talks with Musk on Sunday. Communication and Informatics Minister Budi Arie Setiadi said earlier that local internet providers, which rely

on base transceiver stations to transmit signals, are unable to reach outer islands because they have limited coverage. Starlink's satellites, which remain in low orbit, will help them deliver faster internet with nationwide coverage. Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin said of the more than 10,000 clinics across the country, there are still around 2,700 without internet access. "The internet can open up better access to health services as communication between regions is said to be easier, so that reporting from health service facilities can be done in real time or up to date," he said. During his first in-person visit to Bali, Musk is also scheduled to participate in the 10th World Water Forum, which seeks to address global water and sanitation challenges.

Musk launches Starlink in Indonesia

DENPASAR

Elon Musk travelled to Indonesia's resort island of Bali on Sunday to launch Starlink satellite internet service in the world's largest archipelago nation. Wearing a green Batik shirt, Musk was greeted with a garland of flower petals at a community health clinic in Denpasar, the provincial capital of Bali, where he launched the Starlink service alongside Indonesian ministers. Indonesia, a vast archipelago of 17,000 islands sprawled across three time zones with a population of more than 270 million, has been trying for years to secure deals with Musk's Tesla on battery investment and for Musk's SpaceX to provide fast internet for the country's remote regions.

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People take part in a pro-Palestinian rally in Berlin, Saturday.



KEEPING HYPERTENSION AT BAY

Hypertension or High Blood Pressure is on the rise, posing a significant public health challenge. Despite its prevalence, many cases go unnoticed and untreated with fatal risks. **ARCHANA JYOTI** highlights the urgent need for comprehensive measures to address this silent epidemic

Forty-five-year-old Sunit Dhawan works a desk job with long hours and minimal physical activity. He has a high-stress lifestyle, often skips meals, and when he eats, his diet consists mainly of fast food and high-sodium snacks. He drinks several cups of coffee a day and smokes a pack of cigarettes daily. He feels his life is normal except that he experiences frequent headaches, occasional dizziness, and feels fatigued most of the time.

After a routine check-up, his doctor diagnosed him with hypertension. His blood pressure was consistently measured at 150/95 mmHg.

Prema Sharma (70) has a family history of hypertension. She has been managing her blood pressure for the past 20 years. She leads a relatively active lifestyle for her age, enjoys gardening, and walks her dog daily. However, she tends to indulge in salty snacks and has a sweet tooth.

Prema doesn't exhibit many overt symptoms due to her long-term management of the condition, but she occasionally experiences shortness of breath and mild swelling in her ankles. During her regular follow-up, her blood pressure was recorded at 160/100 mmHg, indicating poorly controlled hypertension.

Similarly, Naveen Shukla (28) who is a healthy young adult recently started experiencing frequent severe headaches and blurred vision. He has no family history of hypertension and maintains a balanced diet and regular exercise routine. Upon investigation, Naveen's blood pressure was found to be consistently high at 145/90 mmHg. Further tests revealed that he has a kidney condition causing secondary hypertension.

Doctors are increasingly noticing a large number of such cases of hypertension among diverse age groups. @These cases illustrate how hypertension can affect individuals differently based on their age, lifestyle, and underlying health conditions, highlighting the importance of personalized management plans, @ said **Dr Tarun Kumar**, Professor of Cardiology at Delhi-based central government RML Hospital. He rings alarm bell as he said, hypertension or high blood pressure leads to 10.8 per cent of all deaths in India. Left unchecked, hypertension can result in severe health issues such as heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure, and premature death.

Hypertension is defined as having systolic blood pressure (SPB) =140 mmHg or diastolic blood pressure (DPB) =90 mmHg. It is considered 'controlled' when the systolic blood pressure (BP) is maintained below 140 mmHg and diastolic BP below 90 mmHg, with medications and lifestyle modifications.

