



OPINION 6 UNVEILING THE ENIGMA OF AN UNUSUAL ELECTION

WORLD 9 IRAN OPENS REGISTRATION FOR JUNE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

MONEY 10 STOCK MARKETS FALL FOR 5TH DAY; SENSEX PLUNGES 617 POINTS

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WEARING INDIA JERSEY IS DIFFERENT FEELING: PANT 12 SPORTS

BJP, CONG SWEAR BY CONSTITUTION, BUT GLOVES ARE OFF 'Third-term 125-day roadmap ready' 'Nation needs inclusive, nationalist Govt'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE HOSHIARPUR (PUNJAB)

Addressing his final rally of the back-to-back hectic 2024 Lok Sabha polls campaign, which spanned about two months, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday attacked the Congress for 'ranting' about the Constitution. He accused them of 'strangling' it during the Emergency and not caring about it when Sikhs were killed in the 1984 riots.



NDA supporters at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's public meeting for the last phase of Lok Sabha elections, in Hoshiarpur, Punjab, on Thursday

Election Commission against the PM's spiritual sojourn." Hitting back at the Congress for its charge that the BJP would scrap the Constitution if voted to power, Modi said, "Nowadays people of the country are hearing rants from the INDI alliance about the Constitution. These are the same people who strangled the Constitution

during Emergency". He also charged that the intentions of the Congress and INDIA Bloc over the issue of reservation are "dangerous". "In the last 10 years, I have always protected reservation for SC/ST/OBCs. Congress and INDI alliance are enraged over my efforts. Their intentions on reservation are dangerous. Their complete

track record has been to snatch reservations of SC, ST and OBC," he said, adding he has always protected the reservation for SC/ST and OBCs. Accusing the Opposition of insulting the spirit of the Constitution and sentiments of BR Ambedkar, he said they want reservation on the basis of religion in Government

jobs, in sports, in Government tenders and admission in universities. The Prime Minister charged that the Opposition wanted to give reservation rights to Muslims after snatching it from Dalits and downtrodden.

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PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI/AMRITSAR

In his first statement in the flag-end of ensuing Lok Sabha elections, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Thursday accused his successor Narendra Modi of lowering the dignity of public discourse and the gravity of the office of the PM by giving "hateful speeches" during the poll campaign. Singh also took the opportunity to make his stand clear after the controversy erupted when Modi had accused Singh of saying that Muslims have the first right on the country's resources. On the last day of two months long campaign, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge also expressed confidence that the INDIA Bloc will secure a clear majority in the Lok Sabha polls and give the country an inclusive and nationalist Government, while senior leader Rahul Gandhi responded to Modi's assertion that the world only learned of Mahatma Gandhi through the film 'Gandhi'.



Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi at Jaku Temple, Shimla, in the midst of last day of campaign in Himachal Pradesh on Thursday



Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh

Commission's direction of no appeal for votes on caste and religion. Earlier in an appeal to voters, particularly Punjab ahead of the seventh-phase of Lok Sabha polls on Saturday, Singh asserted that only the Congress can ensure growth-oriented progressive future where democracy and Constitution will be safeguarded. The senior Congress leader also hit out at the BJP Government for imposing an "ill-conceived" Agniveer scheme on the Armed forces. "The BJP thinks that the value of patriotism, bravery and service is only four years. This shows their fake nationalism," he said in a letter to voters of Punjab.

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As poll commotion ends, prayers begin

RAJESH KUMAR/SAMAR PANDEY NEW DELHI

Mid hostile weather conditions and poll bickering to woo the voters, the 44-day longest ever campaign for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls ended on Thursday evening. The intensity of the campaigns showcased the high stakes and each party's will to maintain their position as the election process neared conclusion. This phase could well be the game changer for the future of the country as well as the political climate. This is probably the first election, where people witnessed Prime Minister Narendra Modi using "Brand Modi" during the 44 days long poll campaign as well as the Opposition parties also used "Modi Brand". Even BJP candidates are banking on Modi's charisma to win and sought votes in the name of Brand Modi. After the end of campaigning, the Prime Minister, the biggest star campaigner of ruling BJP, left for two days meditation at the famed Vivekananda Rock Memorial here. Swami Vivekananda is said to have attained enlightenment at this place. Modi notched up a total of 206 public outreach programs, including rallies and roadshows, since the Election Commission (EC) announced

Table with 3 columns: STATES, NO. OF SEATS, CONSTITUENCY. Rows include Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, West Bengal, Odisha, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chandigarh.

the poll schedule on March 16. The PM surpassed his nearly 145 public engagements during the 2019 polls by a significant margin. The campaign period this time was 76 days, compared to 68 days in the

polls held five years ago. At 73, Modi was not only ahead of any other leader in terms of the sheer number of rallies and the distance he covered but also continued to be the biggest vote magnet for his party.

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22 pilgrims killed as bus falls into gorge in Jammu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE JAMMU

At least 22 pilgrims died and 64 others received injuries after an overcrowded bus, headed towards the famous Shiv Khori shrine, rolled down into a deep gorge near the Tungi Morh, Chowki Choura area of Akhnoor in Jammu division on Thursday. The list of dead included 10 males, 9 women, and two children. The majority of pilgrims hailed from Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. According to a statement issued by the Jammu and Kashmir Police, the bus bearing registration number UP81CT-4058 was carrying devotees from Kurukshetra towards the Shiv Khori shrine in the Reasi district when it met with an accident at around 12.35 p.m. on Thursday in



An injured man being admitted to the Government Medical College Hospital after a bus carrying pilgrims fell into a gorge in Akhnoor, in Jammu, on Thursday

which 21 passengers died and 54 others received injuries. Initial reports suggested the driver of

the ill-fated bus lost control of the wheels while negotiating a turn. Some of the passengers who survived the fatal accident told local reporters that the bus driver failed to negotiate the turn due to high speed leading to an accident. Transport Commissioner, Jammu and Kashmir Rajinder Singh Tara, who along with senior officers also rushed to the spot, told media teams the accident was caused by human error. We have verified the relevant documents of the bus. The fitness certificate of the bus was found valid, he added. The rescue teams have shifted the dead bodies to the Sub Divisional Hospital in Akhnoor and 54 injured passengers have been rushed to the Government Medical College hospital, Jammu for advanced treatment.

CM Yogi announces aid to kin of deceased

Lucknow (PNS): Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Thursday, expressed his condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in the bus accident in Jammu and Kashmir and also announced financial assistance of Rs 2 lakh each for the families of the deceased and Rs 50,000 each for the seriously injured. The chief minister wrote on his social media account, "X," "The loss of lives in an unfortunate bus accident in Jammu and Kashmir is extremely sad. My condolences to the bereaved people who lost their loved ones in this accident. I pray to Lord Shri Ram to grant peace to the departed souls and speedy recovery to the injured."

Kejriwal seeks regular bail in laundering case

RAJESH KUMAR NEW DELHI

A city court on Thursday sought the response of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to a bail plea filed by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in the money laundering case against him in relation to the Delhi excise policy. Kejriwal is currently out on interim bail, granted by the Supreme Court, in the case till June 1. Kejriwal on Thursday campaigned in Punjab, the last day of campaigning for the seven phases Lok Sabha polls. Special Judge Kaveri Baweja also directed the ED to file its response to Kejriwal's plea by Saturday when the ED said it would like to file replies to Kejriwal's plea. The court allowed the same and posted the case for further hearing on June 1 at 2 pm.



Appearing for ED, Additional Solicitor General (ASG) SV Raju sought time to file response to the pleas. The agency claimed he suppressed many facts. Kejriwal, who had been campaigning from the day

he was released on interim bail, is claiming to be unwell as the date for surrender neared, Raju said. "He is not in custody. He has been granted interim bail by the Supreme Court. He is today in Punjab campaigning. His health did not hinder him from campaigning. He moves the bail on the last date so that we get very little time. His conduct doesn't entitle him for any orders today," Raju said. Kejriwal has filed two separate pleas. One plea seeks regular bail in the money laundering case initiated by the ED in relation to the Delhi excise policy scam. A second plea seeks interim bail for seven days on medical grounds. The court on Thursday issued notice on both pleas.

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Now, add terror threat to India-Pak match stress

New York's Nassau County will have unprecedented security arrangements in place for the T20 World Cup clash between India and Pakistan on June 9 due to the threat of a terror attack here even though state Governor Kathy Hochul insisted that it is not credible "at this time". The Eisenhower Park Stadium at the Nassau County will host eight matches of the tournament-proper, including India's three outings. The Indians will also play a practice game against Bangladesh here on June 1. A report on CNN said New York officials are putting safety precautions in place "after terror group ISIS-K made a global threat earlier this year" against the World Cup. Nassau County Police Commissioner Patrick Ryder said on Wednesday that the event received an ISIS-K-linked threat in April. "That was followed by more specific threats on the India versus Pakistan game, scheduled for June 9, and references to a viral video circulating online, which calls for 'that lone wolf to act out,'" the report said.

Monsoon tiptoes into Kerala, NE

ARCHANA JYOTI NEW DELHI

The southwest monsoon arrived two days earlier than usual on Thursday hitting the Kerala coast and parts of Northeast India simultaneously. This early onset, driven by favourable conditions created by cyclone Remal, has pulled the monsoon flow to the Bay of Bengal, according to the scientists from the India Meteorological Department (IMD). This marks the beginning of the four-month rainy season in the country.

Describing successful launch of a rocket Agnibaan powered by world's first single-piece 3D printed semi-cryogenic engine as a "momentous occasion" for India's space sector, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said "it is a testament to our yuvashakti." Chennai-based space start-up Agnikul Cosmos successfully carried out a sub-orbital test-flight of its home-built 3D-printed semi-cryogenic rocket — Agnibaan — from its own launch pad at Sriharikota, making it India's second private entity to do so. Modi, in a post on X, said, "A remarkable feat which will make the entire nation proud!" "The



Agnikul Cosmos successfully carries out a sub-orbital test-flight of its home-built 3D-printed semi-cryogenic rocket Agnibaan from its own launch pad at Sriharikota, on Thursday

successful launch of Agnibaan rocket powered by world's first single-piece 3D printed semi-cryogenic engine is a momentous occasion for India's space sector and a testament to the remarkable ingenuity of our Yuva Shakti. My best wishes to the @AgnikulCosmos team for their future endeavours," he said. After four unsuccessful attempts, the test flight of Agnibaan Sub-Orbital Technology Demonstrator (SORTeD) on Thursday took place at 7.15 am without any live streaming and in

the presence of fewer dignitaries at the Sriharikota launch pad located within ISRO's Satish Dhawan Space Centre. "Humbled to announce the successful completion of our first flight — Mission 1 of Agnibaan SORTeD — from our own and India's first and only private Launchpad within SDSC-SHAR at Sriharikota," Agnikul Cosmos said on X. It said all the mission objectives of this controlled vertical ascent flight were met and performance was nominal. "The vehicle was completely designed in-house and was powered by the world's first single piece 3D printed engine and also happens to be India's first flight with a semi-cryogenic engine," the start-up said.

Agnikul is looking at flying an orbital mission towards the end of the financial year of 2025. Hyderabad-based Skyroot Aerospace was the first private Indian entity to launch its sub-orbital rocket Vikram-S in November 2022. Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chairman S Somanath said, "The success involving many firsts including 3D printed semi-cryogenic engine, flight control systems etc. Demonstrate the prowess of indigenous design and innovation. It motivates ISRO to support the Space startups and Non-Governmental entities for innovation and Atmanirbhara to create a vibrant space ecosystem in the country."

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As poll commotion ends, prayers begin

From Page 1

His comments, panned by critics and embraced by the BJP's ardent supporters, set the narratives of the election. The Prime Minister also gave a total of 80 media interviews, averaging more than one daily since the polls began. The campaigning saw BJP leaders led by Modi accusing the Congress and the INDIA Bloc of being corrupt, anti-Hindu and engaging in loot, appeasement and dynastic politics. The Opposition parties have been claiming that the BJP is anti-farmer, anti-youth and will change and scrap the Constitution if they win the elections. For the Congress, Kharge and party leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra led the campaign. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, out on interim bail in the excise policy case, also led an aggressive campaign for his party candidates along with Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann. In Punjab and Bihar, the stakes are high for the Badal clan and Lalu Prasad's daughter Misa Bharti who are in the fray to save the legacy of their families. The last phase of 57 parliamentary seats is crucial for the BJP as it does not want to leave anything to chance. It is also crucial for the opposition to restrict the BJP/NDA to less than 300 seats. Data shows of the 57 seats, the BJP won 25 in both the 2014 and the 2019 elections, less than 50 percent.

This was amongst the worst phases of the BJP across the seven phases in 2019. In phase seven, 28 seats go to polls in the Hindi heartland of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Himachal Pradesh. 13 seats will be polling in Punjab, and 15 in Bengal and Odisha combined. The BJP-led NDA swept the Hindi heartland states in 2019 winning 26 of the 30 on offer. It needs to maintain a winning streak without significant dents here. Congress won only three seats in 2014 and eight in 2019. Altogether, 24 seats are strongholds of different parties. The Trinamool Congress and the BJP have eight strongholds each. The remaining eight strongholds belong to the Biju Janata Dal, the Congress, the Janata Dal (United), and the Shiromani Akali Dal. Analysis of the 2019 Lok Sabha polls shows there are five clean sweep seats in the seventh phase where the victory margin was more than 35 per cent in the 2019 elections. These seats are Mandi, Hamirpur, Shimla, and Kangra in Himachal Pradesh; and Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh. The BJP won all five. Prime Minister Narendra Modi won the Varanasi seat by a 45.2 per cent margin. In six seats, the contest was very tough in the last election. This is the third consecutive time Modi is seeking reelection, having twice been elected from Varanasi in 2014 and 2019. People are now talking about the victory margin of Modi in Varanasi. In UP, the BJP is facing a stiff challenge from the INDIA Bloc, the Samajwadi Party (SP) and Congress party alliance in the Purvanchal region. The Lalu family seeks to break the jinx in the Patliputra constituency as earlier RJD chief Lalu also suffered a defeat in 2009. RJD patriarch Lal Prasad failed to win from here in 2009. His daughter Misa lost in 2014 and 2019 elections. In the battle for Lalu pride this time, the family is being challenged by Modi who

confidentially asked supporters to be ready with maner ladoos on June 4. It's a head-to-head contest between the BJP and the RJD on the parliamentary seat of Pataliputra, with sitting MP Ram Kripal Yadav vying for a third consecutive term. In Punjab, Bhatinda, the last bastion of the Akali and the Badal family in Punjab, Harsimrat Kaur, former Union Minister and wife of Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) chief Sukhbir Singh Badal, is fighting to save the family's borough. Though this is the first election being fought without the BJP and Prakash Singh Badal, most prominent face of the party, who died last year. Due to a multi cornered contest, Harsimrat is facing a tough time here. Polling is scheduled in all 13 seats of Punjab and four of Himachal Pradesh, 13 constituencies in Uttar Pradesh, nine in West Bengal, eight in Bihar, six in Odisha and three seats in Jharkhand besides Chandigarh. Modi is seeking a third consecutive term from Varanasi. Voting is already over in 486 seats in 28 States and Union Territories. The turnout in the first six phases was 66.14 per cent, 66.71, 65.68, 69.16, 62.2 and 63.36 per cent respectively. Counting of votes will be taken up on June 4.

Lucknow sizzles at 45.1 degree Celsius

PNS | LUCKNOW

Lucknow sizzled once again after 29 years as the maximum temperature crossed 45 degree Celsius on Thursday, five degrees above the normal. Lucknow had recorded a maximum temperature of 46.5 on May 31, 1995. It was 45.1 degree Celsius on Thursday, Bulandshahr was the hottest place in Uttar Pradesh, recording a temperature of 48 degree Celsius. The other districts

which recorded high temperatures included Basti (47.4 degree Celsius), Varanasi (47 degree Celsius), Kanpur Nagar (46.8 degree Celsius) and Agra (46 degree Celsius). Incidentally Lucknow recorded a high maximum temperature when the skies were cloudy on Thursday. Senior scientist Mohammed Danish from the MET department attributed it to the warm winds blowing in the state capital. He said that the maxi-

mum temperature was likely to fall from Friday. The forecast for Lucknow and neighbourhood was partly cloudy with the possibility of thundery development. The maximum and the minimum temperatures will be around 44 degrees Celsius and 32 degrees Celsius respectively. There is a warning that warm nights will continue. The forecast for the state is of rain and thundershowers very likely over isolated places.

There is a warning of a heat-wave, warm night and dust storm accompanied with gusty winds blowing at the speed of 30-40 kilometre per hour at isolated places in western UP. Heatwave conditions are also expected at isolated places in eastern Uttar Pradesh. Doctors' advice the young, the old and those suffering from various comorbidities not to step out in the heat. "Wear loose clothes and keep yourself cool and hydrated by

drinking juice and water frequently during the day," said a senior doctor. He said that one should go for light meals that are easy on the stomach and good for digestion. "Keep your surroundings cool. Drink mango panna, bael sherbet, juicy fruits like orange, watermelon, muskmelon, cucumber, buttermilk, pineapple, coconut water, lemonade, homemade lassi and ORS solution," he said.

NER launches drive against illegal vendors

PNS | LUCKNOW

An intensive checking campaign is being run against illegal vendors at the railway stations of Lucknow division. The drive is being carried out under the guidance of North Eastern Railway's Divisional Railway Manager of Lucknow Division, Aditya Kumar. Leading the drive from the front, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager Ashutosh Gupta, along with

divisional commercial inspectors and a team conducted the intensive checking campaign against illegal vending at various stations of the division such as Lucknow Junction, Gorakhpur Junction, Gonda Junction and Basti and major trains to ensure sale of food and beverages to railway passengers as per standards during the journey and at the stations. During this checking campaign in the last 15 days, 5,700

bottles of substandard branded water and packets of chips/namkeen/biscuits and bottles of mango juice/lemonade were recovered from illegal vendors. Penal action has been taken against all the vendors caught as per rules and fine has been imposed. NER Public Relations Officer at Lucknow, Mahesh Gupta, said the checking drive against illegal vending in stations and trains would continue in the division.

FSDA notice to hotel in Gomti Nagar

PNS | LUCKNOW

Taking cognisance of a complaint made by a citizen that his health deteriorated after eating food at a posh hotel in Gomti Nagar, a team from Food Safety and Drug Administration immediately visited the hotel concerned on Thursday. The complainant had said that his health deteriorated after eating the 'chutney' served at the hotel. The team inspected the restaurant, its kitchen and store room in the presence of the complainant and police personnel

and took samples of food items, chutney, paneer and curd for investigation and sent them to the State Food Analysis Laboratory, Uttar Pradesh for investigation. "On the basis of the deficiencies received, notice is being sent to the hotel. If the deficiencies found are not rectified within time and on receipt of the test report of the collected samples, further action will be taken against the concerned food business operator under Food Safety and Standards Act 2006," said an official.

BJP, Cong swear by Constitution...

From Page 1

Further attacking the Congress over the issue of corruption, Modi called it 'bhasrishtachar ki janni' (Mother of corruption) and said the party has done a "double PhD in corruption". Training his guns at the AAP, Modi said now 'kattar bharashtachari' (thoroughly dishonest) has joined hands with the Congress. Calling AAP also as 'bhayanak jhoothwadi party', Modi said the AAP formed the first Government in Delhi with the support of the Congress. Alleging that the AAP has learnt lessons of

indulging in corruption from the Congress, he said 'kattar bhrishtachari' (AAP) has taken birth from the "womb of the grand old party". Since its inception, the AAP has been a corrupt party, he alleged. While the AAP claimed it would wipe out the drug menace from the State, they made drugs as a source of their income after forming Government, Modi charged. Modi said the politics of selfishness of the Congress and INDIA Bloc has caused loss to the country. "After we form Government, in the third term, what the Government will do in the next 125 days,

how it will do, for whom it will do and for how long, work on this roadmap has been done," he said. Modi also sharpened his attack against the INDIA Bloc, accusing it of making the Army a "weapon of politics" and said there cannot be a "bigger sin than this". His attack came in the backdrop of the Congress and INDIA Bloc members targeting the Modi Government over the Agnipath scheme. Notably, the Congress has said it will scrap the Agnipath scheme if the INDIA Bloc comes to power. Modi said it was his target to make the Indian defence forces as the most modern and

capable force, self-reliant in the real sense. The PM said armies are not made only for the Republic Day parade. The Army is made for a fight, to defeat an enemy and to save our motherland, he said. "I am telling the INDI alliance that I am silent. Do not make any mistake in understanding Modi. The day Modi opens his mouth, I will bring out all your sins -- 'saat peedhi ke paap' (sins of seven generations)," he said. Training guns on the Congress, Modi referred to the Jeep scam, Bofors, submarine and Army truck scam and said they never cared about the requirements of the Army.

Monsoon...

From Page 1

The typical monsoon onset date for Kerala is June 1, and for Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, and Assam, it is June 5. However, while Kerala and the Northeast regions have welcomed the monsoon rains, Delhi and several areas in Northwest and Central India continue to endure intense heat under the scorching sun with the IMD forecasting some respite in these regions soon. "The Southwest monsoon has set in over Kerala and

Mahe, and has advanced into most parts of Northeast India, including Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, and most parts of Tripura, Meghalaya, and Assam as of May 30, 2024," said the IMD scientists. On May 15, the weather office had predicted the monsoon onset over Kerala by May 31. Kerala has been experiencing heavy rainfall over the past few days, resulting in a surplus of May rainfall, with waterlogging reported from various parts, according to weather office data.

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I have changed my name from VASHISTH PRATHAM KUSHWAHA to VASHISTH PRATHAM. In future I shall be known as VASHISTH PRATHAM. VASHISTH PRATHAM S/o Ashish Kumar, 111/105 Dharamveer Gali, Sulem Sarai, Gayasdinpur Uprhar, Prayagraj

NOTICE

I have changed my name from KUM. RUPKALA TO ROOP KANWAR W/o Keshar Singh R/O E-2/684 Sector F Jankipuram Near L P School, Lucknow-226021.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Salika Shazad to SALIKA FATIMA W/O Mohd. Suhaib R/o 44/280 Machhi Tola Meston Road Kanpur for all future purpose.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from MUMTAZ To MUMTAZ HUSSAIN S/O- MOHD SAKIR R/O 321, VILL & POST CHAK KORRA SADAT FATEHPUR for future purpose

NOTICE

Notify that due to mistake my son's Name written in high school(10th) Marksheet as RISHAYA VEMRA which is wrong. Where as the correct name is RISHAYA VERMA. Please correct accordingly. Gaurav Verma. C-51, Sector M. Aliganj, Lucknow 226024.

NOTICE

I, SONU holder of Indian Passport No: M2438162 issued at LUCKNOW on 29/09/2014 and Permanent Resident of H.NO 167K MUNSHIGANJ PO & PS MALIHABAD LUCKNOW PIN 227111 UTTAR PRADESH INDIA and presently residing at JEBEL ALI INDS AREA-1 DUBAI UAE do hereby change my name from SONU to SONU (Given name) KANOJIYA (SURNAME) with immediate effect.

सूचना

जो सम्पत्ति आराजी नं० 22 में स्थित मकान जो स्थित मैट्रोडी उपखण्ड पराना व तहसील चावल इलाहाबाद स्टेट बैंक आफ इण्डिया शाखा जानसेनगंज में बंधक थी, अब बंधक मुक्त हो गयी है। जिसका मूल दस्तावेज जो श्रीमती वन्दना मालवीय पत्नी नीरज मालवीय व नीरज मालवीय पुत्र प्रकाश नरायन मालवीय के पास में बही नं० 1 खण्ड 128 पेज 53 से 62 क्रमांक 4784 दिनांक 05.07.1991 को सब रजिस्ट्रार सदर, इलाहाबाद के यहाँ निर्दिष्ट है, जो स्टेट बैंक आफ इण्डिया शाखा जानसेनगंज से मूव हो गयी है। जिसके बावजूद आईओ30890 नं० 2024000447132 दिनांक 29.05.2024 को चुकी है। प्रत्येक नैनेजर स्टेट बैंक आफ इण्डिया शाखा जानसेनगंज, इलाहाबाद द्वारा सूचनाई अगर उक्त मूल दस्तावेज किसी को प्राप्त हो तो शाखा जानसेनगंज को उपलब्ध करा दे।

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I have changed my name from MEENAZ AHMAD to MINAJUDDIN for future purpose. Minajuddin S/o Jamejuddin R/o 132/488, Begum Purwa, Kanpur

NOTICE

I PRAVEEN KUMAR PATHAK S/O RAM RAJ PATHAK R/O. 511-6 KAILASH VIHAR, JAJMAU KANPUR DO AFFIRM THAT I HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM PRAVEEN PATHAK TO PRAVEEN KUMAR PATHAK FOR ALL FUTURE PURPOSE AND REF.

