

High voters turnout in tribal seats of C'garh

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Raigarh and Surguja Lok Sabha constituencies, both scheduled tribe reserved seats, witnessed higher voter turnout compared to the other five constituencies of Chhattisgarh in the third and final phase of general elections on Tuesday.

Chhattisgarh state recorded an interim 67 percent poll turnout while final figure can shoot up to 73 percent. As per the election commission data, Raigarh parliamentary constituency recorded an interim 75.84 percent voter turnout while Surguja LS seat witnessed an interim 74.17 percent voter turnout. Both Raigarh and Surguja LS constituencies comprise eight assembly segments each. The interim 75.84 percent voter turnout in Raigarh LS seat includes 70.79 percent voting in



On Tuesday, voters reached a polling booth in Surguja region in Chhattisgarh dancing on the tunes of tribal songs and to the beat of traditional musical drums called Mandar.

Saranggarh, 72.55 percent in Jashpur, 73.43 percent in Raigarh, 75.65 percent in Patthalgaon, 76.14 percent in Kunkuri, 79.97 percent in Kharsia, 80.89 percent in Lailunga and 82.92 percent in Dharamjaigarh assembly segments respectively. Similarly, the interim

poll turnout of 74.17 percent in Surguja Lok Sabha seat includes 70.46 percent in Ambikapur, 71.93 percent in Sitapur, 72.96 percent in Ramanujganj, 73.98 percent in Bhatgaon, 74.66 percent in Premnagar, 75.62 percent in Lundra, 76.37 in Samri

and 77.73 percent in Pratappur assembly segments. The Bharatiya Janata Party has pitted Radheshyam Rathiya and Chintamani Maharaj against the Congress candidates Menka Devi Singh as well as Shashi

Singh from Raigarh and Surguja Lok Sabha constituencies respectively. The overall voting percentage in Raigarh and Surguja LS seats was 77.38 and 77.30 percent respectively in 2019 Lok general elections in Chhattisgarh.



Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai exercising franchise at native village Bagia in Jashpur

Elderly and disabled brave heat to exercise franchise

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

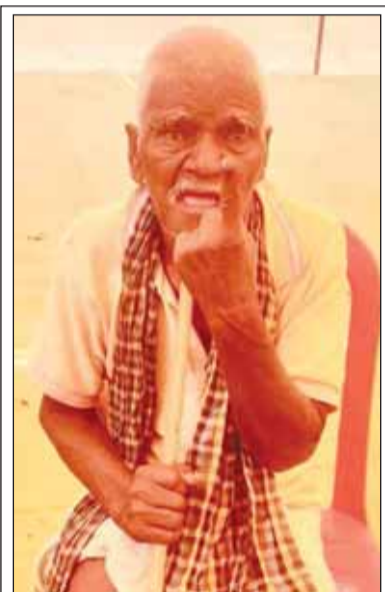
Despite having home voting facility, many elderly and disabled voters braced the heat and voted at polling stations on Tuesday in the third and final phase of the Lok Sabha elections in Chhattisgarh.

Transportation called 'Matdata Rath' had been arranged to ferry the elderly and disabled people to polling stations. Voter buddies were deployed at polling centers to assist them.

Utilizing the arrangements, 96-year-old Ayisha B, 95-year-old Ramji Lal Agrawal and another 108-year-old woman graced the polling stations in Raipur.

In Jashpur, members of the special backward tribe Pahadi Korwa - 100-year-old Tejan Ram Pahadiya and 90-year-old Maryam - voted.

There were a total of 61,715 voters over the age of 85 and 2,174 over the age of 100 in the third phase. About 2,725 of them including 907 disabled voted through postal ballots.



100-year-old tribal voter Tejan Ram Pahadiya shows his inked finger in Jashpur.

Tumbling turnout in Raipur again

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

As per provisional figures, the Raipur constituency recorded the second lowest voter turnout of 61.25 percent on Tuesday in the third and final phase of the Lok Sabha elections in Chhattisgarh.

The familiar scene of lack of serpentine queues was seen, leaving most polling staff idle.

The Kosa production hub in Bilaspur recorded the lowest turnout of 60.05 percent.

Assembly-wise, Raipur City West constituency saw the lowest turnout of 50.08 percent. Raipur Rural and Raipur City North recorded the second and third lowest turnouts of 52.83 and 53.44 percent respectively.

These numbers aren't much different than the 2023 Assembly election turnout.



Then, Raipur City North had the lowest turnout of 55.59 percent, Raipur City Rural 58.55 percent and Raipur City South 60.20 percent.

Last time approximate 7 lakh voters could not turn up to cast their votes. This time too several booths in constituency were deserted look.

The figures are expected to go up when the final tally is released.

Radhika joins BJP after controversy in C'garh



STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

As predicted by Chhattisgarh PCC chief Deepak Baij, Congress leader from Rajasthan and its spokesperson Radhika Kheda on Tuesday joined the BJP after quitting Congress amid the general elections.