"The prevalence of hypertension increases with age from 7.5 per



DR TARUN KUMAR



DR VIVEK TANDON



DR ARUN GUPTA



SAIMA WAZED

DASH stands for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (high blood pressure). The diet is simple:

- Eat more fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy foods.
- Cut back on foods that are high in saturated fat, cholesterol, and trans fats
- Eat more whole-grain foods, fish, poultry, and nuts.
- Limit sodium, sweets, sugary drinks, and red meats.

cent among adults aged 18-39 to 33.2 per cent among those aged 40-59. More than 90 per cent of adults with hypertension are either undiagnosed or untreated", he said. For both women and men, the prevalence increases sharply with age. The increase is for all categories of hypertension, including pre-hypertension, for both sexes. About one-fourth of women and men aged 40-49 have hypertension. According to the health experts, contributing factors include genetics, obesity, sedentary

HOW TO MANAGE, PREVENT HYPERTENSION

Some essential lifestyle modifications are:

Maintain a Healthy Weight: Shedding excess pounds can relieve strain on your heart and reduce blood pressure.

Manage Stress Effectively: Chronic stress can elevate blood pressure, so incorporate relaxation techniques into your routine to combat stress.

Monitor Caffeine Intake: While moderate caffeine consumption is generally safe, excessive intake can cause temporary spikes in blood pressure. Be mindful of your caffeine consumption.

Reduce Processed Food Consumption: Processed foods high in sodium can elevate blood pressure. Opt for whole,

unprocessed foods to better control blood pressure levels.

Prioritize Adequate Sleep and Regular Exercise: Aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep each night and engage in regular physical activity to strengthen your heart and improve circulation, thus lowering blood pressure.

HEAT WAVES & HYPERTENSION

People with a history of high blood pressure should monitor their BP during heat waves conditions. They should also drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated, avoid the midday heat, eat a healthy diet, apply sunscreen if outdoors and wear a hat. In most cases, stay inside a cool environment in your home.

lifestyle, high salt intake, stress, and excessive alcohol consumption. While Sunit has been advised to adopt a heart-healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins, reducing sodium intake and at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise, such as brisk

walking, five times a week. Prema's doctor adjusted her medication dosage and added a diuretic to help manage fluid retention. Since, she has chronic hypertension, she has also been advised to monitor her BP at home and keep a log for her next appointment. Among lifestyle

support, Prema has been asked to engage in a community support group for individuals with hypertension to stay motivated and informed.

For Sunit, smoking cessation has been advised besides relaxation techniques such as yoga or meditation.

Naveen has been referred to a nephrologist for management of the underlying kidney condition. He has been shared with lifestyle modification plan incorporating a healthy diet and exercise.

Dr. Vivek Tandon, Additional Director of Interventional Cardiology at Fortis Hospital Greater Noida, too emphasized the need for increased awareness and accurate diagnosis. "Hypertension is a silent killer that affects a significant portion of the population, yet many remain unaware of their condition."

Dr Tandon cites studies that say that approximately 33% of urban residents suffer from hypertension, while about 25 per cent of the rural population is affected. Only 40 per cent of the urban population and 25 per cent of the rural population are aware of their hypertensive status.

Just 38 per cent of the urban and 25 per cent of the rural population receive treatment. Among those treated, only 20 per cent in urban areas and 10 per cent in rural areas achieve adequate control, he said.

"Accurate measurement and consistent management are vital in preventing the severe health consequences associated with high blood pressure," said Dr Tandon.

Dr Tarun agreed as he pointed out that even the theme of the World Hypertension Day on May 17, say 'Measure Your Blood Pressure Accurately, Control It, Live Longer.' For instance, one should never check BP while crossed legs(it can add 2-8 mm Hg), placing the cuff over your clothes (adds 5-50 mm Hg), unsupported arm (adds 10 mm Hg), using a small sized cuff (adds 2-10 mm Hg), unsupported back/feet (adds 6.5 mm Hg), talking during measuring BP (adds 10 mm Hg) and last but not the least with full bladder prior to measuring BP that can add up to 10 mm HG). The normal blood pressure is 120/80 mm/Hg or slightly lower.