NOTICE

I have now changed my name from Deepa Rani Hotchandani to Deepa Rammani. In future, I should be known as Deepa Rammani, wife of Shri Kamlesh Kumar Rammani. Res.106/307, Ganesh Park, Gandhi Nagar, Kanpur-208012

NOTICE

I, SHUYASH SHUKLA S/O YOGENDRA KUMAR SHUKLA R/o 54-B KESHAV NAGAR-2 FAIZULLAGANJ Ward Lucknow UP. Hereby declare that my High School Certificate mention Father Name as YOGENDRA SHUKLA. which is incorrect. My Father correct name is YOGENDRA KUMAR SHUKLA.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from SUNNY KUMAR GUPTA To SUNNY GUPTA S/O- ANIL KUMAR GUPTA R/O FLAT NO 717, KESHAV PURAM AWAS VIKAS KALYANPUR KANPUR for future purpose

NOTICE

Original Lease Deed Dated - 11-12-1985 (No- 42/1986) of my property No-984, Block-B. Scheme No-40, Panki, Kanpur has been lost some where . Any use of the same shall be illegal. Ravindra Singh Pawariya S/O Kripal Singh Pawariya R/O - 984, Block - B, Panki, Kanpur Nagar

'Nation needs inclusive,...

From Page 1

Mounting an attack on Modi, the former PM said, "I have been keenly following the political discourse during this election campaign. Modi has indulged in the most vicious form of hate speeches, which are purely divisive in nature. Modi is the first Prime Minister to lower the dignity of public discourse, and thereby the gravity of the office of the Prime Minister. "No Prime Minister in the

past has uttered such hateful, unparliamentary and coarse terms, meant to target either a specific section of society or the Opposition. He has also attributed some false statements to me. I have never in my life singled out one community from the other. That is the sole copyright of the BJP," the former Prime Minister said. Modi had accused Singh of saying that Muslims have the first right on the country's resources. Singh said people of India are seeing through all of this. "This narrative of dehumanisation has now reached its peak. It is now our

duty to save our beloved nation from these forces of discord," Singh said in the letter. Addressing a Press conference at the AICC headquarters on the last of campaigning for the seventh and final phase of the Lok Sabha polls, Kharge said people have endorsed their view that "it will be the end of democracy if the current Government gets another chance". He also said Modi in his speeches in the last 15 days took the Congress' name 232 times and his own name 758 times. He didn't talk about unemployment even once, Kharge claimed.

Kharge also took a swipe at the Prime Minister over his comments in an interview that global awareness about Mahatma Gandhi came after Richard Attenborough's film, saying he may not have studied about Gandhi but the Mahatma is known the world over. "Modi said he came to know about Mahatma Gandhi after watching the film 'Gandhi'. This is laughable, perhaps Modi has never read about Gandhiji. The whole world knows Mahatma Gandhi, his statues are there at different places in the world, including in the UN," Kharge said.

Agnibaan breaches another...

From Page 1

Pawan Goenka, chairman of space regulator Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) said the successful launch of Agnibaan SOrTeD was a historic moment for India's space sector. "The successful launch of the Agnibaan SOrTeD is not just a milestone for Agnikul Cosmos but marks a significant moment for private players who are contributing to growing India's space sector," Goenka said. This was the fifth attempt by Agnikul to launch the Agnibaan SOrTeD since

March 22. The earlier attempts on March 22, April 6, April 7 and May 28 had to be called off due to technical difficulties. "We are proud to present India's first Semi-cryo rocket engine, which is also the world's most integrated single shot 3D printed piece. It signals the ability to rapidly assemble rockets that is unparalleled," Satyanarayanan R Chakravarthi, founding advisor of Agnikul Cosmos and Head of the National Centre for Combustion Research and Development (NCCRD) at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras said.

The Agnikul team consists of over 200 engineers and is associated with NCCRD at IIT Madras and is also guided by 45 former scientists from ISRO. "This is the culmination of 1000s of hours of reviews and hard work by the team. We are blessed to have had the opportunity and the full support of IN-SPACe and ISRO to design and build original space worthy hardware in India," Srinath Ravichandran, Co-Founder and CEO, Agnikul Cosmos, said. "This is a huge boost and a proud moment for India's thriving private space industry and just a glimpse

into what the future holds for us, our hearty congratulations to the entire team behind this and best wishes for their future efforts," Lt Gen A K Bhatt (ret'd) Director General, Indian Space Association (ISpA) said. Agnibaan is a customisable, two-stage launch vehicle that can carry a payload of up to 300 kg into orbit of about 700 km, according to the company. The rocket uses a semi-cryogenic engine with a mix of liquid and gas propellants, a technology that is yet to be demonstrated by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in any of its rockets.

Kejriwal seeks regular bail ...

From Page 1

Later, adding a Press conference, Delhi Minister Atishi on Thursday said the ED has opposed Kejriwal's bail plea on medical grounds, as she questioned the probe agency's stand and asked it why it was not allowing the politician to undergo tests as has been suggested by his doctors. Atishi said Kejriwal experienced sudden and unexplained weight loss during the ED custody and in judicial custody. "Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal filed an application for seven-day interim bail at the Rouse Avenue Court. He sought an extension to the bail for his health check-ups, because during his ED custody, he lost 6-7 kg of his weight. Such sudden and unexplained weight loss is an indicator of several serious diseases. Not just this, his ketone level has reached a critical level. His sugar level is on a continuous spike," she said. Atishi claimed that Kejriwal's doctors have advised him to undergo tests for cancer,

kidney ailments and heart related issues. "Why is ED opposing his interim bail plea? Why is the BJP opposing it? I want to ask BJP and ED, 'Why are you opposing Kejriwal's tests?' I want to ask them, 'What did you do to Kejriwal that he experienced unexplained weight loss?'" she said. Earlier, the Supreme Court Registrar recently rejected an application filed by Kejriwal seeking extension of his interim bail by one week in the Delhi Excise Policy case. (Arvind Kejriwal v. Directorate of Enforcement) The AAP leader had sought extension of his interim bail by seven days to undergo a host of medical tests, including a PET-CT scan, in view of "sudden and unexplained weight loss coupled with high ketone levels", which are indicative of kidney, serious cardiac ailments and even cancer. Registrar (Judicial Listing) Pavanesh D in an order passed on May 28 said the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader cannot seek

extension of interim relief when the decision on his main plea is pending. "Order XV Rule 5 of the Supreme Court Rules, 2013, enables the Registrar to refuse receiving a petition on the ground that it discloses no reasonable cause or is frivolous or contains scandalous matter. When the prayer made by the Applicant in this Application is considered, I am of the opinion that no reasonable cause or grounds are made out by the Applicant to entertain this application." However, the Registrar observed that the relief sought was 'misconceived' and 'directly in conflict' with the apex court order. "It is well settled that interim relief can be sought only in aid to the main relief. The relief sought for is beyond the scope of the main appeal since the issue relating to the validity of arrest of the Applicant is in question and not relating to his release on bail...For all these reasons, I refuse to receive the present application, as it does not disclose any reasonable cause for being entertained," it said.

HDFC BANK Legal Cell: HDFC Bank Limited Upper Ground, 1st And 2nd Floor, 4B-115, Gomti Nagar Extension, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh - 226 010. "APPENDIX- IV-A [See proviso to rule 8 (6)] SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in HDFC Bank Ltd. Secured Creditor's website https://www.hdfcbank.com/personal/resources/important-notices. Date: - 31.05.2024 Place: Lucknow

PUBLIC NOTICE Notice is hereby given to the public at large that deceased borrower namely Mr. Mahfooz Alam along with other Co-Borrowers namely M/s. New Bharat Fancy Cloth Store, Mr. Haider Ali, Mrs. Nikhat Jahan, M/s. New Bharat Enterprises, and M/s, F. F. Enterprises, had availed financial assistance of Rs. 1,62,00,000/- from Aditya Birla Finance Limited ("ABFL") wide loan account no. ABLNVLAP00000542920 against immovable property bearing "House No. 129, 130, Ward No.9, Nagar Panchayat Itaujia, Bakshi Ka Talab, Ahmedpur Khera, Lucknow, U.P. - 226203" ("Secured Asset"). That in view of defaults the said loan account has been declared NPA and SARFAESI Proceedings have been initiated against the said Secured Asset. The unfortunate demise of said Borrower namely Mahfooz Alam has come to the knowledge of ABFL and despite several efforts of ABFL, ABFL has not been able to trace the identities of legal heirs of the said deceased Borrower. Therefore by way of the present public notice the legal heirs of the deceased borrower namely Mahfooz Alam are hereby requested to intimate to the undersigned in writing about their identities with all necessary and supporting documents within 7 days from the date of publication hereof, failing which it shall be presumed that there are no legal heirs of the deceased borrower, whereupon ABFL shall be at liberty to initiate proceedings in accordance with law including under the provisions of SARFAESI Act, 2002 read with Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 and enforce its security interest against the said Secured Asset which shall include taking possession of the said Secured Asset and thereafter effecting sale of the same to recover its outstanding dues. Ayush Jhingran Authorized Officer, Aditya Birla Finance Limited

ASIAN FERTILIZERS LTD. Regd. Office : Flat No. 202, Preet Garden, "3A/172", Azad Nagar, Kanpur, PIN-208002 Corporate Office : PWD Officer's Colony, Near Sahara Press, Gorakhpur Pin-273009 CIN No. L99999UP1986PLC007621 E-Mail : aif@asianfertilizers.com, WEBSITE: www.asianfertilizers.com, Telephone : 5512203421 EXTRACT OF THE AUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND YEAR ENDED 31st March, 2024 (Rs. in Lacs)

Campaigning ends for 13 LS seats in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The high-pitched campaigning for the 13 Lok Sabha constituencies going to polls in the seventh phase of parliamentary election and the Duddhi assembly bypoll ended on Thursday. Polling in these constituencies will be held on June 1. To ensure free, fair and peaceful conduct of polling on June 1, polling parties departed for their respective polling stations on Friday. Out of the 13 Lok Sabha seats in the state under the seventh phase, 11 belong to the general category, and two are

reserved for Scheduled Castes. The 13 Lok Sabha constituencies going to polls in the last phase of elections include Maharajganj, Gorakhpur, Kushinagar, Deoria, Bangsaganj (SC), Ghosi, Salempur, Ballia, Ghazipur, Chandauli, Varanasi, Mirzapur, and Robertsganj (SC), which are spread across 11 districts. There are 144 candidates in the poll fray in this phase of polls — 134 male and 10 female candidates, Uttar Pradesh Chief Election Officer Navdeep Rinwa said. Six candidates are competing for the Duddhi (ST) assembly by-election in Sonbhadra district, he added.

The prominent candidates in fray in the seventh phase polls include Prime Minister Narendra Modi from Varanasi, Union minister and Apna Dal (Sonele) leader Anupriya Patel from Mirzapur, former prime minister Chandrashekhar's son Neeraj Shekhar from Ballia, Mukhtar Ansari's brother Afzal Ansari from Ghazipur, Union minister Mahendra Nath Pandey from Chandauli, Union minister Pankaj Chaudhary from Maharajganj, and Bhojpur actor Ravi Kishan from Gorakhpur. Prime Minister Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah,

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, INDIA bloc leaders Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav actively campaigned in this phase to garner support for their candidates. While the Bharatiya Janata Party tried to drive home its allegations that the INDIA bloc will bring in Muslim reservation and put 'Babri lock' in Ayodhya's Ram temple, the opposition urged people to vote to 'save the Constitution'. State's Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa has directed all district election officers overseeing Lok Sabha constituencies in the seventh phase to ensure essential facilities for

voters and polling personnel at polling centres and booths. This includes provision for cold, potable water at all polling centres and the availability of wheelchairs for individuals with disabilities and elderly citizens. Additionally, measures to provide shaded areas at all polling stations have been emphasised due to the intense heat. Furthermore, before polling parties set out, medical kits were distributed to all polling personnel to enable them to tackle heatstroke cases and attend to any other health concerns during voting at the concerned booths.

Several Congress star campaigners remained away from campaign

PREETAM SRIVASTAVA ■ LUCKNOW

Congress had named 40 leaders as star campaigners of the party for campaigning in the seven-phase Lok Sabha elections, but not even a quarter of them were seen active in the field. Even after the completion of campaigning for the seven phases of elections, the candidates did not even see some former state presidents who were made star campaigners by the party. Former Congress president Sonia Gandhi, who retired from active politics due to poor health condition, too made a brief appearance to seek vote for her son Rahul Gandhi in Rae Bareilly. After the party's alliance with Samajwadi Party in UP, Congress was allotted just 17 out of 80 Lok Sabha seats in UP. This also annoyed many senior leaders who were looking for a chance to once again try their luck in the ongoing parliamentary elections. After finding that they were left with no other choice but to seek vote for the SP candidates in their strongholds, they preferred to sit in their homes. Rising mercury

was another reason which kept the veteran Congress leaders away from campaign trail. Among the star campaigners, the Congress included national leaders as well as those state leaders who are known among the public due to their organisational or constitutional post. In the elections, Congress national president Mallikarjun Kharge, former national president Rahul Gandhi and national general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, apart from national general secretary and UP in-charge Avinash Pandey sweated a lot, but due to some reasons, the other star campaigners were relatively less active. Former chief minister of Chhattisgarh, Bhupesh Baghel, former chief minister of Rajasthan, Ashok Gehlot, and former chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, Digvijay Singh, along with party veteran and Rajya Sabha member Pramod Tiwari were also seen active in the election campaign. On the contrary, many former state presidents were not active in the election campaign. These leaders included former state president

Salman Khurshid, Raj Babbar, Dr Nirmal Khatri, Ajay Kumar Lallu and Brijlal Khatri. It was said that Dr Khatri was ill while Raj Babbar was later fielded from Gurugram (Haryana). The current UPCC president, Ajay Rai, himself could not give the required time for campaigning on other seats due to being in the election fray from Varanasi. As a result of this more responsibility fell on Congress Legislature Party leader Aradhana Mishra 'Mona'. Similarly, former Union minister Pradeep Jain Aditya, who was made a star campaigner, could not come out of Jhansi due to being a candidate himself. Party candidates got organisational help from the state in-charge and co-state in-charges, while in the case of public meetings or roadshows during the elections campaigns, they got support from Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi along with Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav. Supriya Srinet, president of the social media department of Congress, who was included in the list of star campaigners, also played a role in election management.



Varanasi: Home Minister Amit Shah with his wife Sonal Shah performs worship at Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi on Thursday.

Yogi offers prayers, seeks blessing at Gorakhnath temple

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

On the last day of campaigning for the seventh phase of the Lok Sabha elections on Thursday, Chief Minister and Gorakshpeethadhiswar Yogi Adityanath paid his respects and sought blessings at the statue of his guru, Brahmachari Mahant Avaidyanath in the Gorakhnath temple complex before leaving for Himachal Pradesh and Punjab. As usual, he also spent some time in cow service, as well as blessed and gave chocolates to children of several devotees who visited the temple. For the final phase of the Lok Sabha elections, Chief Minister

Yogi has been staying overnight at the Gorakhnath temple for the past few days. Despite being busy with about half a dozen election programmes in a day, his daily routine remained unchanged even on Thursday. On Wednesday, Chief Minister Yogi addressed four election meetings in the Gorakhpur division and led a three-hour roadshow in the evening. After staying overnight, he first visited and worshipped Guru Gorakhnath on Thursday morning. Then, he paid his respects at the Samadhi Sthal of his guru, the late Mahant Avaidyanath.

Man held for depositing cloned cheques in GPO

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A man was caught red-handed attempting to deposit a cloned cheque of Rs 45,000 at GPO in Hazratganj on Thursday. The postal employees caught him and handed him over to the police. The miscreant, identified as Rakesh Chaurasiya of Adarsh Vihar Colony in Lucknow, had earlier deposited cloned cheques of Rs 48,000 and Rs 45,000 at GPO and a departmental inquiry was underway as per public relation officer of GPO, Sharad Kapoor, the man

had committed the fraud by withdrawing money after depositing cloned cheques on May 22. "He produced fake Aadhaar card and PAN card to open a postal bank savings account at GPO and had deposited the cloned cheques which were detected during examination and verification by the department and an inquiry was set up against him. On May 25, he reached the post office and again deposited a cloned cheque of Rs 45,000 and was identified by some of the postal employees. They kept him engaged in talks and alerted

the departmental head and later nabbed him. He was later handed over to the police. The police registered a case under relevant sections of the IPC and started investigations. It surfaced that Rajesh had deposited a cheque issued by a bank's branch in Azamgarh. Police suspect him to be a member of a gang which had fleeced several financial institutions in the past by depositing cloned cheques and withdrawing money against these cheques. The police said they had gathered some information and an investigation was underway.

Mystery shrouds man's death

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Mystery shrouds the death of a 40-year-old man whose body was recovered from a vacant plot in Bakshi-katalab police station area on Wednesday afternoon. The body was first spotted by home guard Amrishi Mishra, who was on duty at Biotech Network Facility Centre at Tehsil road in BKT. He said he spotted the man lying dead in a vacant plot adjacent to the centre and immediately informed the police which reached the scene and started investigations. Later, the man was identified as Vishnu Kumar Rawat of Derwa village of Itaunja. Preliminary investigation revealed that the man had left his house for some work and later disappeared. He was being searched by his family. Police said the deceased's father identified the body but did not give any complaint," the police said.

KILLED: A truck driver was killed in a road mishap while his brother suffered critical injuries in a road mishap which took place in the Bakshi-katalab police station area on Thursday morning. The incident took place at village Raitha on the Kisan Path when a truck rammed into the stationary truck parked on the road and both the victims suffered injuries as they were trapped in the mangled cabin of the truck. As per reports, truck driver Rajnish Pal aka Golu (28) of Sitapur, along with his brother Naimish Pal, was going somewhere and the truck collided with the trailer. The impact was intense and the trucks suffered heavy dents and both Rajnish and Naimish were trapped inside the cabin of the truck. The police used gas cutters to pull them out and they were rushed to a hospital in the area where doctors pronounced Rajnish dead and referred Naimish to the KGMU Trauma Centre in view of his serious condition. The police are investigating the case.

Man duped of Rs 35.74 L after 'digital arrest'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A man was 'digitally arrested' at his house while being controlled through WhatsApp call from a fraudster who identified himself as a constable in Cyber Cell Delhi and duped him of over Rs 35.74 lakh in Jankipuram Extension area of Lucknow. The victim, Naveen Joshi, who filed a complaint with the cyber crime police station, said he got a call from an unknown mobile number and the caller introduced himself as a constable in Delhi Cyber Cell. The caller told Joshi that the latter's bank details had been used in illegal transactions of Rs 25 lakh and he would be arrested if the charges were found to be true. The caller then told him that he was connecting him to his boss who would decide his fate

but he was told not share anything regarding this call with anyone in his family and remain seated in his room without any interaction with family members. The miscreant told him that his bank accounts would be seized and he would be arrested for the financial crime. He further told him that a secret investigation against him was underway and he should not share this with anyone in his family or with his friends or all of them would land in trouble. "He asked me to lock myself in a room to prepare for a long interrogation which would be done through WhatsApp call and instructed me not to allow anyone into the room. I was quizzed by the caller and his boss, who introduced himself as a senior police officer with a police station and a police logo being displayed in the

background as I noticed during the WhatsApp call from May 27 to May 28 and forced me to transfer Rs 35.49 lakh and Rs 25,000 from my two bank accounts," the victim said. He said he was sent an acknowledgement letter on his mobile phone in which he was asked to confess the financial crime he had committed. "After I transferred the money, I found the acknowledgement letter had disappeared from the Whatsapp account and also the DP and police logo on the mobile phone of the miscreants had disappeared, the victim stated. He said the miscreants had told him to cooperate in the investigations and had assured him that the money transferred would be refunded, but this never happened. Police registered a case and started investigations in the matter.

Miscreants open fake Facebook account in name of IAS officer, seek money from friends

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Unidentified miscreants opened a Facebook account in the name of Special Secretary, Geology and Mining department, Vijay Kumar and demanded money from his friends. The IAS officer has filed a complaint with the Cyber police. As per reports, Kumar was contacted by some of his friends and told about a Facebook

account in his name. He was further told by his friends that someone had demanded money from them. Kumar was shocked at this revelation and when he checked the social media account he found that the miscreant had used his details and his photo and name in opening and running the social media account. He filed a complaint in this regard and the police are investigating the case.

Theft in house of OT technician

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Thieves broke into the house of an OT technician in Mau village and stole jewellery and cash amounting to lakhs of rupees. During the theft, the thieves relished soft drinks and chewed gutkas as they collected the valuables and cash from the house. As per reports, Prakash Gautam, of Mau in Mohanlalganj nagar panchayat, is an OT technician in a private hospital in Utrathiya. On Wednesday night, Prakash closed the doors of the house and went to sleep on the roof with his family. Late at night, the thieves climbed the wall at the back side of the house and

broke the cemented ventilator and entered the house. They then broke the lock of the boxes and suitcases kept in the room and took away cash amounting to about Rs 1 lakh and jewellery worth Rs 2 lakh and a laptop. On Thursday morning, when Gautam's wife Meera woke up and came down, she was stunned to see the doors of the house open and all the household articles scattered on the floor. She immediately informed her husband who informed the police control room about the theft. A shirt was recovered by the police during the investigation. FOUND HANGING: A milkman ended his life a day after

he attacked his sister-in-law with a sharp weapon after a dispute. After treatment at Apex Trauma Centre, the woman was sent home on Wednesday while on Thursday morning, the body of the milk trader was found hanging from a tree near the village. The police are investigating the case after sending the body for post-mortem. The deceased was identified as Arjun Yadav, of Trilokpur village of Mohanlalganj, used to sell milk. He was married to Savitri from the same village a few years ago. It is alleged that Arjun had a dispute over something at his in-laws' house on Wednesday and in a fit of rage he attacked his sister-in-law Javritri with a sharp weapon.

Difficult for BJP to win even 140 seats: Akhilesh

PTI ■ Maharajganj

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Thursday claimed it would be difficult for the Bharatiya Janata Party to win even 140 seats in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections. Taking a jibe over the National Democratic Alliance's slogan of 'Abki baar 400 paar', Yadav said, "They have forgotten their slogan of crossing 400. People are so angry that they will make it difficult for the BJP to win even 140 seats." Yadav attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi

saying he has started "stumbling due to anxiety". Accusing the BJP of neglecting farmers and waiving loans of only industrialists, Yadav said the loans of farmers will be waived after the INDIA bloc government is formed. Yadav was addressing a joint rally in support of Congress candidate from Maharajganj Virendra Chaudhary. The former Uttar Pradesh chief minister accused the BJP government of deliberately leaking recruitment exam papers so that the youngsters remain unemployed and to snatch reservation.

बैंक ऑफ बड़ोदा Bank of Baroda Regional Office Kanpur Dehat Region : 118/330, 2nd Floor, Kaushalpur Gunti No. 5, Kanpur -208012

Possession Notice Branch: Kannauj, Distt. Kannauj

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Bank of Baroda under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice calling upon the borrower & guarantor to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower/guarantor 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 property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13 (4) of the said Act read with rule 8 & 9 of the said rules.

The borrower/guarantor in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the first charge of Bank of Baroda for amount & interest thereon.