Radhika Khera, who was an All India Congress

Committee (AICC) spokesperson, resigned from the Congress on Sunday after alleging misbehaviour by Chhattisgarh unit leaders.

Baij had already said in a statement on Monday that Radhika Khera had scripted a well planned plot to join the BJP.

Radhika Khera said in a statement: "I would not have been able to reach the Ram temple in Ayodhya but for the

Baij had already said in a statement on Monday that Radhika Khera had scripted a well planned plot to join the BJP.

protection of the Modi government. Today's Congress is not Mahatma Gandhi's Congress. It is anti-Ram, anti-Hindu," she said.

C'garh man dies in polling queue



STAFF REPORTER ■
JASHPUR

An elderly man on Tuesday collapsed and died while standing in a queue to vote in Jashpur district in the Raigarh Lok Sabha constituency.

Jartiyus Toppo (71) was at polling booth no 303 in Jamtoli village when he died, Jashpur Superintendent of Police Shashi Mohan Singh said.

The man had reached the polling booth with his

Jartiyus Toppo (71) was at polling booth no 303 in Jamtoli village when he died, Jashpur Superintendent of Police Shashi Mohan Singh said.

son. He was later shifted to a hospital in an ambulance where the doctors declared him dead.

Prima facie, cardiac arrest seems to be the cause of his death, the official added.

BJP misused govt machinery in elections: Vikas Upadhyay



STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

The Congress candidate from Chhattisgarh's Raipur Lok Sabha constituency, Vikas Upadhyay, on Tuesday alleged that the ruling BJP misused machinery

during elections and violated the model code of conduct.

In a statement to the media, Upadhyay said the government machinery acted like a puppet of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Upadhyay also sat on a protest in front of the Raipur Collectorate. He said the BJP

forced NGOs and social organizations to distribute lemon drinks and cold beverages to garner votes.

All that was happening at the vicinity of polling booths and under the nose of administration but nothing was done to stop the same, he said.



Thirteen injured in bee attack on polling booths



STAFF REPORTER ■
JASHPUR/BALRAM-PUR

As many as 13 people were injured when swarms of bees attacked them in two polling booths in Raigarh and Surguja parliamentary constituencies in Chhattisgarh. Eight people were stung at a polling booth

in the Government High School in Aara village in Jashpur district in the Raigarh Lok Sabha constituency.

Another five persons sustained injuries in a similar incident at the Jawaharnagar polling booth in Balrampur district in the Surguja constituency, officials said.

Eight people were stung at a polling booth in the Government High School in Aara village in Jashpur district in the Raigarh Lok Sabha constituency.

In Jashpur, the injured were admitted to the district hospital. The injured in Balrampur were treated at a health centre.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

The die is cast

The pivotal third phase of the elections concluded with a low turnout, featuring prominent contenders

Yesterday, Prime Minister Modi exercised his voting right. He was vocal about India's exemplary democratic process on the global stage. Indeed, the complexity of Indian elections, given the vastness of the nation and its electorate, makes their execution a challenging feat. As the 2024 Lok Sabha election reaches midway, India's political arena brims with fervour, anticipation, and meticulous scrutiny. The third phase of voting holds particular significance, especially for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), with voting taking place in Gujarat, the home turf of Prime Minister Modi, and Amit Shah, the Home Minister. The presence of both leaders casting their votes amplifies the importance of this phase, shaping the election's narrative thus far. The third phase encompassed 11 States and Union territories, witnessing 93 constituencies participating in the electoral process. Notably, the BJP secured victory in the Surat constituency in Gujarat uncontested. With voting in 283 Lok Sabha seats (52 per cent of total Lok Sabha seats) complete, the election is less than a month away from its logical conclusion. After four more phases, the results would be out on June 4. What set the third phase apart was the presence of several constituencies where notable figures were contesting. This phase hosted several prominent candidates, including Amit Shah (BJP) from Gandhinagar, Gujarat; Digvijaya Singh (Congress) from Rajgarh, Madhya Pradesh; Shivraj Singh Chouhan (BJP) from Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh; Dimple Yadav (Samajwadi Party) from Mainpuri, Uttar Pradesh; Supriya Sule (NCP - Sharad Pawar) from Baramati, Maharashtra; Jyotiraditya Scindia (BJP) from Guna, Madhya Pradesh; Pralhad Joshi (BJP) from Dharwad, Karnataka; and KS Eshwarappa (BJP) from Shimoga, Karnataka, among others.