Dr Tarun also said they recommend DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (high blood pressure). The diet is simple.

WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia, **Saima Wazed** warned that at least more than 294 million people are living with hypertension in the Southeast Asia Region itself.

Limited access to affordable healthcare services is a significant contributor to low Universal Service Coverage Index scores in many countries, impeding access to quality healthcare, she said. In fact, the South-East Asia Region has identified the prevention and control of hypertension as one of the priorities.

Dr Tandon pitched in for effective strategies such as increasing public awareness through media, community programs, and educational workshops about the importance of regular blood pressure checks. Expanding healthcare infrastructure in rural areas to ensure more people have access to medical services is also essential. Implementing policies that make hypertension medications and treatments affordable and accessible can alleviate economic constraints."

According to a study, high BP in childhood may raise heart attack, stroke risk by 4 times, exposing them to significant risks, including heart, kidney, and brain damage.

Nutrition Advocacy in Public Interest (NAPI) convenor **Dr Arun Gupta**, blamed on misleading labels and the addictive nature of ultra-processed foods for the menace. He said that the all-pervasive nature of junk food advertising is misleading consumers into eating unhealthy, addictive, ultra-processed foods.

@There is a need for stringent policy in this regard if the Government is really serious about the health of its people,@ he said.



Enjoy These Fruits With

Eating at least one-and-a-half to two cups of diverse fruits every day can boost antioxidant activity. Fruits are particularly abundant in anti-inflammatory compounds, which are important in protecting our bodies from heart disease, diabetes, and certain forms of cancer and bowel disease.

You'll learn how plant-based chemicals called phytochemicals act as antioxidant and anti-inflammatory agents, helping to bring down levels of inflammation and to counteract inflammation's harmful effects. And you'll find dozens of anti-inflammatory foods with added health benefits that include lowering cholesterol, reducing the risk of Alzheimer's disease and of stroke, improving blood pressure.

These also add protection against heart disease, and even reduce pain and soreness after exercise.

How to get enough healthful fruits in your diet?

While all fruits tend to be rich in disease-protective nutrients, some have received particular attention in the nutrition world for their anti-inflammatory benefits.

BERRIES

From strawberries and blackberries to cranberries and blueberries, these gemlike fruits are particularly potent in antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activity. Along with fiber and vitamin C, berries possess plant pigment phytochemicals, such as anthocyanins and ellagic acid, which may be behind their health benefits. Studies have linked increased berry consumption with lower risks of heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, and diabetes.

APPLES

Maybe it's true what they say about an apple a day. A study of nearly 35,000 women, found that consumption of this fruit—along with its relative, pears—was linked with a lower risk of death from heart disease. The star components of apples—fiber, vitamin C, pectin, and polyphenols—have been associated, primarily in animal studies, with anti-inflammatory effects and an increase in beneficial microbes in the gut.

STONE FRUITS

Cherries, peaches, apricots, and plums are all examples of stone fruits. These fruits contain fiber, vitamin C, potassium, and a variety of phytochemicals associated with their colors. For example, cherries have garnered the lion's share of the research among stone fruits.

Some studies suggest that cherries can reduce pain and soreness after exercise as well as a reduced risk of gout attacks. The high levels of phenolic compounds in cherries, which have been linked to reduced inflammation, may be behind those benefits.

CITRUS

Oranges, grapefruit, lemons, and limes are famously rich in vitamin C.

They also contain fiber, potassium, calcium, B vitamins, copper, and anti-inflammatory phytochemicals such as flavonoids and carotenoids. Though there is little human research on citrus, the nutrients found in citrus fruits have been associated with heart-protective effects.

POMEGRANATES

Those tiny pomegranate seeds contain big rewards of vitamins C and K, potassium, fiber, and potent phytochemicals such as anthocyanin and resveratrol. These nutrients may be behind the potential benefits of eating pomegranates.