The borrower's attention is invited to provision of sub-section (8) of 13 of the act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

Name and Address of Borrower/Guarantor & Description of Mortgage Property and Out Standing Amount as per Demand Notice/Demand & Possession Notice Date
Borrower : M/s Durga Medical Store, Proprietor : Shri Babu Ram S/o Shri Nand Lal, Address : Mohalla House No. 94-A, Mubarakpur Tila, Kannauj. Guarantor : Smt. Krishna Devi W/o Shri Babu Ram & Shri Nand Lal S/o Late Narpati, Both R/o : Mohalla House No. 94-A, Mubarakpur Tila, Kannauj. Demand Notice Date : 12-03-2024 • Date of Constructive Possession: 29.05.2024
Property : Land and Building Situated at House No. 94-A, Arazi 721, Mauza-Kandrauli Bangar, Tehsil & Pargana Kannauj. Owner of Property : Shri Nand Lal S/o Late Narpati, Area : 202.50 Sq. Mtr., Bounded-North : House of Shri Mataram, South : House of Shri Balakram, East : Road, West : Land/House of Ram Sewak. Outstanding Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs. 5,20,868.03 + Intt. +Others Charges
Date : 31-05-2024 Place : Kannauj Authorised Officer

बैंक ऑफ बड़ोदा Bank of Baroda Regional Office, Kanpur Metro Region: 118/330, 1st Floor, Gunti No. 5, Kaushalpur, Kanpur-12

DEMAND NOTICE Branch : Barra World Bank, Kanpur

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

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

Name and Address of Borrower / Guarantor and Security agreement with brief description of securities/N.P.A. Date & Outstanding Amount as per Demand Notice
Borrower : M/s Anandeshwar Traders, Regd. Office : House No. J-398, World Bank Colony Barra, Distt. Kanpur Nagar, Proprietor : Shri Ashish Tiwari S/o Shri Santosh Kumar Tiwari, R/o : House No. J-398, World Bank Colony Barra, Distt. Kanpur Nagar. Guarantor : Shri Santosh Kumar Tiwari S/o Shri Ram Vilash Tiwari, R/o : House No. J-398, World Bank Colony Barra, Distt. Kanpur Nagar and Smt. Munni Devi Mishra W/o Shri Santosh Kumar Mishra, R/o : House No. J-451, World Bank Colony Barra, Distt. Kanpur Nagar. Outstanding Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs. 34,44,138.95 + Intt. +Others Charges
Property (1) : Land & Building Situated at House No. 398, EWS-2, Block-J, Barra-KUDP, World Bank Barra, Kanpur Nagar in the name of Shri Santosh Kumar Tiwari S/o Shri Ram Vilash Tiwari, Area : 36.75 Sq. Mtr. Bounded-North : Plot No. 397, South : Plot No. 399, East : 4.50 Mtr. Wide Road, West : Plot No.425. Property (2) : Land & Building Situated at House No. 451, EWS-1, Block-J, Barra-KUDP, World Bank Barra, Kanpur Nagar in the name of Smt. Munni Devi Mishra W/o Shri Santosh Kumar Mishra, Area : 36.75 Sq. Mtr. Bounded-North : Plot No. 452, South : Park, East : Plot No. 434, West : 4.50 Mtr. Road. N.P.A. Date : 19-02-2024 • Demand Notice Date : 16-05-2024
Date : 31-05-2024 Place : Kanpur Nagar Authorised Officer

इंडियन बैंक Indian Bank 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 Date of NPA	Description of the Property
Branch: City Office			
1.	M/s Sri Krishan Traders, Office Address: 332/32, Ghariyalgali, Chowk Lucknow	Rs. 95,68,786.00 as on 17.05.2024 + interest & other charges	Mortgaged Assets: 1. Sale deed dated 21.12.2011 registered in the office of registrar Bahi No.1 Jild No 8624 page no. 313 to 354 at Sr. No. 16431, Property is residential building bearing house No. 408/96 at Chaupatiya Road Lucknow UP, Area-120.353 Sq. mtr., Boundaries: East- House of Warisan late Pandit Vishwanath Gaur & House Shiv Shankar I (Baboo) West-15 ft Wide Chaupatiya Road, North-Gali 10 ft Wide South-House Warisan Late Pandit Gali 10 ft Wide
2.	Amit Agarwal (Borrower and Guarantor) s/o Naresh Kumar Agarwal, Office Address: 332/32, Ghariyalgali, Chowk Lucknow	Date of NPA: 17.05.2024	2. Sale deed Registered on 21.07.2011 Book No.1 8577 page 255 to 282 S.NO. 5536 with the sub registrar (III) Lucknow, Property Shop No. L-12 Lower Ground Floor HNO. 215/448 A Part of Kala Niwas Subhash Marg Naka Hindola Lucknow, Area 12.509 Sq.Mt. Boundaries: East- Shop No.L-11, West-Shop No.L-13, North- Passage of complex 9.6 Feet, South-Property of Deegar
3.	Anju Agarwal W/o Amit Agarwal (Guarantor), Office Address: 332/32, Ghariyalgali, Chowk Lucknow		
	Residence Address: 96/188 Old Ganesh Ganj, Lucknow		
	Residence Address: 96/188 Old Ganesh Ganj, Lucknow		
	Date of Demand: 18.05.2024		
Date: 31.05.2024 Place: Lucknow Authorised Officer Indian Bank (erstwhile Allahabad Bank)			

BJP's defeat guarantee of progress: Khurshid

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Former Union Minister Salman Khurshid said the defeat of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is the guarantee of the country's progress. While addressing a press conference at Congress central election office here on Wednesday evening, he said in the last seven and 10 years, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) governments of Uttar Pradesh and the country have destroyed the constitutional, social, political and economic fabric of the entire country to satisfy their hunger for power.

"Today is the time of examination for the democracy and in this examination of our country, there are seven question papers from April 19 to June 1 in which the people are evaluating the BJP governments and they have made up their mind to oust the BJP from power", he said, adding that the people of the country will pass the INDIA bloc with top marks.

According to Khurshid, evaluation is being done on seven subjects in seven phases



Senior Congress leaders Salman Khurshid and PL Punia at a press conference in Varanasi on Wednesday evening.

and in the first paper on unemployment, BJP's defeat is a victory over unemployment in the future. In the last seven years, papers of more than 10 recruitment examinations were leaked in Uttar Pradesh and the future of crores of youth was put in the dark. Reacting to the PM's promise to provide two crore jobs every year, he said the report of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) said that 83 per cent of the youth of India do not have employment.

In reply to the PM's promises to the farmers, former union minister said Modi had promised in Bareilly in 2016 to

double the income by 2022, but the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) of the Central government said that the income of farmers has remained at ₹27 per day. "When farmers demanded the price of their crops, they were trampled by jeeps in Lakhimpur Kheri and nails and thorns were laid in their path", he said, adding that as soon as the Modi government came to power, it brought three ordinances one after the other to abolish the law of proper compensation for farmers' land. Prior to him while addressing the press conference, former Chairman of

National Scheduled Castes and Tribes Commission and ex-MP PL Punia said 400 plus means attack on reservation. Punia said as soon as the BJP government came to power at the Centre, it started exploiting the Dalits, the deprived and the exploited. "If the BJP comes to power, it will misuse its massive majority and attack the Constitution written by Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar", he said. "Hatred towards Dalits and backward classes is in the thinking and intentions and DNA of BJP and RSS", he said, adding that this can be gauged from the fact that the article on the website of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is against reservation. "The way Yogi has expressed his opposition to reservation in his article by showing his animosity towards Dalits and backward classes shows that whenever the BJP comes to power, the reservation rights of Dalits will end", he said, adding that this Lok Sabha election is the most important time in which the people, including Dalits and backward classes, are going to throw BJP out of power.

BJP gives finishing touches as campaigning ends

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The two-week-long poll campaigning came to an end on Thursday evening for the high-profile Varanasi Lok Sabha seat where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking his third consecutive win. Due to his busy and hectic schedule across the nation, Modi could not come during the dying moments of electioneering in his own parliamentary seat. The campaigning also halted in two assembly segments of Chandauli parliamentary constituency where union minister Mahendra Nath Pandey is also trying to register his hat-trick of victories.

Before leaving the city, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, on the second day of his two-day Varanasi stay, offered prayers at Kal Bhairav and Kashi Vishwanath temples here in the morning. He was accompanied by Maharashtra BJP vice-president and party's candidate from Jaunpur Kripa Shankar Singh, Pindra MLA Dr Awadhesh Singh, Sanjay Upadhyay, Mohit Kamboj and regional Co-media incharge Santosh Solapurkar. Earlier, Fadnis met the local Marathis at Jangambadi Math.

Meanwhile, the BJP workers took out padyatras at 1,900 booths for Modi's record victory. These processions were participated by many UP ministers, MLAs and party office-bearers along with their respective mandals and booths. They also met influential voters and held meetings with them at various places and appealed for voting. In this direction, UP



Maharashtra DyCM Devendra Fadnis offering prayers at Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi on Thursday.

Minister of State (Independent Charge) Dr Dayashankar Mishra 'Dayalu' spoke to influential voters at the house of Dr Sushil Kumar Dubey in Amara under Rohania assembly constituency. Dayalu said that under the leadership of the PM, the country has become economically and strategically strong. Along with the construction of the grand temple of Lord Ram Lalla, all the cultural and spiritual centres of the country are being developed, he added. He also knocked on the doors of residents under Madhyameshwar booth numbers 135, 136, 137 in the City South assembly of Varanasi Lok Sabha. In the course of his intensive contact and padyatra, UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) Ravindra Jaiswal held meetings at several booths of City North assembly. Jaiswal said that the

time has come to break all past records by taking each and every voter to the booth. While counting the achievements from construction of Ram Temple to Mudra loan, Digital India, Make in India, and bringing 25 crore people out of poverty, he said the time has come again when the important responsibility of ensuring the victory of BJP and Modi and building a developed India is on the shoulders of booth presidents. Former minister and City South MLA Dr Neelkanth Tiwari told the voters during the 'padyatra' in Kashi Vishwanath and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay mandals that the role of 140 crore countrymen will be important in fulfilling the resolution taken by the PM. Cantt MLA Saurabh Srivastava made extensive contact in the monasteries and temples under the Math-

Mandir Sampark Abhiyan of BJP and delivered the letter of PM to the prominent Mahants there. During this period, Saurabh Srivastava visited Batuk Bhairav, Baijnath, Panchmukhi Hanuman, Shiv Hanuman and many other temples. Besides, addressing the Swajati Sammelan organised at Chaudhary Lawn in Nariya, regional BJP president Dilip Patel said that no such leader other than Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was born in the whole world who merged more than 562 princely states in India. Patel said that the PM transformed Kashi when there is no area left where development work has not been done. The conference was conducted by city general secretary Ashok Patel and attended by Dr Shashi Bhushan Singh, Dr Bhaskar Singh, Dr SJ Patel, Surendra Patel and many others. Meanwhile, state BJP (Backward class) general secretary and MLC Ramchandra Singh Pradhan met the people of backward class society and made them aware for 100 per cent voting. He said that under the leadership of Modi, India has become a global superpower. "India's borders are safe and the country is moving towards rapid development", he said.

VOTE MAHOTSAV: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Divyang Cell and Anmol Seva Samiti organised Vote Mahotsav in the Banaras Lokomotiv Works (BLW) campus here on Thursday. Under it a public awareness campaign for voting was run in the entire campus by taking out 'prabhat pheri' and singing songs and 'kirtans'.

Prayagraj records 47.9°C

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The maximum temperature in Prayagraj on Thursday was recorded at 47.9 degrees Celsius while the minimum temperature was 33.2 degrees Celsius.

According to meteorologist Prof HS Mishra, a huge cyclone is being formed in the Bay of Bengal, which may soon bring the monsoon towards the north east. This has increased the local heating. Apart from this, there is a possibility of rain in this land till next week. Meanwhile, there is a possibility of further increase in temperature. Allahabad University meteorologist Dr Shailendra Rai said for the second time in 30 years such a hot day was witnessed here on Wednesday.

According to him, on May 30, 1994, the maximum temperature in Prayagraj was recorded at 48.4 degrees Celsius. Since then the maximum temperature has now reached 48.2 degrees Celsius.

PuVVNL's advisory to consumers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In view of frequent power cuts and tripping the Purvanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam Limited (PuVVNL) has issued an advisory to the power consumers to maintain uninterrupted power supply. In a release, the PuVVNL has said that due to extreme heat, the demand for electricity has increased unexpectedly by about 65 per cent this year as compared to last year. In such a situation, sometimes the electricity distribution system is tripping due to overload. According to the release, it is said that the line workers and engineers of the Electricity department are working day and night and are trying to provide uninterrupted power supply to all consumers. The power consumers are requested to help the power department to save energy in national interest. They are also requested to reduce overloading at the present time by taking some steps like not running all the electrical appliances of the house simultaneously.

INDIA bloc makes every effort to brighten prospects

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Prior to the end of campaigning, INDIA bloc has put its entire strength to brighten its prospects by giving a tough contest to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in this holy city. In the seats of Varanasi and Chandauli two heavyweights Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Minister Dr Mahendra Nath Pandey are seeking their third consecutive wins respectively. Despite many favorable factors due to huge development work done during the last one decade and strong organisational structure of the BJP, the rivals are giving a tough time to sitting MPs.

In Varanasi Lok Sabha seat, Modi is facing a challenge from Congress candidate Ajay Rai, a five-time MLA, who is contesting the seat for the fourth time. In all the three last unsuccessful fights, Ajay could not emerge even as runner-up as he finished third only. However, this time despite facing the challenges of the country's tallest political personality, Rai left no stone unturned to force the rival camps to even take any rest despite scorching heat with temperatures above 47 degrees Celsius.

Similarly, in Chandauli former UP Minister and Samajwadi Party (SP) candidate Virendra Singh has worked hard to increase the



Congress candidate Ajay Rai contacting advocates in Varanasi on Thursday.

heart beats of the ruling camp. As two assembly segments of Chandauli constituency (Shivpur and Ajgara) are in Varanasi, are not new for Virendra Singh, who represented Chirraigaon assembly (prior to delimitation) twice. Besides, the three assembly segments of Chandauli district (Sakaldaha, Sayyendra and Mughalsara) has a sizeable population of his own caste, Rajputs and traditional SP vote bank of Yadavs. It was one of the reasons why Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath addressed two election meetings in the constituency where the presence of the party's local Rajput MP, MLA, and others were prominently seen. However, the absence of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, who originally hails from Chandauli was surprising.

Meanwhile, in his last ditch-attempt to woo the advocates, Congress candidate Ajay

Rai contacted them on Thursday and promised that he would stand by the agitating advocates and live up to their expectations. "Today, the whole country is connecting itself with our alliance and our manifesto has made an action plan to empower every section of the society economically and to enable them to live a life with respect", he said, adding that Banaras needs development with the true Banarasi model, not the 'fake' Gujarat model. Ajay Rai met several advocates, including Akshayvar Tiwari, Radhelal Advocate, Rajesh Tripathi, Kamlesh Kumar Yadav, Anuj Yadav, Anil Pathak, Vinod Shukla, Ashok Upadhyay, Dharendra Sharma and many others. Earlier, INDIA bloc candidate from Allahabad Lok Sabha seat Ujjwal Ramsingh, while addressing an election rally at Vaishnav Vihar Colony near

Akhri on GT Road Bypass, said that Ajay Rai, born in the holy soil of Kashi, is a true companion and son of the people of Kashi in their joys and sorrows. He said Ajai is known for his struggle for the concerns of Kashi. "For this, he clashes with the BJP government and due to this, the government filed cases against him", he said, adding that Ajai has been a dedicated servant of Kashi, by electing him this time, the land of Banaras, which has created history, will add a glorious chapter in the history of democracy. The meeting was also addressed by former ministers Dr CP Rai and Lallan Rai, Prof Satish Rai, Dr Bahadur Yadav, Sunil Rai, Anil Singh, Dr Purga Prasad etc. City SP president Dilip Dey presided over the function. Besides, Ajay Rai took a 'padyatra' from the Ravidas temple at Bhainsasur Ghat to Rajghat and appealed to the public to strengthen his hand. His 'padyatra' passed through Gai Ghat, Bansphatak, Godowlia and ended at Chittaranjan Park. In the same sequence, a 'padyatra' was also taken out from Chowkghat water tank to the National Inter College, Hanuman Phatak, Baluabir Baba, Happy Model School, Hartirath under the leadership of Ramzan Ali. A large number of local citizens participated in the 'padyatra'.

Tobacco use: Health hazards highlighted

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

On the eve of World No Tobacco Day, senior consultant oncologist, Kamla Nehru Memorial Hospital, Dr Sonia Tiwari, at a press conference organised at the Allahabad Medical Association convention centre here on Thursday under the presidency of IMA president Dr Kamal Singh regarding the health hazards due to tobacco use said tobacco use is a major contributor in hosting several life-threatening diseases such as cancer, including those affecting the oral cavity, head and neck, breast, esophagus, colon lungs, liver, stomach, bowel, ovaries etc. The significance of the World No Tobacco Day is to make people aware about the harmful effects of tobacco and how to protect the young generation. She said in particular, smoking is responsible for about 85 per cent of all lung

cancer deaths, which is an alarming and disastrous situation.

In India one among every 10 person is consuming tobacco in one or another form. Approximately nine lakh people die every year due to tobacco use and approximately 3.50 lakh due to secondary exposure. It is an established fact that the life expectancy of tobacco users is approximately 10 years lesser than non-users. Tobacco is the foremost preventable cause of diseases and death. Dr Tiwari mentioned that due to regular and serious efforts of World Health Organisation against the use of tobacco there has been a decline in its use but the decrease is less substantial than hoped. The numbers show that while tobacco control measures are effective in curbing consumption, sustained efforts are needed to see them implemented more widely.

Elderly woman hangs self

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The elderly sister-in-law of the comedian Annu Awasthi committed suicide by hanging herself in a locked room in Kakadeo police station area on Thursday morning. She was identified as Rita Awasthi (60), wife of Arun Awasthi. The police broke open the door and found her hanging. Around 11 am after serving breakfast to husband Arun Awasthi, Rita went to her room. Arun then went out to attend some urgent work. Daughter-in-law Shweta was busy in household chores while her daughter was playing outside the room. Meanwhile, seeing the fan of Rita's room closed, Shweta rushed there and found the room locked from inside. On failing to get any response from inside, she informed Arun Awasthi and Annu Awasthi. On peeping through the window, Arun found her hanging. Rita was taken to a private hospital where doctors declared her dead. Kin informed that Rita was suffering from depression.

Inspector Kali Shanker Gaud said as family members were not ready to send the body for autopsy, it was handed over to them.

On the other hand, after an argument with her husband, a woman committed suicide by consuming poisonous substance in the Vidhnu police station area. She was taken to a private hospital from where the doctors referred her to the LLR (Hallet) Hospital where she died late on Wednesday night. In another incident a youth committed suicide by hanging himself in the Cantonment police station area. The police sent the body for an autopsy. The kin informed that his wife was living at her parents' house for the past three months. It is alleged that she was living with another man and the matter was in the knowledge of her husband.

Meanwhile a youth drowned while his brother was rescued when they had gone to bathe in Ganga at the Khereshwar Saraiya Ghat under Shivrajpur police station.

राष्ट्रीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान, कुरुक्षेत्र
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
 (UNDER THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, GOVT. OF INDIA)
 KURUKSHETRA-136119

Advt. No.67/2024

Admission to M.Tech. & M.Sc. Programmes for the Academic Year 2024-25
 National Institute of Technology Kurukshetra, an Institution of National importance declared by an Act of Parliament, offers several undergraduate, postgraduate & doctoral programmes in Technology, Science, Humanities, Management and allied areas and also provides excellent ambience for academic research and co-curricular activities.
 For the academic session 2024-25, NIT, Kurukshetra offers 17 M.Tech. Programmes in various Engineering Departments & Schools and 03 M.Sc. Programmes in the Departments of Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics. For further details please visit Institute website: www.nitkkr.ac.in.
 For Admissions in M.Tech. Programmes of NIT, Kurukshetra - Visit: <https://ccmt.admissions.nic.in/>
 For Admissions in M.Sc. Programmes of NIT, Kurukshetra - Visit: <https://ccmn.admissions.nic.in/>
 The last date of online submission of application form is **07.06.2024**.

Registrar I/c

AKI INDIA LIMITED
 CIN: L19201UP1994PLC016467
 Regd. Office: D-115, Defence Colony Jajmau, Shiwan Tannery, Kanpur Nagar, Jajmau, Uttar Pradesh - 208010

Extract of Standalone Audited Financial Results for the Quarter and Year ended 31/03/2024

(Rs. In Lakhs except EPS)				
Sr. No	Particulars	Quarter Ending on 31.03.2024	Year to Date Figures 31.03.2024	Corresponding Three Months Ended in the Previous Year 31.03.2023
1	Total income from operations (net)	1880.99	6783.94	1502.63
2	Net Profit for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	70.45	186.73	20.63
3	Net Profit for the period before Tax, (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	70.45	186.73	23.14
4	Net Profit for the period after tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	56.58	135.89	23.14
5	Total Comprehensive income for the period (after Tax)	56.58	135.89	23.14
6	Equity Share Capital	1715.28	1715.28	1338.61
7	Face Value of Equity Share Capital	2	2	2
8	Earnings Per Share (Basic / Diluted)	0.070	0.190	0.100

Extract of Consolidated Audited Financial Results for the Quarter and Year ended 31/03/2024

(Rs. In Lakhs except EPS)				
Sr. No	Particulars	Quarter Ending on 31.03.2024	Year to Date Figures 31.03.2024	Corresponding Three Months Ended in the Previous Year 31.03.2023
1	Total income from operations (net)	2106.93	7412.84	1502.63
2	Net Profit for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	71.22	187.76	20.63
3	Net Profit for the period before Tax, (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	71.22	187.76	20.63
4	Net Profit for the period after tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	57.14	136.71	23.14
5	Total Comprehensive income for the period (after Tax)	57.14	136.71	23.14
6	Equity Share Capital	1715.28	1715.28	1338.61
7	Face Value of Equity Share Capital	2/-	2/-	10/-
8	Earnings Per Share (Basic / Diluted)	0.07	0.16	0.10

Note: The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarter and year ended audited Standalone and Consolidated Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (LODR) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarter and Year ended Audited Standalone and Consolidated Financial Results are available on the Stock Exchanges website i.e. www.bseindia.com, www.nseindia.com and Company website i.e. www.groupaki.com

For, AKI India Limited
 Sd/-
 Mohammad Ajwad
 Whole-time Director
 DIN: 07902475

Date: 28-05-2024
 Place: Kanpur

GIAN LIFE CARE LIMITED
 Regd Office:- 7/216 (6) Swaroop Nagar (Infront of L.L.R. Hospital), Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh-208002
 CIN: L85100UP2018PLC110119; Mobile: 8808051576; Website: <https://gianlifecare.org/>; Email: arunguptagpx@gmail.com

Extract of the audited Standalone & Consolidated Financial Results for the Quarter ended 31.03.2024

PARTICULAR	STANDALONE (Rs. In Lakhs)						CONSOLIDATED (Rs. In Lakhs)					
	Quarter ended 31.03.24	Quarter ended 31.12.2023	Quarter ended 31.03.23	Year ended 31.03.2024	Year ended 31.03.2023	Quarter ended 31.03.24	Quarter ended 31.12.2023	Quarter ended 31.03.23	Year ended 31.03.2024	Year ended 31.03.2023		
	Audited	(Unaudited)	Audited	Audited	Audited	Audited	(Unaudited)	Audited	Audited	Audited		
Total Income	478.7	395.08	172.86	1375.91	1261.7	478.74	397.98	172.86	1378.85	1261.7		
Net Profit for the period (before tax and exceptional items)	310.8	215.75	-76.92	591.21	178.65	302	208.43	-81.76	574.72	159.31		
Net Profit for the period before tax (after exceptional items)	310.8	215.75	-76.92	591.21	178.65	302	208.43	-81.76	574.72	159.31		
Net Profit for the period after tax (after exceptional items)	219.99	162.64	-90.16	429.57	125.71	213.33	155.31	-94.99	415.22	106.37		
Total Comprehensive Income (net of tax) for the period	220.67	162.64	-87.55	430.25	128.32	214.01	155.31	-97.6	415.9	108.94		
Paid up Equity Share Capital (Face value of Rs.10/-each)	10341524	10341524	10341524	10341524	10341524	10341524	10341524	10341524	10341524	10341524		
Reserves (Excluding Revaluation Reserve as shown in the Balance Sheet of Previous Year)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Earning per Share (of Rs. 10/-each)(not annualised)	2.13	1.57	-0.85	4.16	1.24	2.07	1.5	-0.94	4.02	1.05		
Basic & Diluted												

1. The above result of the Company were reviewed by the Audit Committee and approved by the Board of Directors at their respective meetings held on 30.05.2024 which were audited by the Statutory Auditors of the Company.
 2. The figures of previous period/year have been re-grouped and/or recast wherever found necessary.
 3. The above is the extract of the detailed format of Audited Quarterly Financial Results as filed with the Stock Exchange under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligation and Disclosure Requirements) Regulation, 2015. The full Quarter/Year to date Financial Results are available on the Stock Exchange website at www.bseindia.com and the company's website - <https://gianlifecare.org/>

For and on behalf of the Board of Directors
 Sd/-
 Arun Kumar Gupta
 Managing Director
 DIN:- 01331593

Place : Kanpur
 Dated : May 30, 2024

MODI ENDS LS POLL CAMPAIGN

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi ended his whirlwind Lok Sabha poll campaign with a rally in Punjab's Hoshiarpur on Thursday, closing out his electioneering the way he began — by focussing on a region where he has invested heavily over the years for the BJP to make a mark outside its strongholds. Modi notched up a total of 206 public-outreach programmes, including rallies and roadshows, since the Election Commission (EC) announced the poll schedule on March 16. The Prime Minister surpassed his nearly-145 public engagements on the stump during the 2019 polls by a big margin. The campaign period this time was of 76 days, compared to the 68 days in the polls held five years ago. When the EC announced the polls, Modi was on a political tour of southern India, covering all five states in the three days between March 15 and March 17. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is eyeing to boost its fortunes in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh — three states where it won no seat in 2019 — and



Prime Minister Narendra Modi waves at crowd during a public meeting for Lok Sabha elections in Hoshiarpur, Punjab, on Thursday

looking to maintain its strength in Karnataka and increase its tally in Telangana. The extent of his barnstorming campaign's success will only be known on June 4, when the poll results

are scheduled to be declared. At 73, Modi was not only ahead of any other leader in terms of the sheer number of rallies and distance he covered, but continued to be the biggest vote magnet for his party

whose comments, panned by critics and lapped up by the BJP's ardent supporters, set the narratives of the election. The prime minister also gave a total of 80 media interviews, averaging more than one daily

since the polls began. Modi will be in Kanyakumari from Thursday evening to June 1 for meditation, engaging in spiritual pursuit at the site associated with Swami Vivekananda.