GRAPES

These succulent fruits are bursting with fiber, vitamins C and K, and powerful phytochemicals.

(Source: Websites)

Doctors' drive, paired with patients' strength, reaps rewards

Extraordinary moments emerge in tough times, shining like sunshine through clouds. Let's celebrate the remarkable among us—the doctors rising to challenges and patients showing incredible resilience. **ARCHANA JYOTI** brings these inspiring stories to light, restoring hope and joy

Real stories of those who make a real difference, shine their brightest in the darkest times. In the process, one should also not miss the rainbow: a symbol of hope and a promise of brighter days. Take the case of little Radha's transplant triumph. Teenager Radha's struggle with liver failure due to Wilson's disease appeared insurmountable. A few years ago, Radha who is now 13 year-old was diagnosed with the rare disease, and ever since then, she has battled with the aberrant accumulation of copper in her organs, particularly her liver. However, under the careful guidance of Dr. Naresh Bansal, Senior Consultant, Institute of Liver Gastroenterology and Pancreatic Biliary Sciences and his team at the Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in Delhi, her journey saw moments of despair turn into hope.

When hepatitis A dealt a deadly blow to her already damaged liver, leading to acute on chronic liver failure Radha's illness worsened at an alarming rate. Her jaundice, accompanied by skyrocketing bilirubin levels (44), was a clear sign of failing liver function. The subtle development of hepatic encephalopathy sent her into a state of altered consciousness, making a terrible situation much worse. However, it was the catastrophic upper gastrointestinal Blood vomiting (bleeding) that brought her dangerously close to death and required life support to be administered in the intensive care unit. The family was advised to consider liver transplant as lifesaving option. Radha's mother became her hope during her lowest point. Radha's severe bleeding event left her in a hepatic coma, raised require for ventilator support. Radha's



heart pressure was also elevated requiring pediatric cardiologist, Dr. Neeraj Agarwal from Sir Ganga Ram Hospital to intervene. The PICU team under the guidance of Senior Consultants Pediatrics at the hospital Dr. Anil Sachdeva, Dr. Dhiren Gupta, Dr. Neeraj Gupta, and Dr. Nishant Wadwa

SUCH CASES HIGHLIGHT SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DOCTORS AND PATIENTS IN ACHIEVING POSITIVE HEALTH OUTCOMES. IN THE PROCESS, ONE SHOULD ALSO NOT MISS THE RAINBOW: A SYMBOL OF HOPE

fought restlessly to stabilize this 13 year old female child. The twelve-hour long procedure under Dr. Ushast Dhir, Chairman of liver transplant and hepatobiliary Surgery, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital involving the mother as donor, who donated a portion of liver, showed the

unshakable resolve of medical science and was a masterwork of accuracy and competence. Radha recovered very well and is now back home. Her incredible recovery stands as a testament to the human spirit's resilience and the miracles modern medicine can achieve. It was more than that, indeed. In a noble gesture, the doctors of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital (SGRH) had raised Rs 20 lakhs from crowdfunding and corporate donations to finance the transplant since the family was unable to pay for it because of their poor economic condition. Likewise, when a massive adrenal tumor threatened the health of a 59-year-old patient, a surgical team led by Dr. Piyush Varshney, Additional Director of Urology, Fortis Hospital Noida, employed the state-of-the-art da Vinci robotic system to tackle the

challenging tumor, measuring 12x11.5x8 cm. Dr Varshney said, "The patient showed no symptoms, and his tumor, Adrenal incidentaloma was detected incidentally during a routine ultrasound. Surgical removal is often necessary when these tumors exceed 4cm in size. These tumors are often highly vascular and pose surgical challenges due to their location near the spleen, pancreas, and kidney. "The da Vinci system's precision allowed us to successfully remove the entire tumor within two hours with minimal blood loss, and we discharged the patient on the second postoperative day." This groundbreaking procedure not only saved the patient's life but also showcased the potential of cutting-edge medical techniques to overcome daunting challenges.