BJP hails S&P ratings on India's growth

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday hailed the S&P Global Ratings' report on India's growth prospects as a "stamp of authority" on the success of the Centre's policies and hit out at opposition parties, saying they cannot see it as they are blindfolded. After a gap of about 10 years, S&P Global Ratings on Wednesday upped India's outlook to positive from stable on robust growth prospects for the next three years and public spending, and raised hopes for an upgrade in two years, provided the Centre continues with its reforms and policies to keep fiscal deficit under check. "It is a big achievement and a stamp of authority on the policies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the decisions taken by his government in the last 10 years," Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) national spokesperson Syed Zafarul Islam told a press conference at the party headquarters here. He said global rating agencies have started understanding Modi's resolve to make India a



developed country with the results of his government's policy initiatives and decisions taken for the country's progress now becoming visible. "Our opposition parties cannot see it as they are blindfolded. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and the leaders of other opposition parties are blindfolded, not the global agencies. They are clearly seeing the growth of the Indian economy. That is why they have upped India's outlook to positive," the BJP leader added. He said the people of the country are also able to see the country's progress under Modi and showing faith in his leadership. "We are fully confident that this time again, they will ensure the BJP's victory (in the Lok Sabha polls) with a thumping majority," Islam said. The last phase of polling for the parliamentary election is scheduled to be held on June 1 for 57 constituencies spread across eight states, including Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The counting of the votes cast in all the seven phases of the election will be taken up on June 4.



MoU signed to boost innovation, research in medical devices for soldiers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Hyderabad to collaborate on research and training. The MoU was signed by Director General of Armed Forces Medical Services Lt General Daljit Singh, and Director of IIT Hyderabad Professor B S Murty, Defence Ministry said here on Thursday. The MoU aims to foster innovation and research in developing novel medical devices and addressing health issues specific to soldiers serving in varied terrains. IIT Hyderabad, with its departments of Biotechnology, Biomedical Engineering, and Bioinformatics, will provide the necessary technical expertise to tackle the diverse medical challenges faced by the Armed Forces. Key areas of collaboration discussed include drone-based patient transport, telemedicine innovations, the application of Artificial Intelligence in the medical



field, and advancements in nanotechnology. Additionally, the MoU will facilitate student exchange programs, short-term courses for undergraduates, and faculty exchange initiatives. Lt General Singh emphasized the AFMS's commitment to delivering comprehensive medical care to soldiers, both in peripheral and tertiary care settings. He highlighted that partnering with an institute like IIT Hyderabad, known for its cutting-edge technology, represents a significant step towards enhancing research and training, ultimately improving the quality of life for soldiers and their families. Professor B S Murty expressed IIT Hyderabad's dedication to addressing the problem statements presented by the Armed Forces, ensuring prompt and effective solutions to the challenges they face. This collaboration marks a significant milestone in leveraging advanced technology and research to enhance the health and well-being of military personnel.

Phase III clinical trials of dengue vaccine to be launched soon

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) along with the Pune-based National Institute of Virology (NIV) and other research institutes are set to launch phase-3 clinical trials of the recombinant dengue vaccine. Apurva Chandra, Union Health Secretary, while addressing the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) Health Ministers' Meeting on the sidelines of the 77th World Health Assembly (WHA) of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva also informed that the BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre was virtually launched during India's presidency in March 2022. "India has demonstrated active engagement in BRICS health track initiatives, promoting collaborative endeavours to advance joint health agendas aimed at fortifying health systems across BRICS nations, thereby addressing critical global health challenges," Chandra said. "ICMR along with NIV and a network of other partner Institutes is embarking on phase-3 clinical trials of recombinant dengue vaccine." "In addition, ICMR and other

partners will also work towards research and trials for locally endemic diseases such as Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD), Nipah virus, Human Papillomavirus, MTBVAC (Mycobacterium Tuberculosis Vaccine), and influenza," he added. Further, Chandra noted that India's national action plan on AMR, launched in 2017, is in line with the objectives outlined in the WHO's Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR). "India recognises AMR as a global concern and advocates fostering collaboration among BRICS nations to devise and execute protocols, projects, and platforms to tackle AMR," the Union Health Secretary said. He noted that "India acknowledges the importance of advancing collaboration within BRICS countries in nuclear medicine and radio-pharmaceutical science". The country also aims to strengthen "the radio-pharmaceutical supply chain and enhance isotopes production, alongside fostering the development and commercialisation of advanced digital solutions," he added. Chandra urged member states to enhance collaboration and work together to find solutions to various health challenges.

Objective view emerging in Pakistan: MEA after Nawaz remark on Kargil

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Days after former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said Pakistan violated Lahore pact leading in apparent reference to Kargil war in 1999, India on Thursday said an objective view is emerging on the issue in the neighbouring country. This reaction by Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) here came after Nawaz Sharif on Tuesday admitted that Islamabad had "violated" an agreement with India signed by him and ex-Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 1999, in an apparent reference to the Kargil misadventure by General Pervez Musharraf. "You are aware of our



position on the issue. I need not have to reiterate that. We note that there is an objective view emerging in Pakistan as well on this matter," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said while replying to a question on the matter at his weekly media briefing. Nawaz Sharif had said, "On May 28, 1998, Pakistan carried out five nuclear tests. After that Vajpayee Sahab came here and made an agreement with us. But we violated that agreement...it was our fault." Sharif told a meeting of the PML-N general council that elected him president of the ruling party six years after he was disqualified by the Supreme Court. Sharif and Vajpayee signed the Lahore Declaration on February 21, 1999, after a historic summit in Lahore. The agreement that talked about a vision of peace and stability between the two countries signalled a major breakthrough, but a few months later Pakistani intrusion in the Kargil district in Jammu and Kashmir led to the Kargil war.

Half of food waste can be saved by fully refrigerated food supply chains globally: Study

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amidst concern that a huge chunk of food is thrown into the trash even though there are many people who don't have enough to eat, a new University of Michigan study has said that nearly half of the food waste, about 620 million metric tonnes, could be saved by fully refrigerated food supply chains worldwide. They said that such chains could cut food waste-related emissions of climate-warming greenhouse gases by 41 per cent globally. The study is published online in the peer-reviewed journal Environmental Research Letters. As per the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, about a third of the food produced globally each year goes to waste, while approximately 800 million people suffer from hunger. However, the new study says that South and Southeast Asia could see a 45% reduction in food losses and a 54% decrease in associated emissions under an optimized refrigeration scenario. Sub-Saharan Africa has tremendous opportunities for both food loss (47%) and emissions (66%) reductions under optimized refrigeration conditions, the study said. And in many situations, developing more localized, less industrialized "farm-to-table" food supply chains may yield food savings comparable to optimized cold chains, according to the study. "I was surprised to find the scale of our opportunity for reducing food loss and waste globally," said study lead author Aaron Friedman-Heiman, a master's student at U-M's School for Environment and Sustainability and Ross School of Business. "Approximately half of the roughly 1.3 billion tons of food that goes to waste annually can be solved through food supply-chain optimization."



The other author is Shelie Miller, a professor at U-M's School for Environment and Sustainability and at the College of Engineering. While the amount of fruit and vegetable losses is much higher, by weight, throughout the world, the climate-related emissions associated with meat losses are consistently greater than those associated with any other food type due mainly to the high greenhouse gas intensity of meat production. The researchers compared the benefits of globalized, technologically advanced food-supply chains with those of localized "farm-to-table" food systems. "Hyper-localized food systems resulted in lower food losses than optimized global, refrigerated supply chains," Friedman-Heiman said. "The results help quantify the value of maintaining and supporting local food chains." For the study, the researchers built a food-loss estimation tool to assess how improved access to the cold chain could impact food loss and its associated greenhouse gas emissions for seven food types in seven regions. They used data from the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization and other sources. "Although cold chain infrastructure is rapidly increasing worldwide, an optimized cold chain will likely develop at different rates and in different ways across the globe," Miller said.

When speeding luxury cars, rash driving wreaked deaths

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The death of two IT professionals in Pune after being run over by an overspeeding super car speaks of the horrors of drunken and rash driving while also recalling the many times the thrill of speed in an uber luxury automobile spelt death and destruction. Anish Awadhya and Ashwini Koshta were killed in an accident in the early hours of May 19 when an overspeeding Porsche allegedly driven by a drunk 17-year-old boy hit their motorcycle. Speeding cars have too often been involved in accidents that turned fatal for those involved, including the occupants of the vehicles. Two days before the accident in Pune, a speeding BMW car rammed into an e-rickshaw in Noida, leaving two dead, including a nurse, and three injured at 6 am on May 16. The Uttar Pradesh city saw another fatal accident on May 26 morning as

an Audi car hit a 64-year-old man, killing him on the spot, before speeding away. The victim, Janak Dev Shah, a resident of Gijhor village in Sector-53, was crossing the road to buy milk. Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar district, comprising Noida and Greater Noida, witnessed 1,176 road crashes last year that resulted in the deaths of 470 people and injuries to 858. The district had recorded 437 such deaths and injuries to 856 people in 2022, according to official data. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways in its report Road Accidents in India 2022 stated that 4.61 lakh road accidents were reported across the country in 2022, killing 1.68 lakh people and injuring 4.43 lakh. Among various traffic rule violations, overspeeding contributed to 1.19 lakh of the total 1.68 lakh deaths. In August last year, two people died

in an accident in Haryana's Nuh after a Rolls Royce Phantom collided with a petrol tanker on the Delhi-Mumbai expressway. Even though it was the truck that was driving on the wrong side, the limousine was reportedly speeding at nearly 230 kmph. The two occupants of the truck died on impact while those in the car escaped with injuries. Talking about the increasing number of road accidents involving luxury cars, road safety advocate and founder of NGO SaveLIFE Foundation Piyush Tewari said that the problem arises from the flawed licensing system in the country. "Currently, if you have an LMV licence, you can drive anything from an 800cc car to a high-powered supercar. The licensing system should be upgraded to a graduated licensing system under which a person is given a licence based on their competency to drive a certain vehicle," Tewari said. One of the most-reported car



accidents killed former Tata Sons chairman Cyrus Mistry and his friend Jehangir Pandole in November 2022. The duo were travelling in a Mercedes-Benz SUV, driven by

passengers in the back seat died because they were not wearing seat belts. In October 2022, a BMW, cruising at a speed of more than 230 kmph on the Purvanchal Expressway became a mangled heap of metal after colliding with a truck. The car's four occupants died on the spot. The luxury car was being driven by a 35-year-old professor of a private college in Rohtas in Bihar. His friends Deepak Kumar, an engineer, Akhilesh Singh, a realtor, and Mukesh, a businessman, were live-streaming on Facebook when the accident happened. In the live-stream it was also seen that one of them was encouraging the driver to speed up further. In another tragic accident in August 2021 in Bengaluru, seven people were killed after their Audi Q3 car driven by DMK MLA Y Prakash's son Karunasagar Prakash rammed into a divider. The police concluded that the

accident occurred because of negligent driving by Prakash who was speeding at 100 kmph. Motor vehicle accidents have not spared pedestrians either. According to the Road Accidents in India 2022 report, 10,160 pedestrians died in 20,513 accidents on national highways. In an accident in February 2020, an overspeeding Mercedes Benz car on a national highway near Hosapete in Karnataka hit an 18-year-old pedestrian at a tea stall who died on impact and was dragged for several metres. The accident also killed the front seat passenger. Tewari noted that to make roads safer, one of the foremost infrastructural changes involves creating pedestrian-friendly structures. "In India, roads are not pedestrian-friendly. We need to make some infrastructural changes to the existing road network to make them safe for pedestrians, especially along highways, inters.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Appeals no more

The last phase of Lok Sabha polls gets over on June 1 after weeks-long campaign and slogans

The biggest electoral contest in the world will conclude with the seventh phase of voting on June 1. It has been a dynamic election season; the battleground vibrant with slogans, promises and appeals. The major coalitions, the NDA and INDIA, have each deployed strategic messaging to galvanise voter support. When it comes to sloganeering, the BJP-led NDA has been a hands-down winner, coming up with not one but several catchy phrases to woo the electorate. 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas' (Together with all, Development for all, Trust of all) has been a cornerstone of its campaign. 'Naya Bharat' (New India), aimed at portraying the vision for a progressive and self-reliant nation, was another NDA slogan. Along the same lines was 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' (Self-reliant India) which reflected the NDA's focus on boosting local industries and reducing dependency on foreign goods. But more interesting were its jumlas (catchy phrases) that were floated intermittently to give the NDA 'top recall value': 'Abki baar 400 paar' (this time, we will cross 400) and 'Modi ki guarantee'. The major takeaways from the NDA's election pitch were of course its 'Sankalp Patra', heavily focused on economic progress, showcasing initiatives like Make in India, Digital India and the push towards a \$5 trillion economy. The NDA alliance also highlighted its efforts in strengthening national security. The message is clear — a strong leadership to safeguard the nation.



Not to be outdone, the INDIA bloc also used several slogans to reach voters' hearts. Prominence was given to slogans critical of the Modi Government's unpopular policies and its actions to subvert democracy by

sending Opposition leaders to jail. 'Jai jawan, Jai kisan, Jai samvidhan' (Hail the soldier, the farmer, the Constitution) drew heavily on this sentiment. 'Bharat Jodo' (Unite India), a call for unity across the nation's diverse fabric to counter divisive politics, was inspired by Rahul Gandhi's pan-India foot march. Yet another slogan from the INDIA stable was 'Nyay' (Justice), a promise to address disparities and ensure equitable growth. The INDIA alliance has positioned itself as the protector of social justice, focusing on uplifting marginalised communities, ensuring minority rights and addressing caste-based and religious discrimination. The INDIA bloc has promised to tackle issues like farmer suicides, inadequate MSP (Minimum Support Price) and the need for comprehensive agrarian reforms. Of course, 'Save democracy' has been its main theme. The NDA's pitch was more country-centric security, \$5 trillion economy and so forth but INDIA's pitch was more about people, their sufferings and plight due to economic hardships. INDIA's focus on social justice and inclusivity is designed to attract voters who feel marginalised. Their promises to address agrarian distress and safeguard democratic values are aimed at rural voters, farmers and the educated urban electorate. Who really touched people's hearts, we shall get to know on June 4.

PICTALK



Children playing in water to beat the heat during a hot summer day, in Ranchi

PTI

Believe in yourself, not in superstitions

Discovering happiness hinges on passion and diligence, not reliance on external predictors. Be your own lucky charm through hard work

On Sundays, I usually find myself glancing through the weekly forecasts in the newspapers. A favourable week ahead is enough to bring a smile to my lips. It is good fun for the moment. But it was not always so. A few decades ago, I was heading a major department in a Government production unit. Yet I was restless, not satisfied with the way my life was moving. Repeated visits to astrologers and their forecasts became the opium to soothe my frayed nerves. So much so that when I actually got another posting, I visited an astrologer for reassurance that the movement would be auspicious. As I moved into an entirely different role, I found that I loved the new job with the same zeal that I had displayed in my earlier workspaces. I realised a few years later that the key to my happiness was within me—a passion to immerse myself in the moment. I have not gone back to an astrologer since then. Years earlier, I was travel-



SANJAY CHANDRA

ling with my colleagues one night to catch a flight to Europe for a study tour. The driver braked the vehicle to an abrupt halt as a cat crossed the road. The driver was in a dilemma. It was not a good sign. He resolved the issue by reversing the car a few metres before continuing to ward off the ill effect. I was to remember the incident when I had to cut short my stay by a couple of days having caught stomach flu, probably consuming beer and other savouries during the Oktoberfest festivities in Germany. The feline in Delhi had no inkling of its role in my misfortune. I am often surprised at the measures taken by us, to

invoke the blessings, or even to ward off the evil, for an unknown future. Many of us have gone through the process of our mothers feeding us curd and sugar when leaving home for the examinations. The ritual did not help me with papers that I had not prepared well. I also remember my elders telling me not to call out a person leaving home to avoid ill luck, even if I had something important to communicate. This fear of the unknown is not limited to us only. Such superstitions abound even in the so called modern western world. We all have heard the myths of break a mirror and bad luck follows for 7 years, the curse of Friday the 13th, sneezes and blessings, fingers crossed, purse on the floor, money out of the door and countless others. Cricket has been a craze in our country ever since I can remember. IPL is a relatively recent phenomenon that has fueled the frenzy to unimaginable heights. Fans root for players, who are not even remotely connected with the State or city after

which the team is named. The tournament has also sprouted several home-grown charms to ensure victory. I am surprised to see people continuing to remain standing or sitting for the duration of the match, controlling the uncomfortable urge to empty bursting bladders, or staying at home even at the cost of cancelling urgent engagements, among many other quirky behaviours. A lucky charm would also work only if one acts, that too based on sound reasoning and an understanding of the risks involved. Even if one fails, it might not feel like the end of the world. Do it the other way round and it is a heady cocktail for disappointment. American actress and comedian Lucille Ball's words inspire me to set myself free and be my own lucky charm: "Luck to me is something else: Hard work and realising what is opportunity and what isn't." (The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)

Unveiling the enigma of an unusual election



SHIVAJI SARKAR

In this election, accusations of tampering with constitutional values take centre stage, punctuated by issues such as the annulment of OBC certificates by the Calcutta HC

It is one of the strangest elections. Nobody speaks out. Visibly there is no wave. Election commission warnings to defaulting speakers are in nuances. More than the prices and unemployment, saving the Constitution has become the prime concern. This is an onslaught on their rights, asserting the Dalits, OBCs, Scheduled tribes and other marginalised classes. An issue raised by the Congress leader Rahul Gandhi seems to reverberate. Swelling crowds at Phulpur and Lalganj in the suburbs and Allahabad city at Congress and Samajwadi Party speak a lot.

Another key aspect is the campaigning gusto with the nominations by Rahul Gandhi at Rae Bareilly and family friend Kishori Lal Sharma at Amethi. It is being called Rae Bareilly syndrome. It has infused life to Indian alliance workers — AAP, Samajwadi Party and Congress almost everywhere. It has enthused the opposition parties, who now want to clinch the battle.

This is in sharp contrast to BJP leaders' meetings, which are marked by empty chairs as also apologetic clarifications that they are not for changing the statute. But the '400 paar' slogan of the BJP is being equated with a design to change the sacred Constitution of BR Ambedkar. The opposition, INDIA, seemingly has become a trailblazer and the ruling NDA is busy clarifying its charges.

Rally after rally of the NDA is countering the accusations of toying with the statute and trying to alter its basic principles. Selling of public sector assets to preferred private groups comes next. The rulers are saying that major PSUs like ISRO and HAL remain intact. They are, however, quiet on Indian Oil and Railways.

There are emerging issues like the sudden nullification of OBC certificates issued till 2010 by the Calcutta High Court. It is a double-edged sword that targets the Trinamool Congress Government in West Bengal and the Central Government alike. Prices make the highest noise, followed by religion and Agniveer part-time soldiers supposedly compromising with the country's security.



The opposition is being heard with rapt attention. They have raised hopes. The ruling party guarantees are being scoffed at but Ram temple and minority bashing still matter in a large section of the UP and neighbouring areas of the cow belt. The resurgence of youth at the opposition parties reminds many of the days of post-emergency rallies and apologetic clarifications by the then prime minister Indira Gandhi. She was also called the Janata Party, a khichri or motley crowd.

Five kg of free ration is no longer an issue. People have taken it for granted that they would have free ration anyway whosoever is in power. But jobs have become a major issue. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's assurance of one lakh rupee a year for apprenticeship per unemployed is being lapped up so as Rs 1 lakh for every woman. "This money is for the family", Gandhi stresses.

The top BJP leaders' assertion that 'abhi to yah trailor hai' may be counter-productive considering the Supreme Court Stated Newslick journalist Prabir Purakayastha's detention was illegal and released him. Gradually most news systems seem to be changing its delivery, a bid to share space with the surging opposition.

Job reservation, though scoffed at by the BJP, has got a new lease of life with the Bihar caste



THERE ARE EMERGING ISSUES, LIKE THE SUDDEN NULLIFICATION OF OBC CERTIFICATES ISSUED UNTIL 2010 BY THE CALCUTTA HIGH COURT. IT IS A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD THAT TARGETS THE TMC GOVERNMENT IN WEST BENGAL AND THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ALIKE

census and the slogan "jiski jitni sankhya bhari, uski utni hissedari". Yes, reservation is to stay and Indians have to grapple with it. The BJP has been painted not in a bright colour on this score by the opposition. Despite the Calcutta High Court cancellation of all OBC certificates and a tough stance against TMC leader Mamata Banerjee, it will not be easy to nullify the reservation in an aspirational jobless country.

Another peculiar aspect is the regional variations of the poll. Congress or its alliance partners are the principal opposition in UP, MP, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Himachal, Maharashtra, Punjab and has even come out with some determination in Gujarat. Most southern States have secured tie-ups with the Congress.

BJP is fighting a straight battle in all those States as also in Bengal, Odisha, Assam, Tripura, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and many other smaller States. The poll is being keenly contested and results are difficult to guess, particularly with the EC revising the total extra votes polled by over 1.7 crore. The jerky expressions of BJP leaders, stressing on mangal sutra to Muslims instead of the achievements of the party have put it on the back foot with each day partly leaders dishing

out new figures on the lower side. This gives jitters to the party cadre. It is another story that the cadre is mostly missing. They are not seen moving robustly in constituencies and managing the booths. It is being said that the cadre has been told by the organisation to stay put and not seek to vote for anyone.

The cadre apathy is said to be reflected in its performance. More so the voters are getting alerted by its slogan "abhi to yah trailor hai", spoken by top BJP leaders often, may not suit the BJP. Quite a few YouTube news channels and skits like "Dadi Poti ke Kha" have viewership in lakhs. These are setting the basics for election narratives across the country in different languages.

How these are influencing the voters would be known as boxes open on June 4. BJP leaders' shrill deliveries and the brash expressions from public platforms are not taken kindly. Still predicting the elections is not easy. The Election Commission adding to 1.7 crore votes to the numbers cast after a few days may do wonders. The election this time with regional flavours of all kinds and quiet voters may even fox the exit poll stalwarts if it is free and fair. Nobody should wonder if a post-June 1 exit polls reflect a trend that could be different from the actual.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RESTORING PURI'S ANCIENT TEMPLE

Madam — Apropos the news article, "ASI moves to restore 1400-year-old Shiva temple in Puri," published on May 29, this is my response. As a daily newspaper reader, the story of the Swapaneswar Mahadev temple in Odisha's Puri district resonates deeply. The recent discovery and imminent restoration of this 1300-1400-year-old marvel is both exciting and a reminder of the rich historical tapestry of our nation.