Abhishek explosive 66 powers SRH to easy win against PBKS

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Abhishek Sharma bossed Punjab Kings bowlers with yet another explosive half-century as Sunrisers Hyderabad chased to a four-wicket win in the IPL here on Sunday.

Opting to bat on a flat track, Punjab Kings posted an imposing 214/5 riding on Prabhsimran Singh's 45-ball 71 and skipper Jitesh Sharma's final over heroics.

But SRH looked in complete control of the tall chase after losing Travis Head off the first ball and chased down the target with five balls to spare. The win took them second place in the table with 17 points from 14 matches. Abhishek went about his

business with utmost nonchalance for a 21-ball fifty, his third half-century of the season.

He smoked six sixes and five boundaries in his knock of 66 from 28 balls to completely tilt the equation in their favour.

Henrich Klaasen (42; 26 balls) Rahul Tripathi (33; 18b) and Nitish Reddy (37; 25b) made handy contribution in their complete domination act.

Shashank Singh dismissed Abhishek against the run of play with the batter getting beaten by a slower ball and ended up gifting a catch to Shivam Singh at covers.

But with SRH in top gear at 129/2 at the midway stage, the chase was just a formality and Klaasen continued their

strong momentum, slamming three fours and two sixes. Looking to seal the chase, the South African wicketkeeper-batter was bowled by Harpreet Brar in the final over.

But by then, SRH just needed seven runs from 10 balls and Sanvir Singh sealed the issue with a four in the first ball of the final over.

Earlier Arshdeep gave SRH an early blow, cleaning up the dangerous Travis Head for a golden duck.

After losing a wicket of the first ball, SRH showed little sign of panic with Rahul Tripathi seizing the momentum in a 18-ball 33.

Playing only his second match of the season, Tripathi took Rishi Dhawan to clearers

with two fours and one six in a row that set the tone for their tall chase.

Abhishek then came on his own, smashing Arshdeep for two fours and one six as the duo continued their assault dealing only in boundaries to cruise to 50 in four overs.

Harshal Patel leaked 22 runs in his first over but returned with a wicket, dismissing Tripathi with a slower ball.

But with 72/2 in five overs, there was no looking back for SRH when Klaasen came to the party to record their third highest powerplay score of 84/2.

The new look opening pair of Prabhsimran and Vidarbha's Atharva Taide put on 97 runs from 55 balls as PBKS did well to see

through the power play without losing a wicket.

Prabhsimran smashed seven fours and four sixes for his 45-ball 71, while Taide will regret missing out on a fifty after being dismissed for a well-made 46 off just 27 balls.

Taide hit five fours and two sixes and after his departure, Prabhsimran in the company of Rilee Rossouw as the duo put together 54 off 32 balls to keep the momentum going in the middle overs.

It looked a one-way traffic at 151/1 in 14 overs when leg-spinner Vijayakanth Vijayakanth (1/37) dismissed the set batter Prabhsimran off a quicker delivery that took a faint edge and

Klaasen did well to take a one-handed catch behind the stumps.

Cummins (1/36) ended his spell taking the wicket Rossouw one run shy of a half-century in the 18th over that left two new batters at the crease — Jitesh Sharma and Ashutosh Sharma. T Natarajan (2/33) then did well to remove the inform Ashutosh in the penultimate over.

PBKS went on to lose four wickets for 44 runs in five overs before the stand-in skipper Jitesh's last over assault took them to a fighting total. Jitesh (32 not out from 15 balls; 2x4, 2x6) finished with two sixes against Nitish Kumar Reddy in a 20-run final over.

Rajasthan Royals finish third after rain plays spoilsport

Guwahati (PTI): Rajasthan Royals paid the price for their shoddy show during the business end as a washout of their final IPL league game against table toppers Kolkata Knight Riders on Sunday pushed them to third place behind Sunrisers Hyderabad. While KKR finished the league engagements on 20 points with nine wins and two more solitary points courtesy wash-outs, SRH (17 points) pipped RR (17 points) by virtue of better Net Run Rate (NRR). SRH finished with NRR of 0.414 compared to RR's 0.273.