The temple, showcasing the unique Kalingan architectural style, had been neglected for years, buried under vegetation and obscurity. The Archaeological Survey of India's (ASI) efforts to designate it as a "monument of national importance" will ensure that it receives the attention and resources needed for preservation. This initiative, supported by various ministers and INTACH, reflects a commendable commitment to preserving our cultural heritage. The intricate stonework and historical significance of the temple are a testament to the craftsmanship of the post-Gupta era. Protecting such monuments is crucial, not just for their architectural beauty but for the cultural and historical legacy they represent.

Roshan Nayak | Puri

INDIA NEEDS MORE DEFENCE FUNDS

Madam — Apropos the news article, "India needs substantial defence investment", published on May 29, this is my response. Reading the daily headlines reveals a complex landscape for India's defence strategy. The BJP's manifesto, promising a "Surakshit Bharat", emphasises achievements like the revocation of Article 370 and reductions in terrorism, yet recent attacks in J&K challenge these claims. Historical incidents, from the 2001 Parliament attack to the Pulwama tragedy, illustrate the persistent threat of terrorism.

The BJP touts surgical strikes as deterrents, but critics point to ongoing violence and the situation in Manipur as evidence of unmet challenges. The omission of China

Ensure fire safety, prevent tragedies



Apropos news, "Delhi asks establishments to ensure firefighting equipment functional and there are no obstacles on staircases," published on May 29, this is my response. The loss of newly born lives in the heart-wrenching fire incident in a neonatal hos-

pital in East Delhi is a huge, irreparable loss for the bereaved families. The round of allegations and counter-allegations has started on the fire incidents.

The administration and Delhi Government should examine every technical and legal aspect to determine accountability. The explosion of an oxygen cylinder and fire due to a short circuit in a Delhi hospital is a serious case of negligence in safety parameters. The Central or State Government will have to make concrete arrangements to ensure that incidents of arson are not repeated anywhere. Fire safety-related infrastructure facilities should occasionally be audited and inspected without favour and waiver. Right now, the well-known phrase befits on Delhi Government that the decadent and unpopular Nero "fiddled while Rome burned."

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

and Pakistan from the manifesto is concerning, especially given the unresolved tensions in Ladakh. Moreover, defence spending remains insufficient. Despite rising GDP, the allocation has dropped to under 2 per cent, far below what's needed to match China's military capability. With global trends showing increased defence investments, India must re-evaluate its priorities to effectively address its twin threats and ensure robust national security.

Pratiksha Sharma | Ujjain

END CASTE HATRED IN INDIA

Madam — Apropos the article "Nurture dreams with open eyes and determination," published on May 29, this is my response. Sanjay Chandra rightly highlighted the importance of supporting others in their journey towards realising their aspirations. But to achieve fraternity among Indians, caste hatred is a major obstacle. The latest National Crime Records Bureau data show the crimes against Dalits increased from 50,744 in 2021 to 57,428 in 2022. The graph has been going up since 2013. There were 15,368 crimes against Scheduled

Caste persons in 2022 in Uttar Pradesh, while MP ranked first in crimes against Scheduled Tribes from 2020 to 2022.

However, the ugly apathy towards Dalits by the upper-caste members of the same religion is not just confined to these two States but all over India. In some schools in Tamil Nadu, students wear colour-coded wristbands to show their caste identity! This is a threat to the ideals of equality and fraternity. Even a machine cannot work if there is a conflict among its parts, let alone a State or a society. In his famous poem *Apamanita* (Insulted), Tagore said, "Whom you push down will pull you down." We cannot turn a blind eye to hatred, abuse, torture and exploitation towards our Dalit brothers and sisters. Political will and stringent punishment must be in place to prevent atrocities against Dalits. Also, Dalits should get proportional representation in every sector to counter caste-based nepotism.

Sujit De | Kolkata

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FIRST COLUMN

TURNING A BOLD NEW LEAF IN FOREIGN POLICY

India's geopolitical strategy is poised for transformation



KUMARDEEP BANARJEE

In a week from now, a new central Government would be in place, picking up from where the last Government had left. If the BJP comes back to power for a third time, India's foreign policy push would be towards enhancing its stature globally. In a couple of interviews with various media, PM Modi has stressed a confident India now actually mediating on critical global affairs, than the earlier practise of being an observer. In most of the interviews, he mentions the role India played or continues to play, behind the scenes in the Ukraine situation, a sensitive topic. India has a historical relationship with Russia, which has never attempted to alter the relationship, however, Russia has of late started getting into a tighter embrace with China, cooperating on several critical projects including hydrocarbons and technology partnerships.

Meanwhile, India has grown closer to the US and has been rightly projected as a key ally for the Indo-Pacific region. PM Modi has also highlighted that his third term would ensure, that the Indian PM would be the senior most among democratically elected leaders, serving as he would post a decade of tectonic shifts in geo-political affairs. He hinted that a more confident India has to act more responsibly with its allies while expanding the network, especially with an aggressive China in the neighbourhood. It was no coincidence that external affairs minister S Jaishankar while delivering a key note on the Nikkei Future of Asia forum mentioned "The world is undergoing a flux - driven by geopolitical, geo-economic and geo-technological developments. In the last four decades, economic and political rebalancing accelerated by globalisation has been driving us towards multipolarity.



Today, the global order is visibly under stress, with Asia and the Indo-Pacific very much part of this transformation. But it is not just change we are seeing; there is also much greater risk-taking. It is visible in the conflict in Ukraine, in violence in the Middle East and the disregard for international law and agreements in Asia and the Indo-Pacific. This has economic facets, perhaps even more concerning. The supply chain challenge, over-concentrations stemming from globalisation and the use of economic coercion by States have put a premium on resilience and redundancy. Equally important is the technology challenge that has created a new level of inter-penetration and inter-dependence. Mr Jaishankar underscored India's future foreign policy roadmap with a firm focus on neighbours in the East, West and the Indian Ocean. He also highlighted the centrality of the Indo-Pacific in India's progress. Cross-border road infrastructure and integrated port facilities have found traction in India's external policy in the recent past.

The Iran-based Chabahar port, whose long-term maintenance contract India secured a few weeks back, providing access to crucial landlocked Central Asian countries and beyond is a recent example. External Affairs minister highlighted in his speech the pace at which road and rail networks are getting built in India, even when one of the largest democratic exercises in the world, India elections are underway. He said "The transformation of India is critical to strengthening multipolarity in Asia itself, a pre-requisite for a multipolar world. India's growing weight will ensure that the overall balance in the world order remains in favour of freedom, openness, transparency and a rules-based order. Equally, its greater sense of responsibility and more contributions are also making a difference. Indian naval ships are currently operating in the Red Sea to protect maritime shipping. India has been a First Responder for natural disasters across the Indian Ocean, sometimes even beyond." Without speculating for next week, it would be safe to assume a huge diplomatic outreach, awaits the new Government.

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

RBI dividend aids Government finances



UTTAM GUPTA

The RBI's dividend transfer provides a substantial fiscal cushion to the cash-strapped Government, but it must be prudent in fiscal management and resource allocation



In the amendment to the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act through the Finance Bill 2018-19 (the amendment was based on the recommendations of Dr N K Singh's committee mandated to review the FRBM Act (2003)), the Modi - the Government had pledged to achieve fiscal deficit or FD (excess of total expenditure over total receipts) of 3 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) by the FY 2020-21. Following the Corona pandemic that played havoc with the economy leading to plunging revenue and ballooning expenditure during 2020-21 and the resultant zooming of FD to 9.1 per cent, it changed this fiscal glide path.

In her budget speech for FY 2021-22, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the Government's decision to achieve FD of 4.5 per cent by FY 2025-26. From 9.1 per cent during 2020-21, the FD descended to 6.7 per cent during 2021-22; 6.4 per cent during 2022-23 and 5.8 per cent during 2023-24. For 2024-25, in the interim budget presented by her on February 1, 2024, she has set the target at 5.1 per cent. If the Government can achieve this target, then 4.5 per cent for 2025-26 should be within easy reach. Against this backdrop, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has come up with a bonanza for the Centre. The RBI Board has approved a record dividend transfer of Rs 210,000 crore to the Centre for its (read: RBI) FY 2023-24. This will be reflected in the accounts of the central Government for the FY 2024-25. This amount is 2.4 times the dividend transfer of about Rs 87,400 crore made by the RBI for its FY 2022-23 and available for use by the Centre during 2023-24.

Even when compared to the provision of about Rs 80,000 crore made by Sitharaman in the interim budget for 2024-25, the dividend amount available from the RBI i.e. Rs 210,000 crore for use by the central Government during the year will be over two-and-a-half times. This gives a cushion of Rs 130,000 crore (210,000-80,000). This translates to about 0.4 per cent of the GDP.

While this should give substantial leeway



UNLIKE A PUBLIC SECTOR BANK (PSB) OR ANY OTHER PUBLIC SECTOR UNDERTAKING (PSU), THE RBI IS NOT A COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE AND HENCE, IS NOT EXPECTED TO PAY ANY DIVIDEND. INSTEAD, IT IS A 'FULL SERVICE' CENTRAL BANK

to the Government in managing its fiscal situation and ensuring easy compliance with the 5.1 per cent target, there is no room for complacency.

First, it shouldn't forget that the new glide path of 4.5 per cent for 2025-26 is way behind the original FD target of 3 per cent for 2020-21 as per the FRBM (Amendment) Act 2018. The Corona pandemic of 2020 was once in a lifetime event. Its impact was transitory and it won't be logical to use it as a basis for altering the medium-term fiscal trajectory. This is all the more when from 2021-22 onward, the economic situation was more or less back to normal.

The Government ought to be aiming at an FD target of 3 per cent by 2025-26 and going by this benchmark, it has still a long way to go. Second, we need to assess things from the RBI perspective. Unlike a public sector bank (PSB) or any other public sector undertaking (PSU), the RBI is not a commercial enterprise hence, is not expected to pay any dividend. Instead, it is a "full service" central bank.

Apart from managing the currency and payment systems and keeping inflation/prices in check, it is also mandated with managing the borrowings of the Union Government and State Governments; and supervising or regulating banks and non-banking finance companies (NBFCs). While carrying out these functions or operations, it generates a surplus. Typically, the RBI's income comes from the returns it earns on its foreign currency assets (FCA) — which could be in the form of bonds and treasury bills of other central banks or top-rated securities and deposits with other central banks. It also earns interest on its holdings of local rupee-denominated Government bonds or securities and while lending to banks for very

short tenures, such as overnight. Its expenditure is mainly on the printing of currency notes and staff, besides the commission it gives to banks for undertaking transactions on behalf of the Government across the country and to primary dealers, including banks, for underwriting some of these borrowings. The excess of income over expenditure is the "surplus".

After making provision for bad and doubtful debts, depreciation in assets, contributions to staff and superannuation fund, etc. and for all matters provided for under the RBI Act (1934), the balance of surplus is paid to the Union Government by Section 47 (Allocation of Surplus Profits) of the Act. Apart from this routine stuff, the financial crisis in the early 90s, when India's foreign exchange reserves had plummeted to a level barely enough to buy two weeks of imports, brought to the fore a dire need to prepare the RBI for dealing with 'unexpected' and 'unforeseen' events by enhancing its capacity to absorb financial shocks, ensure financial stability and provide confidence to the markets. So, it started transferring part of the surplus to a 'Contingency Fund'. This was in line with the recommendation of a committee to build contingency reserves (CR) of 12 per cent of its balance sheet.

In 2013, a panel led by Y H Malegam, then a member of the RBI board, also reiterated the need for building CRs. Subsequently, in its annual report for 2015-16, the central bank alluded to a "draft economic capital/provisioning framework to assess its risk-buffer requirements in a structured and systematic manner." Meanwhile, in 2018, the RBI set up a Committee on Economic Capital Framework (ECF) under Dr Bimal Jalan. The Committee recommended that the RBI should maintain a minimum

contingency risk buffer (CRB) of 5.5 - 6.5 per cent of its balance sheet as risk buffer. The ECF was to remain in force for five years. The RBI adopted the ECF on August 26, 2019. During accounting years 2018-19 to 2021-22, it determined the surplus transferred to the Union Government taking the CRB at the lower end of the range i.e. 5.5 per cent of its balance sheet. For arriving at the transferrable surplus during 2022-23, the CRB was increased to 6 per cent. However, for calculating the amount for 2023-24, it has used the higher end of the band prescribed by the Committee i.e. 6.5 per cent. The surge in dividend transfers for 2023-24 over 2022-23 despite the increase in CRB is due to the substantial increase in the RBI's interest income from foreign securities as well as exchange gain from foreign exchange transactions (according to the State Bank of India (SBI), these two factors accounted for 60 - 70 per cent of the increase in income of the RBI from Rs 235,000 crore during 2022-23 to around Rs 375,000 - 400,000 crore during 2023-24). This in turn was due to a sharp hike in interest rates by the US Fed and central banks of other developed countries; the hikes were prompted by the dire need to bring down high inflation in those countries. But the situation may not be sustained as the US Fed prepares to move the interest rate 'south' from the latter half of 2024 and other central banks follow suit. Even if it doesn't happen so soon and RBI repeats its performance during 2025-26, it would do well to retain more surplus with itself in the CRB. As a matter of prudent policy, the Centre should avoid riding piggy-back on the RBI for managing its

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

EU roots for a shift from free trade to fair trade on global stage

EU's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (EUCSDDD) sparks a global trade paradigm shift

Free Trade Agreements or Sustainable Trade Agreements? The EU's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (EUCSDDD) raises this crucial question of choices, challenging the norms of international commerce in vogue for the last few decades. Imagine a world where every product purchased carries a hidden story—a tale of the well-being of the farmers and their families, environments preserved and corporate integrity maintained. The European Union's proposed Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (UCSD) is a landmark piece of legislation towards that direction. It compels European companies to identify and mitigate environmental and human rights risks throughout



SHATADRU CHATTOPADHYAY

their supply chains. It also underscores living wages and incomes as human rights, insists on responsible management of supplier relationships and emphasises the necessity of meaningful stakeholder engagement to enhance transparency and accountability in human rights and environmental practices. However, the EUCSDDD's impact could extend far beyond Europe's

borders. It has the potential to become a catalyst for a global race to the top, pushing democracies around the world to adopt stricter sustainability standards. India stands at a crossroads, poised to not just adapt to these standards but also lead the way in demonstrating how integral sustainable trade is to the ethos of modern democracies.

Democracy: The Bedrock of Sustainable Trade

Democracy and sustainable trade are not merely compatible; they are inextricably linked. The interconnection between democracy and sustainable trade is rooted in the principles of equity, participation and long-term accountability. Democratic systems, by their nature, promote inclusive decision-making and public

accountability, which are essential for sustainable trade practices. For instance, democracies are more likely to implement and enforce regulations that ensure trade does not lead to environmental degradation or exploitation of workers, which are key aspects of sustainable trade (Hickel, 2020). Closer home, scholars like Amartya Sen have shown through his works that sustainability legislation ensures that economic decisions consider the environmental and social impact on future generations, a core tenet of responsible governance. Moreover, sustainable trade often requires international cooperation and agreements that are robust and equitable. Democracies are better positioned to engage in such agree-

ments because they are based on principles of transparency and public participation. This openness allows for more effective and fair negotiations that consider the diverse needs and impacts on all stakeholders involved, from local communities to international partners. Reputed international scholars like Hickel (2020) and Rockström and Klum (2015) suggest that this democratic approach supports a form of globalisation that is not only about free trade but also about fair trade, where the benefits and responsibilities of trade are widely and fairly distributed. This is crucial for achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as it ensures that trade supports broader societal well-being and envi-

ronmental sustainability rather than contributing to inequality and ecological degradation. **Impact on Global Trade** Some critics fear the EUCSDDD could encourage trade toward countries with laxer regulations, creating a race to the bottom rather than the top. However, the European Union has emerged in the past five decades as a powerful force in shaping the global conversation around sustainable international trade. The EU's early environmental regulations, like clean air and water directives, weren't just about protecting its citizens. By making stricter environmental standards a prerequisite for access to its vast market, the EU created a ripple effect. Companies worldwide adapted to comply and other countries followed

suit, leading to a global shift towards cleaner practices and a higher bar for environmental responsibility. Other landmark legislation like the Conflict Minerals Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2017/821), which aims to eradicate conflict minerals from supply chains, demonstrates the bloc's commitment to ethical trade practices. This, in turn, has spurred international discussions and collaborations on human rights and responsible sourcing practices throughout global supply chains.

Navigating the EUCSDDD: The India-EU bilateral trade in goods is valued at €115.3 billion in 2022 and services contribute an additional €39.9 billion; the EU stands as India's second-largest trading partner (EPRS, 2024). The UCSD pre-

sents a unique opportunity for India to solidify its position as a responsible player on the global trade stage.

While initial concerns exist regarding potential cost increases for Indian businesses complying with the directive's standards, there's a significant upside. Aligning with the EUCSDDD can elevate India's image as a sustainable and ethical sourcing hub, attracting more European investment and boosting exports of responsibly produced goods. This, in turn, strengthens India's negotiating position in the ongoing Free Trade Agreement talks with the European Union.

(Shatadru is the founding Managing Director of Solidaridad in Asia; views are personal)



Modi slams INDIA Bloc, accuses it of making Army as weapon of politics

PTI ■ HOSHIARPUR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday sharpened his attack against the INDIA bloc, accusing it of making the Army a "weapon of politics" and said there cannot be a "bigger sin than this". Modi further hit out at the opposition, alleging that the Congress and "INDI alliance" never left any effort in weakening the Indian armed forces. Modi was addressing his last poll rally of the Lok Sabha polls here. His attack came in the backdrop of the Congress and INDIA bloc members targeting the Narendra Modi government over the Agnipath scheme. Notably, the Congress has said it will scrap the Agnipath scheme if the INDIA bloc comes to power. Modi said it was his target to make the Indian defence forces as the most modern and capable force, self-reliant in the real sense. But this initiative blocks the ways for the "INDI alliance" to make black money. Therefore, they are taking out anger against "Modi", he said. "It is clear that we need to keep all things in mind to see with whom we fight... And we have to prepare our army accordingly," he said.



The prime minister said the Republic Day parade. The Army is made for a fight, to defeat an enemy and to save our motherland, he said. But the opposition made the Army as a weapon of politics, Modi alleged, and added that there cannot be a bigger sin than this. "I am telling the INDI alliance that I am silent. Do not make any mistake in understanding Modi. The day Modi opens his mouth, I will bring out all your sins out — 'saat peedhi ke paap' (sins of seven generations)," he said. Modi said Punjab is a land of brave and valour but the INDIA bloc insulted the brave at each step. "They are those people who had insulted our late Army chief Bipin Rawat, calling him 'gali ka gunda'. It was not only the insult of General Rawat but also of each soldier of the country," said the prime minister. He targeted the opposition leaders, saying they are those people who had sought proof

of the surgical strike. "They are those people who gave clean chit to China during the 1962 Indo-China war. They insult the Indian Army every other day," he said. Modi said the Congress and the INDIA bloc never spared not a single effort in weakening the Army. Training guns on the Congress, Modi referred to the Jeep scam, Bofors, submarine and Army truck scam and said they never cared about the requirements of the Army. "They only made plans to loot and empty the government exchequer by indulging in corruption," he alleged. He accused the Congress of putting the Tejas fighter plane project in cold storage. "They kept the issue of CDS (Chief of Defence staff) hanging for many years. They are those people who did not allow important reforms for many years to modernise the Army," he said. He again targeted the Congress over the issue of One Rank One Pension (OROP), saying it lied to the ex-servicemen for 40 years on this. "How they throw dust in the eyes of soldiers," he said, recalling that it was his government which implemented OROP.

Repeated polls not good for country, says Rajnath

PTI ■ KUSHINAGAR (UP)

Union Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said frequent elections are not good for the country and efforts will be made to install the "one nation, one election" system in the next five years. Singh said Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) believe that the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls should be held simultaneously across the country. "In five years, we will try our best to make provisions for one nation, one election," the defence minister said, addressing a rally in support of Vijay Kumar Dubey, the BJP's Lok Sabha poll candidate from Kushinagar in Uttar Pradesh. Singh heaped praise on Modi for his leadership and taking the country to new heights. "When India speaks today, the world listens," he said, adding that even politicians in Pakistan are praising India, but those in the Congress and Samajwadi Party (SP) do not understand this. "They (SP and Congress) are opposing Modi," he said. Hitting out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Singh said his great grandfather Jawahar Lal Nehru, grandmother Indira Gandhi and father Rajiv Gandhi were prime ministers. "Rahul Gandhi says he has seen the system very closely.



He says the system that was there was anti-backward, anti-poor. He is talking about the governments of his great grandfather, grandmother and father, and saying the system during their times was anti-backward and anti-poor. "Rahul Gandhi himself is saying all these things, which means he is accepting that his government was against Dalits, the poor and backward classes. Tell me, have you seen such a leader anywhere? He is a strange leader," the senior BJP leader said. Referring to former Union minister R P N Singh, who quit the Congress and joined the BJP, Rajnath Singh said, "Any sensible man will kick the Congress." R P N Singh was seated next to the defence minister on the dais. Rajnath Singh claimed that the BJP does not indulge in

"Hindu-Muslim politics". "We consider everyone a citizen of India. Be it Hindu, Muslim, Christian... We never discriminate and neither does our prime minister. Our party's ideology is also not like this," he said. The BJP leader pointed out that India has become the fifth-largest economy in the world and credited Modi for it. "By 2027, India will become the third-largest economy. I have no doubt that India will become a developed country by 2047, but if our government continues like this, India will become the largest economy in the world by 2070," he said. Kushinagar is scheduled to go to polls in the seventh and final phase of the Lok Sabha election on June 1. The counting of votes will be taken up on June 4.

PM Modi invokes Guru Ravidas, says welfare of poor his Govt's top priority

PTI ■ HOSHIARPUR

Time has come for a full majority government at the Centre after decades to score a hat-trick, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted on Thursday and invoked Guru Ravidas to say that he was the inspiration for working towards the welfare of the poor. Addressing a rally here on the last day of campaigning for the seven-phase Lok Sabha poll, Modi said the country witnessed unprecedented development during the last ten years. "Welfare of poor is my government's top priority. And in this big inspiration is of Guru Ravidas," he said. The prime minister also said that his wish is for Adampur airport, which serves Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur, to be named after Guru Ravidas. Noting that it is his last public meeting of this election, he said Hoshiarpur is called 'Chhoti Kashi' and is Guru Ravi Das' 'tapobhoomi'. "Varanasi, from where I am MP, Guru Ravidas was born there. Therefore, in this pious land of Hoshiarpur, closing of the poll campaign, for me is a matter of pride," he said. Targeting the Congress and the INDIA bloc, he said they sought proof of surgical strike and never cared about the army and emptied the government exchequer.

Nitish not going along well with BJP; Bihar to witness something major: Tejashwi

PTI ■ PATNA

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Thursday asserted that "something major" will take place, after Lok Sabha results are out, in Bihar where Chief Minister Nitish Kumar seemed to be "not going along well" with ally BJP. Yadav, who lost the Deputy CM's post as a result of Kumar's abrupt return to the NDA in January this year, made the claim while interacting with journalists here. "Ever since I made the prediction that chacha (uncle) will take a big decision after Lok Sabha polls, he has not been going out to campaign", pointed out Yadav, referring to a claim he had made a couple of days ago. "I have also learnt that it is the Governor who is holding meetings with officials and issuing instructions. On the election front, the BJP and the JD(U) are concentrating on their respective states, with no synergy", alleged the RJD leader. "All these things confirm my apprehension that after June 4 Bihar is going to witness something big (kuch bada)",



said Yadav. Interestingly, ever since Kumar quit the 'Mahagathbandhan' helmed by the RJD, the RJD leader has refrained from making a frontal attack on the JD(U) president. During the elections, the young leader has repeatedly sought to fish in the NDA's troubled waters. After ill-health caused Kumar to excuse himself from visiting Varanasi where Prime Minister Narendra Modi was filing his nomination papers, the RJD leader claimed that the JD(U) boss wanted the BJP to be defeated and "his

blessings are with me" even though the alliance had come to an end. The young leader, who has been campaigning on a wheelchair, with a belt wrapped around his injured spine, proudly stated "by the time campaign for the final phase comes to a close, I would have addressed 251 election meetings. He added "INDIA bloc is heading for a spectacular victory. The alliance may win 300 plus seats. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be defeated by his three beloveds (teen Mehboba) - poverty, price rise and unemployment. Asked about Modi's planned visit to Kanyakumari for a marathon meditation session, Yadav said "he might be going to market himself, to get himself photographed. Be that as it may, he must not take the media along for self-publicity. He may meditate to his heart's content but must not take along hindrances (baadha)."

Create new turnout record, PM Modi appeals to Varanasi voters

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday appealed to the voters of his parliamentary constituency Varanasi to create a new record of voting on June 1 for the creation of a developed India. In a video message to the voters of Varanasi, the prime minister said representing Kashi, the cultural capital of the world and the land of music and 'Shastrarth' (debate), in Parliament is possible only due to the infinite grace of Baba Vishwanath and the blessings of the people of the holy city. Modi, who is vying for the third consecutive term as a BJP candidate from the Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency, which is going to vote in the seventh and final phase of the Lok Sabha elections, said, "Now Maa Ganga has adopted me." Modi said the election for Kashi this time is also one for the creation of a developed India along with "Nav Kashi" (new Kashi).

The people of Kashi have to create a new record of voting on June 1, he appealed. "We remember how the young generation was in a different kind of enthusiasm on the day of our nomination. This is our request that now this enthusiasm should be seen at every booth," he said. The prime minister said it is now the opportunity to take Kashi's development to new heights. This will only be possible when the people of Varanasi vote in large numbers on June 1, he added. "We have a special request to the youth, women and farmers of Kashi that each of your votes will increase our strength. It will give us new energy. We have to get every person from your society, every elderly person of Kashi to vote. "You have to remember that first vote, then refreshment," he added. Stating that in the last 10 years, Kashi has supported him in every scheme of the central government, he said it has guided him.

"Baba Vishwanath's grand Dham, Kashi Ring Road project, development of Banaras railway station and development of Ganga Ghat, road projects, every scheme has linked not only Kashi but the entire Purvanchal (eastern UP) with new development. Now the pace of this development will be taken forward by your votes," the PM added. Modi said, "Kashi has become the capital of youth welfare and development in the last 10 years. We have seen your enthusiasm in the MP (member of Parliament) sports competition. "Lakhs of people of Kashi are getting cataract treatment, employment in the city is increasing due to tourism development, and every scheme and campaign is giving new strength to the young generation of Kashi, women and farmers," he said. Modi won the election from Varanasi seat in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections. In this year's election, he is being challenged by Congress candidate Ajay Rai.

Manish Tewari political tourist, will look for new seat in 2029: BJP LS nominee

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

BJP leader Sanjay Tandon who is making his Lok Sabha election debut from the Chandigarh parliamentary seat said his opponent and senior Congress leader Manish Tewari is a "political tourist" and will look for a new constituency in 2029 to fight polls from. Tandon, who has been the Chandigarh BJP President for 10 years, exuded confidence that the party will secure a hat-trick of wins from the constituency which will go to polls in the seventh phase on June 1. "Manish Tewari is a political tourist... In 1991, he went to Kanpur to contest election... Even before he reached the constituency people objected and he was sent back to Delhi from the airport itself," Tandon told PTI in an interview. "Since then he has been behaving like this only. He goes to a constituency, tries to play with the system there. He has been elected twice from two different



constituencies. The question that comes to the mind of people in Chandigarh is why did he leave Ludhiana?" he asked. Tandon, son of six-time MLA and former Chhattisgarh governor Balramji Das Tandon, is a chartered accountant by profession. He said Tewari was elected from Ludhiana in 2009 and served as the Information and Broadcast Minister in the Manmohan Singh government but "he did not deliver". "He ran away (in 2014 polls)... In, 2019 he found a new constituency (Anantpur Sahib), he pledged there that 'I don't want to go to Chandigarh... Whatever he said he went back to. Besides being a political tourist, he also goes back on his words," Tandon added.

Robertsganj voters aspire for real change, development

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ ROBERTSGANJ

Sonbhadra, a district in Uttar Pradesh known for its industrial might, is home to six thermal power plants, three cement factories, one aluminium factory, 313 stone crushers and numerous chemical factories. Despite this, it remains one of the most impoverished regions in the state. This stark contrast between industrial success and persistent poverty highlights a glaring disparity. For its residents, elections are just another event, which they believe will not change their lives. "We vote with the hope that elections will bring change to our lives. Governments change in Delhi, but we remain where we were 10 years ago," says Dilip Gond, a tribal resident, encapsulating the frustration felt by many. As you enter Sonbhadra, the second-largest district in Uttar Pradesh, the bustling activity of trucks is striking. The district's landscape, a unique blend of plains, valleys, plateaus and hills, comes alive during the monsoon, transforming into a lush green haven with cascading waterfalls. The southern region of Sonbhadra, known as the 'Energy Capital of India', houses numer-

ous power stations around Govind Ballabh Pant Sagar. NTPC, a leading power generation company, operates three coal-based thermal power plants here. However, the industrial activities have taken a toll on the environment, with significant air and noise pollution. The district's strategic location, bordered by Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, underscores its logistical importance. Despite these industrial advancements, many local communities, especially the tribals living in kutcha houses on sparsely populated hillocks, continue to lead minimalistic lives. "Even as Sonbhadra amasses wealth from its industrialisation - drawing investments from Japan, the US, and the UK - it remains one of UP's most backward districts," says Arvind Shakya, a local activist. "Varanasi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's parliamentary constituency, is just a three-hour drive from Robertsganj, the district headquarters of Sonbhadra, but the difference is immense, not only economically but also socially and geographically," Shakya adds. Narendra Gond, a tribal from Rasuda village, expresses frustra-

tion with the election process. "Politicians enjoy privileges, but nothing changes for us," he says. This sentiment of disillusionment is growing louder as Sonbhadra's Robertsganj parliamentary constituency gears up for a fiercely contested election. The constituency covers four assembly segments within Sonbhadra and one in the neighboring Chandauli district. Tribals constitute a significant portion of the electorate, accounting for 34 per cent of Uttar Pradesh's Scheduled Tribe (ST) population, with Gonds and Kharwars being the dominant groups. On June 1, the constituency will witness a high-stakes battle between Rinki Singh Kol of the Bharatiya Janata Party's ally Apana Dal (Sonelal) and Chhote Lal Kharwar of the Samajwadi Party. Rinki Singh Kol, who has a strong community connection, is up against Kharwar, a former Member of Parliament and popular folk singer with a dedicated voter base. The Bahujan Samaj Party has also fielded a candidate, though their impact is expected to be limited. The political landscape is further complicated by issues of unemployment, inadequate infrastructure and environmental degradation. Despite Sonbhadra's signif-

icant contribution to India's power grid, many villages remain without electricity or cellular service. Industries in the region offer limited job opportunities to local youth, exacerbating the unemployment crisis. Locals like Manik Patel and Shalik Mohan express dissatisfaction with the current leadership, citing unfulfilled promises and deteriorating public infrastructure. However, there remains a faction confident in the BJP's ability to bring stability and development. As the day of election approaches, both major parties are pulling out all stops. BJP leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, have rallied in support of Rinki Singh Kol. Meanwhile, SP leaders, confident of their grassroots support, believe that Chhote Lal Kharwar's local appeal and active campaigning will secure a victory. The upcoming election in Robertsganj is not just a political contest but a reflection of the broader challenges and aspirations of Sonbhadra's residents. As they cast their votes, the people of Sonbhadra are not only choosing their next representative but also voicing their demand for real change and development in their district.

Modi, Yogi focussed on UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The popular saying that the road to Delhi goes via Uttar Pradesh remains relevant, prompting both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to focus on the state during their campaign for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The chief minister even set the ambitious target of winning 80 out of 80 Lok Sabha seats in UP and devised a strategy accordingly. The seemingly foolproof strategy, on the one hand, glorified achievements of Prime Minister Modi in the last 10 years of his tenure, in addition to that of the state government in past seven years, and on the other, cornered the opposition over their alleged past misdeeds, lack of vision for the country, an exclusive dynastic and regressive approach, favouring the mafia and corruption, as well as lacklustre campaigning. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, in his rallies within the state and outside, along with describing the achievements of the Central and the state governments, continuously attacked the opposition over issues related to faith, culture, development and people's welfare as well as its intimacy with the mafia and the corrupt. Notably, Narendra Modi has had two successful terms as

prime minister of the country and UP's contribution to his success in terms of seats has been significant on both the occasions. In this election, Chief Minister Yogi coined a new term 'Ram drohi', describing the election as a fight between Ram bhakts (devotees of Lord Ram) and Ram drohis (Ram traitors). The chief minister referred to the Ram bhakts as those who, along with their ancestors, long dreamed of building the Ram temple in Ayodhya, actively participated in the movement during the Samajwadi Party government's tenure, and even faced bullets for their cause. Conversely, he described Ram traitors as those who obstructed the temple's construction, opened fire on Ram devotees, and provided various arguments to delay the Supreme Court's decision in the Ram Jannabhoomi-Babri masjid case. The statement aimed at wooing Hindu votes, which the opposition parties had allegedly been trying desperately to divide. Chief Minister Yogi also tried to corner the opposition parties on the issue of cow slaughter and consumption of beef, by referring to its manifesto in which the party talked about giving the minorities the freedom to eat whatever they want. Chief Minister Yogi alleged that through this, the Congress was promising the minorities the freedom to slaughter cows and

eat beef, which violates the faith of the majority society. Cow is worshipped in India and its slaughter or beef consumption are prohibited in the country. The Yogi government made the cow slaughter law even more stringent in 2020, under which there is a provision of imprisonment up to 10 years and double the punishment if found guilty again. When former Pakistani minister Fawad Chaudhary praised Rahul Gandhi, Chief Minister Yogi introduced the topic of Pakistan into the election discourse for the first time. Later, when Congress leaders talked about Pakistan's atom bomb, Yogi seized the opportunity once again to train his guns at the party and the entire INDI Alliance, projecting them as the ones whose sentiments were with the mafia and the terrorists. Chief Minister Yogi attacked the opposition continuously over conspiring to cut into the reservations meant for the SC, ST and OBCs and giving them to the people of a particular religion against the spirit of the Constitution and wishes of Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar. Yogi also accused the Congress of planning to bring inheritance tax into the country to rob people of their ancestral properties. In his statements, Chief Minister Yogi accused Congress and the opposition of appeasement, labelling their actions as anti-

majority and discriminatory against SC, ST and OBC communities. Additionally, he claimed that the opposition intended to implement personal law, asserting that the country should be governed by the Constitution, not Sharia. The chief minister's allegations seem to have had a demoralising effect on the opposition parties, as they were unable to clarify their positions on the issues. In his statements, Chief Minister Yogi accused the Congress and the opposition of appeasement and termed it anti-majority and anti-SC, anti-ST and anti-OBC. Along with this, Chief Minister Yogi also accused the opposition of promising to implement personal law. He said that the country would be run by the Constitution and not by Sharia. Chief Minister Yogi launched a consistent attack on the opposition parties on the issue of nepotism. Mentioning SP chief Akhilesh Yadav and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi as two boys, he criticised them of criminal negligence on the issues internal and border security as well as safety of women and traders. The prime minister and the chief minister cornered the opposition so much right from the beginning of their poll campaign that they lost the steam to take on the ruling party effectively.

US-built pier in Gaza breaks apart

AP ■ WASHINGTON

A string of security, logistical and weather problems has battered the plan to deliver desperately needed humanitarian aid to Gaza through a US military-built pier.

Broken apart by strong winds and heavy seas just over a week after it became operational, the project faces criticism that it hasn't lived up to its initial billing or its USD 320 million price tag. US officials say, however, that the steel causeway connected to the beach in Gaza and the floating pier are being repaired and reassembled at a port in southern Israel, then will be reinstalled and working again next week. While early Pentagon estimates suggested the pier could deliver up to 150 truckloads of aid a day when in full operation, that has yet to happen. Bad weather has hampered progress getting aid into Gaza from the pier, while the Israeli offensive in the southern city of Rafah has made it difficult, if not impossible at times, to get aid into the region

by land routes.

Aid groups have had mixed reactions — both welcoming any amount of aid for starving Palestinians besieged by the nearly eight-month-old Israel-Hamas war and decrying the pier as a distraction that took pressure off Israel to open more border crossings, which are far more productive. It's "a side-show," said Bob Kitchen, a top official of the International Rescue Committee. The Biden administration has said from the start that the pier wasn't meant to be a total solution and that any amount of aid helps. "Nobody said at the outset that it was going to be a panacea for all the humanitarian assistance problems that still exist in Gaza," national security spokesman John Kirby said Wednesday. "I think sometimes there's an expectation of the US military — because they're so good — that everything that they touch is just going to turn to gold in an instant."

"We knew going in that this was going to be tough stuff," he added. "And it has proven to be tough stuff." Before the war, Gaza was getting about 500 truckloads of aid on average every day. The United States Agency for International Development says it needs a steady flow of 600 trucks a day to ease the struggle for food and bring people back from the brink of famine. The aid brought through the pier was enough to feed thousands for a month, but UN data shows it barely made a dent in the overall need of Gaza's 2.3 million people. Here's a look at the timeline of the pier, the problems it faced and what may come next: President Joe Biden announces his plan for the US military to build a pier during his State of the Union address. "Tonight, I'm directing the US military to lead an emergency mission to establish a temporary pier in the Mediterranean on the coast of Gaza that can receive large shipments carrying food, water, medicine and temporary shel-

ters," he said. But even in those first few moments, he noted the pier would increase the amount of humanitarian aid getting into Gaza but that Israel "must do its part" and let more aid in.

MARCH 8: Maj Gen Pat Ryder, Pentagon spokesman, tells reporters it will take "up to 60 days" to deploy the forces and build the project. MARCH 12: Four US Army boats loaded with tons of equipment and steel pier segments leave Joint Base Langley-Eustis in Virginia and head to the Atlantic Ocean for what is expected to be a monthlong voyage to Gaza.

The brigades commander, Army Col Sam Miller, warns that the transit and construction will be heavily dependent on the weather and any high seas they encounter. US Army vessels hit high seas and rough weather as they cross the Atlantic, slowing their pace. Seven World Central Kitchen aid workers are killed in an Israeli airstrike as they travel in

clearly marked vehicles on a delivery mission authorized by Israel. The strike fuels ongoing worries about security for relief workers and prompts aid agencies to pause delivery of humanitarian assistance in Gaza. US officials confirm that the UN World Food Program has agreed to help deliver aid brought to Gaza via the maritime route once construction is done. Major construction of the port facility on the shore near Gaza City begins to take shape. The onshore site is where aid from the causeway will be delivered and given to aid agencies. Satellite photos show the US Navy ship USNS Roy P Benavidez and Army vessels working on assembling the pier and causeway about 11 kilometers (6.8 miles) from the port on shore. The US vessel Sagamore is the first ship loaded with aid to leave Cyprus and head toward Gaza and ultimately the pier. An elaborate security and inspection station has been built in Cyprus to screen the aid coming from a number of countries.

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N Korea fires missile barrage toward its eastern waters

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korea on Thursday fired a barrage of suspected ballistic missiles toward its eastern sea, according to South Korea's military, days after its attempt to launch a military reconnaissance satellite ended in failure but still drew strong condemnation from its rivals. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said it detected the North firing around 10 projectiles that appeared to be short-range ballistic missiles from an area near its capital, Pyongyang. It said the suspected missiles flew around 350 kilometers (217 miles) before landing in waters off the North's eastern coast. It said the South Korean military has increased surveillance and vigilance and is closely sharing information with the United States and Japan. Japan's coast guard issued a maritime safety advisory over the North Korean launches



A news program broadcasts a file image of a missile launch by North Korea, at the Seoul Railway Station in Seoul, South Korea, Thursday. North Korea on Thursday fired a barrage of ballistic missiles toward its eastern sea, according to South Korea's military, days after its attempt to launch a military reconnaissance satellite ended in failure but still drew strong condemnation from its rivals. AP/PTI

and urged ships to exercise caution if they find any fallen objects. Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters that the suspected missiles were believed to have landed in waters outside of Japan's exclu-

sive economic zone and there were no immediate reports of damages. He said Tokyo "strongly condemns" the launches, which are in violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions against the North.

Court convicts 14 in HK national security case

AP ■ HONG KONG

A Hong Kong court Thursday convicted 14 pro-democracy activists in the city's biggest national security case under a law imposed by Beijing that has all but wiped out public dissent. Those found guilty of conspiracy to commit subversion included former lawmakers Leung Kwok-hung, Lam Cheuk-ting, Helena Wong and Raymond Chan, and they could face up to life in prison when sentenced later. The two defendants acquitted were former district councilors Lee Yue-shun and Lawrence Lau. They were among 47 democracy advocates who were prosecuted in 2021 for their involvement in an unofficial primary election. Prosecutors had accused them of attempting to paralyze Hong Kong's government and topple the city's leader by securing the legislative majority necessary to indiscriminately veto budgets. In a summary of the verdict distributed to media, the court said the election participants had declared they would "either actively use or use the power conferred on the (Legislative Council) by the (Basic Law) to veto the budgets."

Under the Basic Law, the chief executive would be compelled to dissolve the legislature and eventually step down if major bills such as the budget were vetoed. In the full, 319-page verdict, the court also said if the plan to veto bills would lead to the dissolution of the legislature, it meant "the implementation of any new government policies would be seriously hampered and essentially put to a halt." "The power and authority of both the Government and the Chief Executive would be greatly undermined," the court said in the verdict. "In our view ... that would create a constitutional crisis for Hong Kong." The judges concluded that "unlawful means" are not limited only to criminal acts, and that it was not necessary for the prosecution to prove the accused knew that the means to be used

were "unlawful." The court was adjourned until later Thursday, and Judge Andrew Chan did not give further details on the court's reasoning. Lau, who was acquitted, told reporters that he should not be the focus at the moment as other defendants in the case warrant the public's concern and love. He said if there's any "star" in the case, the judgment should be "the star" because it set out the logic and perspectives of the judges. "This is part of our rule of law," he said.

The court acquitted Lau after it found he had not mentioned vetoing the budget in his election campaign and the court was unable to conclude he had intended to subvert state power. Lee, the other defendant found not guilty, thanked the public for caring about the case over the past few years. He said he could not say more about the verdict because the prosecution might appeal against his acquittal. "I feel calm, as I have always been," he said. In an earlier Facebook post, he said Thursday was like a special graduation ceremony for him, though graduation is usually about sharing happiness with families and friends.

"This perhaps best reflects the common helplessness of our generation," he had said in his post Wednesday. Lee, like Lau, was acquitted after the court found no evidence he mentioned vetoing in an election forum, nor had he personally expressed his stance on using veto power to force the government to accede to protester demands. While Lee — then a member of the now-defunct Civic Party — had adopted a similar political platform as other party members, the court took into account that he was a latecomer to the party's campaign for the primary and that he would have had little choice but to adopt the platform used by others. Thus, the court said in the verdict it could not be sure he had intended to subvert state power.

Ship attacked by Houthi rebels was full of grain bound for Iran

AP ■ DUBAI

A Greek-owned, Marshall Islands-flagged bulk carrier that came under attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels earlier this week had a cargo of grain bound for Iran, the group's main benefactor, authorities said Thursday. The attack on the Laax comes as the Houthis continue their attacks on shipping throughout the Red Sea corridor, part of a campaign they say aims at pressuring Israel and the West over the war in Gaza. However, as shipping through that artery has dropped during the months of attacks, the rebels have struck vessels associated with Iran, as well as Tehran's economic lifelines of China and Russia. Initially after the attack, the Laax had listed its destination

as Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates. On Thursday, however, its listed destination instead appeared to be Bandar Khomeini, Iran. A statement released by French naval forces based in the UAE that patrol the Middle East also identified the vessel's grain shipment as being bound for Iran. It said that a team from Djibouti had inspected the damage caused by the attack, which it said involved both drones and missiles, and found no remaining dangerous explosives onboard the ship. Images released by the French navy showed damage both at the waterline of the vessel, as well as on its deck. Tuesday's attack saw five missiles hit the Laax during the hours-long assault, the private security firm LSS-SAPU told The Associated Press. LSS-

SAPU, which earlier helped evacuate mariners from the Houthi-attacked Rubymar that later sunk, said there had been no prior warning by radio from the Houthis. LSS-SAPU had three armed security guards onboard the Laax at the time of the attack. Among the ship's crew were 13 Filipinos and one Ukrainian, the Philippine Department of Migrant Workers said in a statement. The Houthis in recent months have stepped up attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, demanding that Israel end the war in Gaza, which has killed more than 36,000 Palestinians there. The war began after Hamas-led militants attacked Israel on Oct. 7, killing about 1,200 people and taking around 250 hostages.

Turkiye signals new military intervention in Syria

AP ■ ANKARA

Turkiye will not hesitate to carry out a new offensive in northern Syria if Kurdish-led groups - which Ankara accuses of linked to outlawed Kurdish militants - go ahead with plans to hold local elections in the region, Turkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Thursday. A Kurdish-led autonomous administration that controls northern and eastern parts of Syria has announced plans to hold municipal elections on June 11. The vote to choose mayors will be held in the provinces of Hassakeh, Raqqa, Deir el-Zour and eastern part of Aleppo province. Turkiye, which has launched military operations in Syria in the past, considers the move as a step by Syrian Kurdish militia toward the creation of an independent Kurdish entity across its bor-

der. It has described the planned polls as a threat to the territorial integrity of both Syria and Turkiye. "We are closely following the aggressive actions by the terrorist organization against the territorial integrity of our country and of Syria under the pretext of an election," Erdogan said after observing military exercises in western Turkiye. "Turkiye will never allow the separatist organisation to establish (a terror state) just beyond its southern borders in the north of Syria and Iraq," he said.

Turkiye considers the Kurdish militia group, known as the People's Protection Units, or YPG, as a terrorist group linked to an outlawed Kurdish group that has led an insurgency against Turkiye since 1984. That conflict with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or

PKK, has killed tens of thousands of people. The YPG however, makes up the backbone of the Syrian Democratic Forces, or SDF - a key US ally in the fight against the Islamic State group. American support for the SDF has infuriated Ankara and remains a major source of contention in their relations.

Turkiye has carried a series of military operations in Syria to drive out Syrian Kurdish militia away from its border since 2016, and controls a swath of territory in the north. Turkish leaders frequently speak of plans to establish a 30-kilometre deep safe zone along its border in Syria and Iraq, where the PKK has a foothold, to protect its borders. "We did what was needed in the past in the face of a fait accompli. We will not hesitate to act again if we encounter the same situation," Erdogan said.

Spain's parliament gives final approval to amnesty law

Madrid (AP) - Spain's Parliament voted Thursday to give final approval to a controversial amnesty law for hundreds of Catalan separatists involved in the illegal and unsuccessful 2017 secession bid. The legislation was backed by Spain's left-wing coalition government, two Catalan separatist parties, and other smaller parties. It passes by a vote of 177-172 in the lower house with the conservative Popular Party and far-right Vox opposing it. The amnesty could benefit former Catalan regional president Carles Puigdemont, who is a fugitive from Spanish law in Belgium after fleeing his country following the failed Oct. 2017 breakaway bid that he led. It should also help out hundreds more, including former government officials in Barcelona, average citizens who participat-

ed in the secession attempt or protests, and some police officers involved in the crackdown on an illegal independence referendum held by Puigdemont's government. The passing of the amnesty law, however, does not immediately clear up the legal mess of the separatists. The law is likely to face legal challenges and will be reviewed by higher courts. It also must be applied by courts on a case-by-case basis. There are experts who question its constitutionality since they say it would create inequality between Spanish citizens by favoring some over others. Since taking power in 2018, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has focused on reducing tensions in northeast Catalonia and he argues that the amnesty is key to culminating that process.

Power outages could linger for days after storms batter Texas again, leaving 1 dead

AP ■ HOUSTON

Power outages scattered across storm-weary Texas on Wednesday could linger into the weekend after storms flooded streets in Houston for the second time this month and ripped off roofs in Dallas, leaving a teenager dead and injuring others. The teen was killed Tuesday at a construction site while working on a home that collapsed, and three people at a campground were shocked by a downed power line. The severe weather left more than 1 million homes and businesses without electricity at one point. Electric utility Oncor said power in the Dallas area should be restored by Friday for most customers, but some outages will continue into the weekend. More than 1 million homes and businesses were without electricity across Texas at one point, but by Wednesday night, the lights had come back on for more than 75% of



those customers. Houston was flooded and damaged just weeks after a storm walloped the area, killing eight people. The 16-year-old worker was killed northeast of the city, in the suburb of Magnolia. He was a construction company employee, the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office said. A 6-year-old boy and two others who were shocked by the downed power line at a campground north of Houston were

in critical condition, authorities said. Witnesses saw a 59-year-old man touch the line Tuesday, but investigators were trying to determine how the two others were shocked, Montgomery County Fire Marshal Jimmy Williams said Wednesday. A couple driving during the storm in the Houston suburb of Spring missed a turn and then spotted a pickup truck submerged in a culvert. Ashley Renee Young said her

boyfriend, Robert Chance, grabbed a sledgehammer from his toolbox, broke the back window and pulled out the driver, who only suffered minor cuts from broken glass. They then bought the man a shirt from a nearby gas station before driving him home. "I think we have lifelong friends now," Young said. The potential for heavy rains, localized flash flooding and severe weather continued Wednesday through Oklahoma and Texas. Thunderstorms were predicted late Wednesday and Thursday across eastern Montana and Wyoming and northeast Colorado before pushing into Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma and northern Texas. Tuesday's power outages in the Dallas area prompted officials to extend voting by two hours in the state's runoff elections after dozens of polling places lost electricity amid 80 mph winds (129 kph) that caused extensive damage.