KKR will play Sunrisers Hyderabad in the first Qualifier in Ahmedabad on Tuesday followed by the 'Eliminator' between Rajasthan Royals and Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the same venue.

Rajasthan Royals would blame themselves for getting into a nice little rut after an incredible run during the first half of the tournament when they had won eight out of their nine games.

RCB'S TURNAROUND WILL INSPIRE OTHER TEAMS, SAYS DINESH KARTHIK

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Royal Challengers Bengaluru's remarkable turnaround to win six games on the trot and barge into the Indian Premier League playoffs this year will inspire other teams in future, believes wicketkeeper-batter Dinesh Karthik.

RCB, who lost seven of their first eight games including six defeats in a row, came back roaring from the brink of elimination in the 17th edition of IPL to make the final four.

The Faf du Plessis-led side on Friday got the better of defending champions Chennai Super Kings by 27 runs to seal the fourth spot in the points table.

"People will always remember certain journeys. The way we have come back after eight games, we needed to win six, people will remember this team," Karthik was quoted as saying in a RCB release.

"Every year in this tournament, when you hit the seven-game mark, there will be one or two teams which would have probably won one



or two and they will look to us and say, 'RCB did it. That was special. We are going to try and repeat what RCB did'."

"That is what we all play cricket for, sport for, where people follow us and believe us that they can do something

special. It is hard. It is not going to be easy, I can tell any team that. What we have achieved today is very, very special," Karthik said.

RCB will now face the team which finishes third, one among Sunrisers Hyderabad

and Rajasthan Royals, in the Eliminator to be played at Ahmedabad on Wednesday.

"We have it within our grasp to do something that people will remember us for many decades. It will be a journey where people will say, 'wow,

that RCB team was special. We are on that journey," Karthik said.

Karthik said RCB's confidence was the differentiating factor between them and CSK, a team which has a better bilateral record.

"Coming into this game, there was a sense of quiet confidence about us, playing the defending champions, and the way we played we should be really proud," Karthik said.

The senior wicketkeeper pointed out RCB's fielding and aggressive batting, despite rain intervention, as the factors which worked for them.

"We can proudly say we are the best fielding team in this tournament without a doubt," he said.

"Even though it turned, we had a rain break, we had to go, start again, just the way Virat (Kohli) and Faf played the next three overs made it feel like 140-150 could be a decent total.

"Most teams would have thought about that and we would have thought about that for a second as well," he said.

Rayudu does not feel Dhoni has played his last match, puts ball in BCCI court

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India batter Ambati Rayudu doesn't feel MS Dhoni has played his last match in the IPL and wants the BCCI to continue with the contentious impact player rule as it could help the long-serving legend to keep going in top-flight cricket.

Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings bowed out of this edition of the Indian Premier League following a 27-run defeat to Royal Challengers Bengaluru in a much-anticipated southern derby in Bengaluru on Saturday.

The five-time defending champions needed 17 in the final over to qualify for the playoffs on better net run rate, but bowler Yash Dayal, after being hit for monstrous six by Dhoni, held his nerves to help RCB prevail.

Later, speaking on Star Sports Cricket Live, Rayudu said, "I don't think this is his last game. I just don't see him wanting to end on this note."

Even as the RCB players broke into wild celebrations, Dhoni shook hands with the opposition's reserves and support staff before quietly disappearing into the dressing room. Rayudu said, "He looked a little frustrated, even when he got out. That's very unlike MS Dhoni, he just



wanted to qualify and finish on a high. But you never know with MS Dhoni, he might come back next year." Rayudu, who played under Dhoni at CSK, brought the BCCI into the picture.

"... With the impact player role as well, it gives him the opportunity to be able to come in those last few overs and truly make that impact."

"BCCI better not remove the impact player role because we still want to see MS Dhoni play. So, it's up to BCCI now. Do we want to see MS Dhoni play or not?"