Jurors in Trump hush money trial end 1st day of deliberations

AP ■ NEW YORK

The jury in Donald Trump's hush money trial ended its first day of deliberations without a verdict on Wednesday but asked to rehear testimony from key witnesses about the alleged hush money scheme at the heart of the history-making case. The 12-person jury was sent home around 4 p.m. after about 4 1/2 hours of deliberations. The process is to resume on Thursday, when jurors are expected to rehear the requested testimony and at least part of the judge's legal instructions meant to guide them on the law. The notes sent to the judge with the requests were the first burst of communication with the court after the panel of seven men and five women was sent to a private room just before 11:30 a.m. to begin weighing a verdict. "It is not my responsibility to judge the evidence here. It is yours," Judge Juan M. Merchan told jurors before dispatching them to begin deliberations, reminding



them of their vow during the selection process to judge the case fairly and impartially. It's unclear how long the deliberations will last. A guilty verdict would deliver a stunning legal reckoning for the presumptive Republican presidential nominee as he seeks to reclaim the White House while an acquittal would represent

a major win for Trump and embolden him on the campaign trail. Since verdicts must be unanimous, it's also possible that the case ends in a mistrial if the jury cannot reach a consensus after days of deliberations. Trump struck a pessimistic tone after leaving the courtroom following the reading of

jury instructions, repeating his assertions of a "very unfair trial" and saying: "Mother Teresa could not beat those charges, but we'll see how we do." He remained inside the courtroom during deliberations, where he posted on his social media network complaints about the trial and quoted legal and political commentators who view the case in his favor. In one all-caps-letters post, he proclaimed that he didn't even "know what the charges are in this rigged case", even though he was present in the courtroom as the judge detailed them to jurors. He did not testify in his own defense, something the judge told jurors they could not take into account. Trump is charged with 34 counts of falsifying business records at his company in connection with an alleged scheme to hide potentially embarrassing stories about him during his 2016 Republican presidential campaign. The charge, a felony, arises from reimburse-

ments paid to then-Trump lawyer Michael Cohen after he made a USD 130,000 hush money payment to porn actor Stormy Daniels to silence her claims that she and Trump had sex in 2006. Trump is accused of misrepresenting Cohen's reimbursements as legal expenses to hide that they were tied to a hush money payment. Trump has pleaded not guilty and contends the Cohen payments were for legitimate legal services. He has also denied the alleged extramarital sexual encounter with Daniels. To convict Trump, the jury would have to find unanimously that he created a fraudulent entry in his company's records, or caused someone else to do so, and that he did so with the intent of committing or concealing another crime. The crime prosecutors say Trump committed or hid is a violation of a New York election law making it illegal for two or more conspirators "to promote or prevent the election of any person to a public office

by unlawful means". While the jury must unanimously agree that something unlawful was done to promote Trump's election campaign, they don't have to be unanimous on what that unlawful thing was. The jurors — a diverse cross section of Manhattan residents and professional backgrounds — often appeared riveted by testimony, including from Cohen and Daniels. Many took notes and watched intently as witnesses answered questions from prosecutors and Trump's lawyers. Jurors started deliberating after a marathon day of closing arguments on Tuesday. A prosecutor spoke for more than five hours, underscoring the burden the district attorney's office faces in needing to establish Trump's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. The Trump team need not establish his innocence to avoid a conviction but must instead bank on at least one juror finding that prosecutors have not sufficiently proved their case.

Iran opens registration for June presidential election

Dubai (AP) - Iran opened a five-day registration period Thursday for hopefuls wanting to run in the June 28 presidential election to replace the late Ebrahim Raisi, who was killed in a helicopter crash earlier this month with seven others. The election comes as Iran grapples with the aftermath of the May 19 crash, as well as heightened tensions between Tehran and the United States, and protests including those over the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini that have swept the country. While Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 85, maintains final say over all matters of state, presidents in the past have bent the Islamic Republic of Iran toward greater interaction or increased hostility with the West. The five-day period will see those between the ages of 40 to 75 with at least a master's degree register as potential candidates. All candidates ultimately must be approved by

Iran's 12-member Guardian Council, a panel of clerics and jurists ultimately overseen by Khamenei. That panel has never accepted a woman, for instance, nor anyone calling for radical change within the country's governance. Ahmad Vahidi, Iran's interior minister, opened the registration period. The Interior Ministry, in charge of the country's police, run Iranian elections with no substantial international observation. "These elections, like the parliamentary elections, will be held in complete safety and health, with good competition and wide participation of all dear people," Vahidi said. Raisi, a protégé of Khamenei, won Iran's 2021 presidential election after the Guardian Council disqualified all of the candidates with the best chance to potentially challenge him. That vote saw the lowest turnout in Iran's history for a presidential election.

RBI balance sheet rises 11 per cent to ₹70.47 lakh crore in FY24

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The size of Reserve Bank's balance sheet increased by 11.08 per cent to Rs 70.47 lakh crore as on March 2024, leading to the highest-ever dividend payout to the government, according to the central bank's annual report. In actual terms, the increase was Rs 7,02,946.97 crore over Rs 63.45 lakh crore as on March 2023.

The central bank's net income stood at Rs 2.11 lakh crore at end-March 2024 after making a provision of Rs 42,819.91 crore, significantly down from Rs 1,30,875.75 crore in the preceding fiscal. The amount made towards provisioning is transferred to Contingency Fund (CF). The net income during 2022-23 was Rs 87,420 crore. Like 2022-23, no provision was made towards Asset Development Fund (ADF) during the year under review. The balance sheet of the Reserve Bank reflects activities carried out in pursuance of its various functions including issuance of currency as well as monetary policy and reserve management objectives. Last week, the RBI had approved the highest-ever dividend payout of Rs 2.11 lakh crore to the central government for 2023-24. The dividend or surplus transfer by the RBI to the Centre was



Rs 87,416 crore for the fiscal 2022-23. The previous high was Rs 1.76 lakh crore in 2018-19. According to the RBI's Annual Report for 2023-24, the increase on assets side in the balance sheet was due to rise in foreign investments, gold, and loans and advances by 13.90 per cent, 18.26 per cent and 30.05 per cent, respectively. On liabilities side, expansion was due to increase in notes issued, deposits and other liabilities by 3.88 per cent, 27.00 per cent and 92.57 per cent, respectively. The RBI further said domestic assets constituted 23.31 per cent while foreign currency assets, gold (including gold deposit and gold held in India) and loans and advances to financial

institutions outside India constituted 76.69 per cent of total assets as on March 31, 2024, as against 26.08 per cent and 73.92 per cent, respectively, as on March 31, 2023. The Reserve Bank holds 822.10 metric tonnes of gold, of which 308.03 metric tonnes are held as backing for notes issued as on March 31, 2024. The value of gold held as asset of Issue Department increased by 16.94 per cent from Rs 1,40,765.60 crore as on March 31, 2023 to Rs 1,64,604.91 crore as on March 31, 2024. RBI said this increase in the value of gold during the year is on account of addition of 6.94 metric tonnes of gold, increase in price of gold and depreciation of Indian rupee against US dollar.

Internet based trading: Sebi reduces approval time to seven days for brokers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Thursday significantly reduced the time taken by stock exchanges for granting approval to stock brokers for internet-based trading to seven days from the current 30 days. The move is aimed at facilitating ease of doing business. Under the rule, the broker is required to apply to the respective stock exchange for a formal permission to provide internet-based trading service.



Further, the stock exchange, which was required to communicate its decision to the member within 30

calendar days, will now have to do so within 7 days, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in its circular. The internet trading can take place through order routing systems, which will route client orders to exchange trading systems for execution. Thus a client sitting in any part of the country can trade using the internet as a medium through brokers' internet trading systems. Additionally, the regulator has abolished the existing requirement of periodic confirmation of internet-based trading (IBT) statistics by stock brokers before they are published by stock exchanges.

Instead, exchanges would publish IBT statistics on the basis of details of IBT terminals provided by stock brokers. Further, exchanges, in this regard, can obtain information/declaration about IBT terminals from stock brokers as deemed fit by them. The decision has been taken after Sebi received requests pertaining to internet-based trading from the Industry Standard Forum (ISF) of stock brokers. The new guidelines will be applicable with immediate effect, Sebi said.

Rupee rebounds to settle 9 paise higher at 83.31 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee recovered 9 paise to settle at 83.31 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday on the back of softening American currency as well as crude oil prices in the overseas market. Forex traders said, however, a massive selling in the domestic equity markets, outflow of foreign fund and increased month-end demand of greenback by oil marketing companies weighed on the Indian currency. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.42 and oscillated between the intra-day high of 83.26 and lowest



level of 83.44 during the session. It finally settled at 83.31 (provisional), registering a gain of 9 paise from its previous closing level. The rupee plunged 22 paise to close at 83.40 against the US dollar on Wednesday, a day after losing 5 paise on Tuesday. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.12

per cent lower at 104.90. Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said the rupee, which fell in the first half of the day on weak domestic markets and FII outflows, appreciated on softening of the US dollar as the US treasury yields eased after rising over the past three days. "Overall strength in the US dollar amid hawkish tone of the US Federal Reserve officials may further pressure the rupee. However, any further easing of US treasury yields or any intervention by the RBI may support rupee at lower levels," he said, adding, "USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.10 to Rs 83.70."

Capital needs to remain high for corporates: Moody's

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Moody's Ratings on Thursday said capital requirements will remain high for Indian corporates as they go in for capacity expansion and inorganic growth spending. Moody's estimates that 16 of the 23 rated companies will require USD 70-100 billion of funding annually in the next two years for growth spending, refinancing requirements and shareholder payments. While improving domestic liquidity and companies' internal cash flows can cover a large portion of their capital needs, offshore funding will remain an important funding channel, it said. "Capacity expansion, inorganic growth spending,

refinancing and working capital needs, along with shareholder payments, will keep capital requirements high for nonfinancial corporates in India," Moody's Ratings said in a statement. It said capital spending by non-financial corporates will remain high as they expand their capacities to cater to the strong consumption growth expected in the country, at a time when their capacity utilisation is already high. Expectations of strong consumption growth are driven by India's growing population, rising disposable incomes and favourable demographic trends, including a young population and rising urbanisation, Moody's said.

Number of frauds in banking sector rises in FY24, amount declines 47 per cent



PTI ■ MUMBAI

The number of frauds in the banking sector went up to 36,075 in 2023-24 year-on-year, but the amount involved reduced by 46.7 per cent to Rs 13,930 crore, according to the Reserve Bank's annual report released on Thursday. The RBI report also said that with an aim to curb frauds and enhance the payment experience further, the introduction of real-time payee name validation before the actual fund transfer will be explored in compliance with newly enacted 'The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023'. During 2023-24, the amount involved in frauds was Rs 13,930 crore, down from Rs 26,127 crore a year ago. The number of frauds increased to 36,075 during 2023-24 from 13,564 in the preceding financial year. An assessment of bank group-wise fraud cases over the last three years indicates that while private sector banks reported maximum number of frauds, public sector banks

continued to contribute maximum to the fraud amount, said the Annual Report for 2023-24. "Frauds have occurred predominantly in the category of digital payments (card/internet), in terms of number. In terms of value, frauds have been reported primarily in the loan portfolio (advances category)," the report said. While small value card/internet frauds contributed maximum to the number of frauds reported by the private sector banks, the frauds in public sector banks were mainly in loan portfolio. Further, an analysis of the vintage of frauds reported during 2022-23 and 2023-24 shows a significant time-lag between the date of occurrence of a fraud and its detection. "The amount involved in frauds that occurred in previous financial years formed 94 per cent of the frauds reported in 2022-23 in terms of value," the report said. Similarly, 89.2 per cent of the frauds reported in 2023-24 by value occurred in previous financial years.

Stock markets fall for 5th day; Sensex plunges 617 points

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty declined nearly 1 per cent on Thursday, continuing their falling streak for the fifth day running due to profit booking amid monthly expiry in the derivatives segment. The 30-share BSE Sensex plunged by 617.30 points or 0.83 per cent to settle at 73,885.60. The barometer hit the day's low of 73,668.73 due to selling in blue-chips. The NSE Nifty dropped by 216.05 points or 0.95 per cent to close at 22,488.65.



Benchmark indices closed at lifetime high levels on May 23 which triggered profit-taking amid growing nervousness among investors ahead of the results of the Lok Sabha polls on June 4. Since then, Nifty and Sensex have declined

around 2 per cent in the five straight sessions. "The benchmark index is taking cues from the US market as treasury yields continue to climb following the stickiness of global inflation, delaying the central bank's interest rates cut policy," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said. From the Sensex pack, Tata Steel, Titan, Tech Mahindra, Wipro, Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, Nestle India, Tata Motors and JSW Steel were the biggest laggards. ICICI Bank, Axis Bank,

HDFC Bank, State Bank of India and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the gainers. "Meanwhile, the broader market continued the weak trend, led by profit booking, due to feeble closing of monthly expiry owing to lack of interest to hold short-term positions, as exit poll is slated in the weekend," Nair said. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Shanghai settled lower. European markets were trading with gains, while US markets ended in the negative territory on Wednesday. Foreign Institutional

Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 5,841.84 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data. The last phase of polling is scheduled for June 1. The results of the ongoing general elections will be declared on June 4. Global oil benchmark Brent Crude fell 0.41 per cent to USD 83.19 a barrel. On Wednesday, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 667.55 points or 0.89 per cent to settle at 74,502.90. The NSE Nifty dropped 183.45 points or 0.80 per cent to close at 22,704.70.

Navi Mumbai Marriott Hotel opens

Mumbai: MRG Group, the Bengaluru-based hospitality and real estate powerhouse known for its Goldfinch Hotels & Resorts brand, announced the grand opening of the Navi Mumbai Marriott Hotel. Strategically located in the vibrant heart of Navi Mumbai, this new establishment aims to cater to both business travellers and vacationers with unparalleled convenience and accessibility. Situated along the Thane Belapur Road, the hotel is just 26 km from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport. PNS

Paytm stock jumps 5 per cent, hits upper circuit limit for second straight session

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of One97 Communications, which owns the brand Paytm, on Thursday jumped 5 per cent to hit its upper circuit limit for the second straight session amid reports of Adani and Paytm were in talks to acquire a stake in the fintech company. However, One97 Communications Ltd on Wednesday said it is not in talks to sell a stake to the Adani Group, while the Gujarat-based conglomerate has also termed such reports as "false and untrue." The stock climbed 4.99 per cent each to Rs 377.40 and 377.50 -- its upper circuit limit -- on the NSE and BSE, respectively. Paytm founder Vijay Shekhar Sharma owns 9.1 per cent of Paytm in his personal capacity and another 10.3 per cent through Resilient Asset



Management, a foreign entity, as of end-March. Since shutting its banking unit after falling foul to regulations, Paytm has lost about half of its market value and there has been consistent speculation about it being a potential takeover target. In February, it was reported to be in talks with billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Jio Financial Services but both entities had denied the same. Paytm recently reported a

widening of loss in the fourth quarter of the financial year 2023-24 to Rs 550 crore, following the ban imposed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on transactions related to its payments bank. The RBI barred Paytm Payments Bank Limited (PPBL) from accepting deposits, credit transactions or top-ups in any customer accounts, wallets, and FASTags, keeping in view the interest of customers, including merchants from March 15 onwards. The company during the reported quarter wrote off Rs 227 crore investment for a 39 per cent stake in PPBL, following future uncertainties associated with the bank's business operations including the uncertainty of any other regulatory development etc.

UAE looking to expand scope of trade under CEPA with India: Official

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

The United Arab Emirates is looking to expand the scope of trade and services covered under the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with India to further accelerate bilateral trading volume, a senior UAE official said here on Thursday. India and the UAE signed the historic CEPA on February 18, 2022, to further boost bilateral trade and economic ties. Feryal Ahmadi, the Chief Operating Officer of the Dubai Multi-Commodities Centre (DMCC), said that the UAE is looking at agri-commodity potential and working on adding other sectors including critical minerals under the CEPA. The United Arab Emirates is looking to expand the scope

of trade and services covered under the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with India to further accelerate bilateral trading volume, she said. Emphasising the importance of India as the largest trading partner for the Emirates, she said, "We are absolutely looking at agri-commodity potential and working on adding other sectors including critical minerals under CEPA." Feryal also underlined the growing importance of other Free Trade Agreements and trade corridors, including the potential of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor. She sees more and more countries working on bilateral free trade agreements and regionalization of trading among countries.



She presented a DMCC report, "The Future of Trade", in Singapore today, in which the UAE-India CEPA trade growth was highlighted. "These have undeniable trade benefits, reducing tariff and trade barriers while increasing inter-regional market access." As a case in point, countries

in the Gulf Cooperation Council such as the UAE have expanded bilateral ties, particularly with Asian nations -- India, Indonesia, Israel, Turkey and Cambodia. Currently, there are 26 FTAs in progress, according to the report. Countries like the UAE and ASEAN member states are

poised to benefit from their geopolitical neutrality and diverse trade relationships, said the report. "Governments should foster partnerships and trade agreements with these powers to facilitate increased trade flows and investment opportunities," the report suggested. "By leveraging their strategic geographic locations and trade-friendly policies, they can serve as key hubs for regional trade and economic integration," the report stated. On regionalisation, the report sees new centres of gravity forming in Asia - around ASEAN, China and India - as well as North America. "This is bolstered by relatively new multilateral agreements with commitments to reduce tariffs, create a common market and boost regional trade," said the report.

Treesa, Gayatri upset world number 2 Baek, Lee; Sindhu goes down to Marin

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

P V Sindhu suffered yet another setback against Carolina Marin, but the rising Indian women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand stunned world number two Baek Ha Na and Lee So Hee of South Korea to enter the quarterfinals at Singapore Open here on Thursday.

Double Olympic medallist Sindhu blew away 18-15 lead in the decider to go down to familiar rival Marin in a thrilling 21-13 11-21 20-22 women's singles last-16 match. It was Sindhu's sixth loss on the trot against her arch-rival dating back from 2018. But the Commonwealth Games bronze medallist duo of Treesa and Gayatri kept the Indian flag flying by eliminating Baek and Lee 21-9 14-21 21-15 in close to one-hour battle.

This was world number 30 Indian duo's maiden win from three meetings against the world number two Korean pair. The Baek-Lee duo was error prone as Treesa and Gayatri held a commanding 18-9 lead before taking the opening game without much fuss. But the Indians allowed the



South Koreans to bounce back, committing unforced errors in the second game as the match went to the deciding third game.

The rival pairs exchanged some powerful smashes and were locked 8-all before the Indian duo took a slender two-point lead at the final mid game break.

They continued to play with aggression and reeled off six points on succession to make it 16-9 and seal a memorable win. In the men's singles, world No.

10 HS Prannoy, seeded eighth, lost to Kenta Nishimoto, ranked 11th in the world, of Japan 13-21, 21-14, 15-21 in a 45-minute match.

This was the Indian's fourth defeat against the Japanese from six matches.

In the women's singles, Sindhu, fresh from her runner-up finish at the Malaysia Masters last week, took the opening game against her Rio Olympics final nemesis, but the Spaniard bounced back to win in a one-hour, eight-minute battle of the BWF World Tour Super 750

meet. Having saved one match point, Sindhu committed a sloppy misjudgement of the shuttle on the backline to prolong her wait to five years and 11 months.

Sindhu had last beaten Marin in the quarterfinals of the Malaysia Open on June 29, 2018 since then the Indian has endured six losses on the trot. Facing each other for the first time in seven months after their heated Denmark Open semifinal clash, the double Olympic medallist Indian dominated the opening game

against an error-prone Marin. With a powerful body smash, Sindhu took a massive 11-6 lead and maintained her authority to extend it to 15-8. The third-seeded Marin tried to come back but Sindhu held her ways and sealed it comfortably.

But the Spaniard world No 3 bounced back strongly in a lopsided second game wherein she won six points on the trot and cruised to 17-7 lead to force a decider. Maintaining her lead, Sindhu nosed 11-9 ahead in the final mid-game interval as she unleashed a powerful body smash to make it 14-10.

Sindhu exhibited a brilliant drop shot as she went two points shy of an elusive win against Marin making it 19-17. But the Indian lost her composure as she found the net, allowing Marin to bounce back and get a match point at 19-20.

Marin, however, shot it wide as the game hung in balance at 20-all before the Spaniard got another match point with her fiery smash. But this time, Marin had the last laugh with Sindhu erring on her judgment on back court. This was Marin's 12th career win from 17 matches against the Indian.

Praggnanandhaa claims maiden classical win over Carlsen

PTI ■ STAVANGER (NORWAY)

Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa crushed world number one Magnus Carlsen for the first time in Classical format to emerge as the sole leader in the Norway chess tournament here. Having beating him a few times in online and faster versions of the game and after losing to him in the finale of the last World Cup, Praggnanandhaa finally got past the home favourite in what would be known as a clear classical triumph.

Following the third-round win, the 18-year-old Indian now leads the men's section with 5.5 points in all, half a point clear of USA's Fabiano Caruana who scored his first victory in classical against reigning world champion Ding Liren of China. Carlsen, on three points, looks like a distant third for now in the updated standings but with each classical win worth three points, this might not hold for too long.

Hikaru Nakamura of United States, Firouzja Alireza of France and Liren are all joint fourth currently on 2.5 points in the six-player double round-robin contest.

"I wish Magnus would take similar risks against us old folks," said Nakamura on Carlsen's choice of playing a risky battle against Praggnanandhaa. Classical chess, also known as slow chess, allows players significant amount of time to make their moves, usually at least one hour. Carlsen and Praggnanandhaa had drawn their previous three encounters in this format. In the women's event, Praggnanandhaa's elder sister R Vaishali maintained her sole lead after getting past Anna Muzychuk of Norway in the Armageddon game after drawing the Classical.



Vaishali inched up to 5.5 points too and enjoys a full-point lead over women's world champion Wenjun Ju of China who is sole second by a half point margin over compatriot Tingjie Lei.

Muzychuk, Pia Cramling of Sweden and Koneru Humpy share the fourth spot here on three points each.

It was a Sicilian Kann, an opening that does not find many favours in the elite chess circles, wherein Praggnanandhaa got an advantage through better space control right from the beginning.

The middle game saw Magnus' king stuck in the centre and the Indian super-talent capitalised with some deft manoeuvres after the minor pieces were off the board.

Eventually, the King's vulnerability came to question as Praggnanandhaa posed some dangerous checkmate threats. The game lasted just 37 moves.

Caruana outclassed Liren out of an Italian opening game. Launching the offensive on

the king side the American, who had lost the first two rounds

under Armageddon, he sacrificed two minor pieces for a rook to rip apart black's King side and another exchange sacrifice soon sealed the game in his favour.

In the other game of the day, Nakamura proved superior as white against Alireza in the USD 1,60,000 prize money event.

In the women's section, Vaishali ensured that her lead remained intact after a draw in Armageddon as black against Muzychuk. Seven rounds still remain in both sections of the event.

Results

Men: R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 5.5) beat Magnus Carlsen (Nor, 3) 3-0; Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 5) beat Ding Liren (Chn, 2.5) 3-0; Hikaru Nakamura (Usa, 2.5) beat Firouzja Alireza (Fra, 2.5) 1.5-1.

Women: Anna Muzychuk (Ukr, 3) lost to R Vaishali (Ind, 5.5) 1-1.5; Koneru Humpy (Ind, 3) beat Tingjie Lei (Chn, 4) 1-1.5; Pia Cramling (Swe, 3) lost to Wenjun Ju (Chn, 1-1.5).