While the match ended in agony for Dhoni and Co, RCB continued their revival with a sixth straight win in a row, a remarkable feat that saw them rise from the bottom of the table to make the playoffs.

Speaking of Dhoni, former Australian opener Matthew

Hayden said, "Yeah, I suppose the thing is when you come to the end of your career, whether it is the last part of his career or not, what you don't want to see is diminishing returns as an athlete."

"Firstly, as a leader, he is The Thala of the Chennai Super Kings. This is telling me that nothing here is about becoming anything else other than first place. He's desperately using his brains, all of that cricket knowledge."

"And of course, the power is there and that's always been MS Dhoni. He's always hit balls at this stage of an innings. At the front, you can understand how players can hit it. But at the back, it's really hard to hit balls." Dhoni made 25 off 13 balls with the help of three fours and a huge six, showing that he can still send the ball a long, long way.

OTHERS SPORTS

Satwik, Chirag win Thailand Open title

PTI ■ BANGKOK

In a confidence-boosting performance ahead of Paris Olympics, star Indian shuttlers Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty on Sunday won the Thailand Open Super 500 badminton tournament with a straight-game win over Chen Bo Yang and Liu Yi of China, here.

Satwik and Chirag, the world number three pair, prevailed 21-15 21-15 over Liu and Chen, ranked 29th, for their ninth BWF world tour title in men's doubles.

It was also the second title of the season for the Asian Games

champions following their triumph at the French Open Super 750 in March. They had also finished runners-up at Malaysia Super 1000 and India Super 750.

"It has been a lucky tournament for us. The journey started from here. We lifted this title in 2019 and again we are lifting it here now. After 2019, we went on to win many tournaments and, hopefully, it will give more boost to us in the upcoming important tournaments," Satwik said after the win.

"They keep on playing fast and we knew we couldn't relax. Overall, I think it's the best match we played throughout the tournament. We kept



everything calm and under control. So really happy that we played well."

Asked about Paris Games, Chirag said: "Not just us but all athletes want to go out there in the Olympics and win that medal and we too want that

and hopefully we will play well there." For Satwik and Chirag, the title comes at a crucial juncture of their careers as they had some low returns in the last couple of tournaments.

The Indian pair lost in the second round at All England Championships and then missed the Asia Championships due to an injury to Satwik. The Thomas Cup campaign was also not too fruitful as they lost a couple of narrow matches to top pairs.

Satwik and Chirag had come into the Thailand Open final without dropping a game and were favourites to claim the title, while Liu and Chen also produced some stunning wins in the run-up to the summit clash and

had the reputation of never losing a final.

However, it was always going to be a tough task to tame the top-seeded Indians, who didn't allow the Chinese to get into long rallies or sustain any pressure.

Satwik and Chirag made a superb start by quickly opening up a 5-1 lead. Chen and Liu clawed back with a four-point burst.

At 7-7, the Chinese pair won a 39-shot rally and surged ahead to 10-7 before spraying one long. Liu and Chen played a few intense rallies but Chirag unleashed a bullet return to draw level at 10-10 but Liu ensured they had a slender edge at the break.

Messi held scoreless but Inter Miami extends unbeaten string

AP ■ FORT LAUDERDALE

Lionel Messi was kept off the scoresheet for the second consecutive match, but Inter Miami extended its unbeaten string with a 1-0 win over DC United.

Leo Campana scored four minutes into second half stoppage time as Miami, 6-0-3 since a 4-0 loss at the New York Red Bulls on March 23, avoided a second consecutive scoreless draw. Campana, who entered the match a minute earlier, received a pass from Sergio Busquets on the right wing and converted on a shot that landed inside the left post.

Miami had used its allotted five substitutions but was allowed an additional replacement when United's Martin Rodriguez left the match because of a concussion. Second half stoppage lasted 10 minutes.

"I know that lately I have not been getting too many minutes but it is my responsibility to be ready," Campana said in Spanish. "Whether it's 30, 20, 15 or one minute you have to be ready. Thankfully, we had the time to score the goal."

For a team known for its high-powered offense that has produced a league-high 36 goals, Miami secured its second straight shutout.

"We were not as fluid offensively and they formed a solid defense," Miami coach



Gerardo "Tata" Martino said. "Defensively we worked very well."

The win improved Eastern Conference-leading Miami to 9-2-4 with 31 points. DC United dropped to 4-5-5 and 17 points.

Messi returned to the lineup after missing Wednesday's match at Orlando because of knee soreness.

The Argentine star forward had at least one goal and assist in five consecutive matches until a 3-2 win at Montreal on May 11. Messi began Saturday with a league-leading 12 assists.

Tightly marked for most of the match, Messi found a slight opening in the 71st minute, but his shot from 22 yards sailed high above the crossbar.

Miami goalkeeper Drake Callender preserved the shutout when he stopped a shot from United's Jacob Murrell in the 86th minute and then denied Cristian Dajome's inside the box four minutes later.

PTI ■ SHARJAH

Indian Grandmaster Aravindh Chithambaram defeated local star A R Saleh Salem to emerge as the sole leader on 4.5 points after the end of the fifth round of Sharjah Masters chess tournament here.

Chithambaram is now followed by four players, the Iranian duo of Amin Tabatabaei and Bardiya Daneshvar and Americans Hans Moke Niemann and Sam Shankland who all have four points apiece.

Top seed Arjun Erigaisi is in the next pack of eight players having 3.5 points each and giving him company here is another Indian in Sankalp Gupta.

With four rounds still to be played in the USD 52000 prize money tournament, as many as 16 players have an

Aravindh Chithambaram beats Salem to claim sole lead in Sharjah

identical three points each. The list includes Indians Abhimanyu Puranik, Leon Luke Mendonca, P Iniyan and V Pranav.

It turned out to be a tough day at the office for many but Chithambaram was in his element as he simply crushed Salem in all departments of the game.

It was a King's Indian defense by Salem who played black and the middle game saw Chithambaram exerting pressure on the queen side. It was on the 17th move that the Chennai-based GM unleashed a brilliant tactical sequence, giving up two



pawns endgame where the draw was a just result.

Sankalp continued with his impressive run, holding highly regarded Teimour Radjabov of Azerbaijan to a draw while Abhimanyu Puranik could not keep up with his form and lost to Amin Tabatabaei of Iran.

Important and Indian results Round 5 (Indians unless specified): Aravindh Chithambaram (4.5) beat A.R. Saleh Salem (Uae, 3.5); Hans Moke Niemann (Usa, 4) drew with Alexey Sarana (Srb, 3.5); Erigaisi Arjun (3.5) drew with Volodar Murzin (Fid, 3.5); Abhimanyu Puranik (3)

lost to Amin Tabatabaei (Iri, 4); Sankalp Gupta (3.5) drew with Samuel Sevian (Usa, 3); Shreyas Royal (Eng, 3) drew with Nihal Sarin (3); Leon Luke Mendonca (3) drew with Nikolas Theodorou (Gre, 3); P Iniyan (3) drew with Teimour Radjabov (Aze, 3); V Pranav (3) beat Nodirbek Yakubov (Uzb, 2); Abhimanyu Mishra (2.5) drew with Bharath Subramaniyam (2.5); Benjamin Gledura (Hun, 2.5) drew with Pranav Anand (2.5); Aditya Mittal (2.5) drew with Siddharth Jagadeesh (Sgp, 2.5); B Adhiban (3) beat Poutya Idani (Iri, 2); Abhijeet Gupta (2.5) drew with Mahdi Gholami Orimi (Iri, 2.5); D Harika (1.5) lost to Emre Can (Tur, 2.5); Yilmaz Mustafa (Tur, 1.5) drew with Raja Rithvik (1.5); S P Sethuraman (1) lost to Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus (Tur, 2).

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