Sachin, Sanjeet win in Boxing World qualifiers to close in on Paris Olympics berth

PTI ■ BANGKOK

India's Sachin Siwach (57kg) and Sanjeet Kumar (92kg) advanced another step towards Paris Olympic qualification as they registered convincing victories over their respective opponents to advance to the next round of the Boxing World Qualifiers here on Thursday.

Sachin started the proceedings for India with a clinical 5-0 win against Olympian Batuhan Ciftci of Turkey in the pre-quarterfinal round and Sanjeet then saw

off the challenge from Luis Sanchez of Venezuela with an identical margin in the round of 32.

In the 57kg category only three boxers will make cut for the Paris Olympics. Sachin, therefore, needs to win two more bouts to make the cut while Sanjeet, who got a bye in the round of 64, will have a similar target as all four semi-finalists will qualify in his weight category.

Up against an experienced boxer, Sachin came out all guns blazing in round 1 and that strategy worked wonders for the Indian as he took



control of the bout very quickly.

He earned a unanimous verdict even in round 2 and though Ciftci attempted a

comeback in the third and final round, the Indian was too comfortable in the end. The 92kg bout between Sanjeet and Sanchez followed

a similar pattern as the 2021 Asian Championship gold medallist did not allow his Venezuelan opponent to get a look in, in round 1.

Sanchez did show some spark in round 2 and 3 but the experienced Sanjeet kept himself at bay and landed his punches on counter attacks to win easily. Later in the day, 2022 Commonwealth Games gold medallist Amit Panghal will face Mauricio Ruiz of Mexico in a 51kg second round contest while Jaismine will be up against Mahsati Hamzayeva of Azerbaijan in women's 57kg category.

Men secure shootout win over Germany, women draw against Orange Rood

PTI ■ BREDA (NETHERLANDS)

India concluded their junior hockey teams' tour of Europe with a gritty shootout win over Germany by the men's side, while the women were held to a 2-2 draw by Orange Rood club here.

The men's team won 3-1 on penalties after a 1-1 stalemate in the regulation time in their match at the Bredase Hockey Vereniging Push here on Wednesday.

Gurjot Singh, Dilraj Singh, and Manmeet Singh scored one each in the shoot-out after Mukesh Toppo struck off a rebound from a penalty corner in the 33rd minute. The Indian Colts held their lead in regulation time until Germany equalised four minutes into the fourth quarter, adding excitement to the game.

Despite both teams' efforts to take the lead, the score remained unchanged, leading to a penalty shootout. This was the men's team's second win from five matches of the tour, having beaten Belgium 4-2 (2-2) on penalties in their opening



game at Antwerp on May 20. They also suffered three losses -- against Belgium (2-3), Bredase Hockey Vereniging Push (4-5) and Germany (2-3).

The women's team registered two wins, two losses and a solitary draw against Orange Rood on Wednesday.

They played a quiet first quarter against Oranje Rood and Sanjana Horo (18') broke the deadlock for India. Oranje Rood responded well, earning two penalty corners but the Indian defence held

firm, ending the first half 1-0. Oranje Rood took the initiative in the third quarter and earned three penalty corners and scored twice to take a 2-1 lead.

But India levelled the score in the last quarter when Anisha Sahu (58') scored in the final moments.

The visitors earlier defeated Bredase Hockey Vereniging Push (2-0), Belgium 4-2 (2-2), and conceded defeats against Belgium 2-3, Germany (0-1), 4-6, 1 draw (Orange Rood 2-2).

Messi scores, but Inter Miami's 10-match MLS unbeaten streak ends in 3-1 loss to Atlanta United

AP ■ FORT LAUDERDALE (FLORIDA)

Lionel Messi scored yet again. It was the lone real highlight for Inter Miami, as its 10-match Major League Soccer winning streak was ended by an Atlanta United side that got its first league win in nearly two months. Saba Lobjanidze scored once in each half, Jamal Thiari helped put the game away with a goal in the 73rd minute and Atlanta United snapped a nine-match MLS winless streak with a 3-1 victory on Wednesday night.

Atlanta United was 0-5-4 in MLS play since beating Chicago 3-0 on March 31. But it never trailed on Wednesday, with Lobjanidze scoring late in the first half to put his side on top and adding the second in the 59th minute. After Messi's score, Atlanta United kept all 10 field players in the defensive end whenever the hosts had deep possession in the final 30 minutes.

Messi got his 11th goal of the MLS season, tying Luis Suarez for the team lead. Inter

Miami (10-3-4, 34 points) kept a one-point lead atop the Eastern Conference and the overall MLS standings over Cincinnati (10-3-3, 33 points). Cincinnati lost to Nashville on Wednesday night, missing a chance to take the top spot.

"We were missing a gear," Inter Miami coach Gerardo "Tata" Martino said through an interpreter.

Inter Miami entered Wednesday with a 7-0-3 mark in its last 10 MLS matches. It is now 10-0-4 when allowing two goals or less in MLS play this season - and 0-3-0 when surrendering three goals or more.

"I'd say it was a night where the team went backwards from other matches," Martino said.

So, Wednesday was a dud. The first half of the season, though, has gone largely to plan.

With 34 points through exactly half the MLS schedule - matching its total from all of the 2023 season, when Messi joined around the midway point and helped the team win Leagues Cup but couldn't



get it into the playoffs - Inter Miami is on pace for 68 points this season. Mathematically, yes, that's correct.

Realistically, well, probably not so much. The plan, for now, calls for Messi to play at least some minutes when Inter Miami plays host to St. Louis on Saturday. After that, Messi will be trading Inter Miami's pink kit for the blue of Argentina - playing for country instead of club for a bit.

Copa America - the 16-team tournament which runs from

June 20 through July 14 - is looming, with Messi set to play for defending champion Argentina and Suarez a possibility to play for Uruguay.

They may miss MLS matches when Inter Miami plays at Philadelphia (June 15), vs. Columbus (June 19), at Nashville (June 29), at Charlotte (July 3) and at Cincinnati (July 6). Following the Copa America final, Miami also has home matches against Toronto (July 17) and Chicago (July 20).

Unlike most leagues, MLS schedules games during some

FIFA fixture periods, when release of players to national teams is mandatory. And after Copa, it would seem likely that Inter Miami may lose some players again when national teams call for the Paris Olympics.

Messi had some opportunities in the early going, including a diving header about four minutes into the match off a chip into the middle of the box by Jordi Alba. Messi, fending off some contact, sent the ball into the turf and the carom spun over the crossbar; he gave Alba a thumbs-up for the idea as he picked himself up from the grass with a smile.

And in the 21st minute, Messi sent a chip toward the left post - just over a leaping Robert Taylor, who would have had plenty of net to aim for had he been able to attempt the header.

His goal in the 63rd minute was a typical Messi masterpiece, threading a ball between two defenders and just inside the right post, barely out of the reach of a diving Atlanta goalie Josh Cohen.

Celebrations in Greece as Olympiakos beats Fiorentina 1-0 for first European title

AP ■ ATHENS (GREECE)

Setting off wild celebrations in Athens, Olympiakos won Greece's first European club title by beating Fiorentina 1-0 with a goal in extra time of the Europa Conference League final on Wednesday.

Ayoub El Kaabi provided the dramatic ending, diving to nudge in a last-gasp goal in a second period of extra time, with fans erupting in celebration after a lengthy wait for a VAR check for offside.

"Praise be to God, we promised our supporters we'd do this today and we did it," El Kaabi said.

The Morocco striker - who finished as the competition's top scorer - struck in the 116th

minute of the match and dropped to his knees as he waited to see if the goal would stand after he had met a cross from Santiago Hezze.

The goal decided a game that had looked destined for a penalty shootout following an energetic but largely risk-free encounter at AEK Arena, and condemned Fiorentina and its coach Vincenzo Italiano to a second straight defeat in the final of the Europa Conference League after losing last year to West Ham.

"We created chances and had the opportunity to lift the cup but unfortunately it didn't happen - I'm sorry," Italiano said. "In Europe it's not an easy thing to get this far and lose." Olympiakos coach Jose Luis



Mendilibar secured a second straight European title after winning the Europa League

with Sevilla last season. "It's an honor to have made all these people happy, I feel

immense joy and happiness to have made people feel this way and I dedicate it to them,"

Mendilibar said. "We have achieved something that our club has never achieved before. We will celebrate it and celebrate it the way we should. Then we will start working on what comes next." Tens of thousands of Olympiakos fans joined boisterous celebrations across the Greek capital after attending outdoor viewing parties. Youths held up lit flares in the port city of Piraeus, near Athens, where the team is based.

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis described Olympiakos as "a true legend," adding in an online post: "Olympiakos has won the Europa Conference League and made history! A

sensational night for the club itself, but also for Greek football as a whole."

The third-tier European club competition took place amid a massive security operation, with some 5,000 police officers forming concentric cordons around a northern area of the capital - amid Europe-wide security concerns this summer for major sporting events including the Paris Olympics and European soccer championship in Germany.

The final was briefly marred by scuffles between Fiorentina fans inside the stadium and riot police next to them.

Although the visitors dominated the early stages of the final, Fiorentina goalkeeper Pietro Terracciano kept his

team in the game with two impressive fingertip saves to block on-target shots from Daniel Podence in the fourth minute and Stevan Jovetic in the sixth minute of extra time.

El Kaabi, who scored a total of 11 goals in the competition, had been largely sidelined in the match by Fiorentina's unyielding four-man defense.

Olympiakos players celebrated with 15,000 fans after the game, some holding their young children as golden confetti was fired into the air around the awards podium.

"It's the best emotion I've felt so far in my career," defender Panagiotis Retsos said. "I've had a lot of ups-and-downs but I'm very, very happy to be here."



WEARING INDIA JERSEY IS DIFFERENT FEELING, HOPE TO MAKE IT COUNT: RISHABH PANT

PTI ■ NEW YORK

It would be 527 days since his life-threatening accident when Rishabh Pant donned the India jersey on June 5 at the Nassau County ground for the opening T20 World Cup match against Ireland and he can't wait for it. On March 23 this year, Pant wore the blue of Delhi Capitals while making an emotional comeback after the horrific car crash in 2022 but he is more eager to wear a different shade of blue -- the 'India Blue' to be specific. "Getting back on the field with an Indian jersey on is a different feeling altogether. This is something I missed a lot...Hopefully I (can) make it count and make it better from here," Pant told BCCI.TV on the sidelines of India's first net session ahead of the warm-up

game against Bangladesh on June 1. Pant, who underwent an intense 15-month rehabilitation at the National Cricket Academy, had teammate Suryakumar Yadav for company during this interaction and recalled the time how his presence helped him cope with the loneliness of his injury management programme in the NCA. "Seeing the team here and meeting them again, spending time, having fun with them, having a conversation with them, I really enjoyed," a beaming Pant said. Having scored 446 runs in 13 IPL games, Pant is slowly getting back into the groove. The leaner and fitter Pant looked in nice touch at the India nets at the Cantique Park on the outskirts of New York City.

Pant also spoke about the prospects of cricket gaining popularity in the USA going forward. He felt the T20 World Cup could be the start of an eventful chapter. "We are used to playing in certain countries but this is a different prospect. It has opened up a different channel for sport because I feel cricket is growing around the world and...Getting the exposure here would be nice for cricket as well as USA cricket," he said. He spoke about the drop-in pitches that will be used during the tournament and also the bright sunshine that he and the rest of the team is getting used to. "New pitches are there. I'm just getting used to the conditions. The sun is a little bit brighter here, so just getting used to the conditions over here. Let's see how it goes," Pant concluded.

Ponting picks IPL top performers Bumrah, Head to dominate T20 World Cup

PTI ■ DUBAI

Former Australia captain Ricky Ponting has picked Indian Premier League (IPL) top performers Jasprit Bumrah and Travis Head to excel among the bowlers and batters respectively in the T20 World Cup starting June 2. India's pace spearhead Bumrah stood tall among the bowlers with 20 wickets in 13 matches for Mumbai Indians despite the five-time winners enduring their worst-ever campaign in 17 editions of the IPL, while Australian Head struck 567 runs in 15 matches. Despite MI's all-round struggles, Bumrah shone brightly with his supreme control with the ball, maintaining an enviable economy rate of a mere 6.48 in a tournament wherein each of the top 10 bowlers went for at least eight runs per over. "My leading wicket-taker for the tournament will be Jasprit Bumrah. I just think an outstanding performer, contributor for a number of years now. He's just come off an outstanding IPL," Ponting was quoted as saying in 'The ICC Review'.



"What he can do with the new ball, he swings the new ball, he has the seam up. But at the end, his economy rate at the end of the IPL was less than seven runs an over. "He takes wickets. He does bowl a lot of the hard overs too. When you bowl the hard overs in T20 cricket, it gives you a chance to pick up a lot of wickets along

the way. So, I'm going with him," said Ponting, who coaches Delhi Capitals in the IPL. Even though Head finished fourth in the list of those with most runs in this IPL, it was the manner he got them which impressed the most. Head's strike rate remained in excess of 200 for a large part of the IPL, with the

left-handed batter eventually finishing at 567 runs in 15 matches at 191.55, average of 40.50, and featuring one century and four fifties. "My prediction for the leading run-scorer will be Travis Head. I just think everything he's done, whether it be red-ball or white-ball in the last couple of years, has been of the highest quality. I think he's playing fearless cricket at the moment," said Ponting of his compatriot. "It'll be exactly the same for Australia. He might not be the most consistent on the way through this tournament, but he'll be right up there with the leading run scorers. As I've said, if he spends any amount of time at the wicket for Australia, he'll win more games than ever." The T20 World Cup will be held in the West Indies and the USA from June 2 to 29.

Story of Uganda's inspirational rising stars

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

An estimated 60 per cent of Ugandan population lives in slums and fast bowler Juma Miyagi is a cult figure in these impoverished areas. These usually football-loving people would be keenly following him and the Ugandan cricket team's debut at the ICC T20 World Cup, trying to live a sporting dream through his exploits. Miyagi grew up in the slums of Naguru, located on the outskirts of Kampala, and two years after representing Uganda at the U-19 level in the Caribbean, the 21-year-old will be shouldering the

senior team's bowling attack at the ICC showpiece that kicks off on June 1. Uganda qualified for their maiden cricket World Cup last November. Miyagi, who has 34 wickets in 21 T20 Internationals, grew up in the slums and continues to live there with his family to date. The same is the case for other T20 World Cup squad members including Simon Ssesazi and travelling reserve Innocent Mwebaze. They have grown up in areas which lack clean water, sewage systems and have little or no access to health care in poorly constructed pigeonholes that pass for rooms. Their fellow slum dwellers

From slums of Kampala to T20 World Cup



look up to them as all three of them have given hope to the struggling community. Their story of hardship even moved Uganda's Indian head coach Abhay Sharma, who took charge of the team ahead

of the ICC event beginning on Saturday. Sharma is not completely unaware of slums as India has one of Asia's biggest slums in Dharavi, Mumbai but being in Kampala was eye-opening

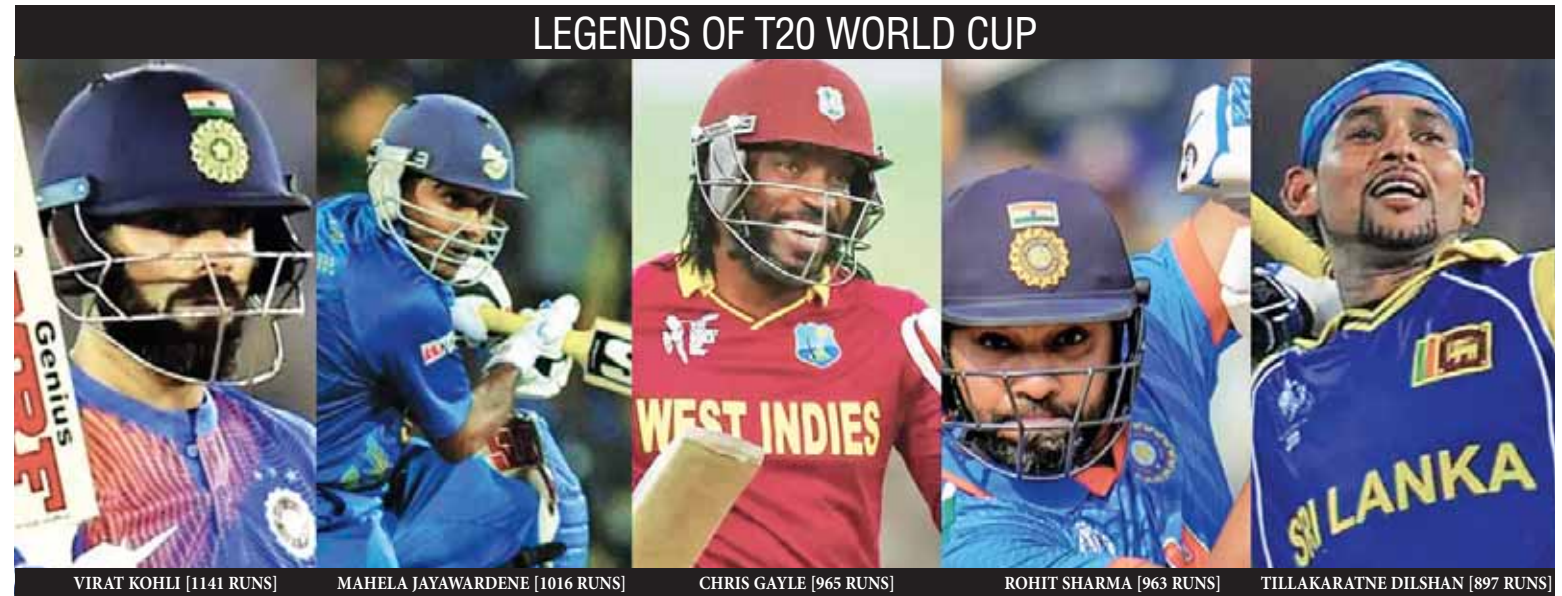
even for him. Having spent some time with the players on and off the field, Sharma's respect for the players has increased manifold. "Some of the players come from very humble backgrounds and it is inspiring to see them play for the national team. "I didn't expect them to live in such conditions before I arrived. Their respect for coaches is also immense. The players think we can change their lives," he told PTI from Trinidad, where the team is based at the moment ahead of its World Cup opener against Afghanistan in Guyana on June 3.

Leading run-getters and batters with best strike rates

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With cricket's slam-bang version set for its ninth World Cup, PTI gives a rundown on the leading run-getters and the ones with best strike rates in the T20 showpiece. **LEADING RUN GETTERS** **Virat Kohli [1141 runs]:** Who else at No. 1 but the King himself? The talismanic Indian batter has been an absolute beast in the marquee event, scoring over a thousand runs across five editions. His ability to thrive under pressure and deliver match-winning performances has cemented his reputation as one of the finest batters in T20 cricket. He holds the record for most runs in a single edition of the tournament — 319 in 2014. He was also sensational in the 2016 edition, scoring 296 runs. **Mahela Jayawardene [1016 runs]:** The now retired Jayawardene's performances in T20 World Cups have been

instrumental in former champions Sri Lanka's success in the tournament. He was a consistent scorer across the five editions he played. **Chris Gayle [965 runs]:** One of the most prolific and entertaining hitters in cricket history, Gayle is widely regarded as one of the most destructive batters, particularly in T20s. No longer competing for the West Indies, his performances in T20 World Cups have been nothing short of spectacular, making him a fan favourite and an important player for the West Indies when they won their maiden title in 2012. **Rohit Sharma [963 runs]:** The current India skipper has been a key player for his team in the T20 World Cups, especially after taking on the opening position. His ability to score big runs and provide stability at the top of the order has been crucial for India's success in the tournament. He has played all editions,



scoring 963 runs, including 91 fours at a strike rate on 127.88. **Tillakaratne Dilshan [897 runs]:** The leading run-scorer in the 2009 edition with 317 runs from seven matches, the

retired Dilshan, with his aggressive batting style and ability to provide quick starts at the top of the order, was a vital cog in the Sri Lankan team's lineup across six

editions. **HIGHEST STRIKE RATES** **Jos Buttler [144.48]:** Regarded as one of the most dynamic and destructive batters, Buttler's greatest

strength lies in his ability to score rapidly and that is why he has the best strike rate in the T20 World Cup history that fetched him 799 runs in 27 matches.

AB de Villiers [143.40]: The now retired South African has had an outstanding strike rate in T20 World Cups. His ability to score quickly and decisively made him one of the most

feared batters. De Villiers collected 717 runs in 29 innings with the help of 51 fours and 30 sixes. **Chris Gayle [142.75]:** Gayle's unparalleled level of fearlessness and confidence helped him to an amazing 142.75 strike rate in the T20 World Cups. The Jamaican always backed himself to take on any bowler. Gayle is the only player to have scored two centuries in the event, both of which were match-winning efforts. **Mahela Jayawardene [134.74]:** Jayawardene had an impressive average of 39.07 and a strike rate of 134.74, a fine reflection of his ability to score quickly while maintaining consistency. **David Warner [133.22]:** Warner's aggressive approach will once again be crucial for Australia. His ability to score runs quickly and efficiently has made him one of the most exciting and effective batters in T20 World Cups.

Indian women's hockey team gets rousing welcome in London

PTI ■ LONDON

The High Commission of India here gave a rousing welcome to the country's women's national hockey team as dignitaries sang paens to the players for their achievements in the sport after overcoming obstacles on the road to success. The women's team, along with the senior India men's squad, is in the United Kingdom for the FIH Pro League fixtures starting this weekend. The Indian men's and women's sides are scheduled to play their counterparts from Germany here on Saturday. "Each one of them represents every part of India and every region and community of India. Their stories are the most wonderful stories of what is possible in India," said Indian High Commissioner to the UK Vikram Doraiswami, in his address at the reception. The reception was held at the India House on Wednesday evening. "Each one of these girls is a story of sacrifice and struggle by their parents, and also a story of triumph and of spirit. "These young ladies inspire every one of us today because what they have



achieved tells us that there is no ceiling to human ambition, there is no ceiling in a country like India - where anything and everything can be possible," Doraiswami added.

The team, led by captain Salima Tete and coach Harendra Singh, were greeted by cheering supporters as community leaders and sports fans gathered at a special reception in their

honour. Their first fixture will take place when they play Germany in London on Saturday and members of the Indian diaspora were encouraged to turn out

in large numbers to support the team. The Indian teams are coming to the UK after playing some difficult Pro League matches in Belgium against sides such as Argentina, Ireland and the hosts. The Indian envoy, himself a hockey player, reflected upon how playing England on their home soil will bring back some memories for the women's team after narrowly losing to them in the last Olympics' playoff. "We really look forward to being able to come and support you and to tell everybody what great stuff is happening in Indian hockey and what great stuff Indian women are doing in changing India. "Every goal that you score, every game that you play and every day that you train and get better, India becomes a better country. And for that thank you very, very much," he said. The Australian High Commissioner to the UK, Stephen Smith, was among the special guests at the event, and he said India "taught" Australia how to improve their hockey and become a heavyweight in the sport. "The reason that Australia has become so good at hockey is because the Indians taught us everything," said Smith in his address.

FC Goa, midfielder Brandon Fernandes set to part ways

PTI ■ MARGAO

Indian Super League side FC Goa on Thursday said midfielder Brandon Fernandes will leave the club after his contract ends this summer. The 29-year-old Fernandes, who joined FC Goa in 2017, netted 17 goals in 130 outings for the club. He helped the Gauris win the Indian Super Cup in 2019, the ISL League Shield in 2019-20 and the Durand Cup in 2021. Fernandes also holds the record for most assists in the club's history (31). Having begun his youth career in 2002, Fernandes played for Goa United and Salgaocar FC and made his senior debut with ASD Cape Town in 2013. Fernandes made his senior debut in India in 2015 with Sporting Goa FC, which was followed by his debut in ISL for Mumbai City FC in 2015-16. He also represented Mohun Bagan (in 2016 on loan) and Churchill Brothers (2017) before joining FC Goa.



FC Goa CEO Ravi Puskar said in a statement released on the club's website, "He became ingrained into the fabric of the club and was one of the pillars upon which sporting success was built in the seasons he was with us." Puskar said the club will be open to have Fernandes back in their fold in any capacity. "While he leaves us today, Brandon will always be welcomed back to FC Goa in whatever capacity he may choose with open arms." Fernandes, who has also played 25 matches for India since 2019, helped the national side win the SAFF Championship in 2021. He is expected to join Mumbai City FC for the next season.