The Election Commission reported a turnout of 66.14 per cent and 66.71 per cent for the first and second phases, respectively. The third phase was no different in terms of voter turnout. With the completion of the third phase, the fate of 283 Lok Sabha seats has been sealed, marking the election's midpoint with 52% of seats voted upon. The persistently low turnout across all phases raises concerns for both democracy and political parties, each grappling with the challenge of ensuring voter participation. For the BJP, the third phase holds immense significance. As a party entrenched in power since 2014, it faces the daunting task of not only maintaining its stronghold but also expanding its influence across diverse regions of the nation. As the Lok Sabha election unfolds, discernible trends and dynamics offer insights into the nation's pulse. Despite facing formidable challenges, the BJP leverages its organisational strength, robust campaign machinery, and Modi's charismatic leadership to maintain its competitive edge. However, navigating through economic concerns, social tensions, and regional disparities presents formidable obstacles. The outcome of this phase serves as a litmus test for the BJP's policies and leadership shaping the trajectory of Indian politics.

PICTALK



Women show their ink-marked finger after casting votes for the 3rd phase of Lok Sabha elections, in Bareilly. PTI

Evolution of monetary policymaking in India

With the changing nature of inflation and macroeconomic turbulence, remaining committed to inflation-targeting seems daunting

The history of monetary policymaking in India dates back to the pre-independence era, but it gained significant momentum and structure post-independence. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) was established in 1935, as a private shareholders' bank and was nationalized in 1949, giving the Government greater control over monetary policy and credit system. With the establishment of the Planning Commission in 1951, emphasis was laid on the direct and active role of Central banking. A breakthrough year was 1969 when 14 private sector banks were nationalized. It led to transforming monetary policy into 'credit planning' and taking up a 'command approach' (Khatkhate, 1990). Soon the economy suffered due to the two oil price shocks (1973-75 and 1979-81) leading to critical economic crises, which led to large-scale monetary expansion in the form of Government debt to support fiscal policy. It badly hit the inflation situation when it reached 23% in 1974-75. The condition worsened and



became dismal when India had to borrow largely from the IMF and also faced a critical BOP situation. Hence, the revision of the monetary policy framework was the way ahead. This was done by appointment of a committee (which came to be known as the Chakravarty Committee (1985) chaired by Sukhmoy Chakravarty) to review the functioning of the monetary system by the then Governor of RBI, Dr Manmohan Singh. The RBI Governor, C Rangarajan, introduced the Multiple Indicator Approach (MIA) in 1998, incorporating various macroeconomic factors like interest rates, inflation, exchange rates, output growth, employment, foreign trade, capital flows,

banking stability, among others, into the monetary policy framework, moving away from the unreliable M3 target due to economic liberalisation's unpredictability. This provided monetary authorities the flexibility to cater to a broad forum of economic disruptions. The economy was coordinating well with the MIA till the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 dawned, and a high-order expansionary fiscal and monetary policy was floated to capture the receding economic growth. This jeopardised inflation management by the RBI with the inflation gliding into double digits in 2009-10. The RBI became hawkish and between March 2010 and October 2011, the repo rate was increased by 325 basis points. It started preparing for inflation as the primary goal of monetary policy. Finally, in May 2016, the RBI formally adopted inflation-targeting (IT), the target being a 4 per cent inflation rate, with a relaxation of 2 per cent on both sides, to handle unforeseen macroeconomic disruptions. Taming inflation helps

counter investor uncertainty and business sentiments, anchors inflationary expectations, unfavourable exchange rates and balance of payments, besides supporting receding purchasing power. The IT did not get a fair chance to prove itself due to economic disturbances like Demonetisation and the Pandemic, and the current geo-political unrest has led to supply-side inflationary pressures that are difficult to control with IT, which is more efficient against demand-side inflation. With the changing nature of inflation from demand to the supply side, macroeconomic turbulence, and burgeoning uncertainties, remaining committed to IT seems daunting. The RBI needs to frame a comprehensive policy to make determined efforts to address and supplement IT with prudent actions to counter supply-side disruptions especially, affecting food prices. (The author is assistant professor at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, University of Delhi; views are personal)



KAJLEEN KAUR

Global South's cultural diplomacy

Cannes transcends its role as a mere film festival; it serves as a beacon of cultural exchange, artistic exploration, and industry innovation



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

As we inch closer to the second week of May, excitement for the forthcoming 77th edition of the Cannes Film Festival is reaching a crescendo. The Cannes Film Festival, since its inception, has been hailed as the platform celebrating the joy and creativity of cinema, the high point of confluence of cultures, and talents, and an assembly of masters of storytelling. In recent years, its stage has increasingly spotlighted the cinematic voices of the Global South, a trend underscored by the burgeoning presence of films from Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia. Building on last year's diverse selection from Japan, China, and South Korea, Cannes in its 77th edition, from 14th to 25th May 2024, reaffirms its commitment to amplifying varied narratives and perspectives. This year's edition promises to continue this trajectory, featuring standout entries like "All We Imagine As Light" by Indian filmmaker Payal Kapadia, "Boku No Ohisama (My Sunshine)" by the acclaimed Japanese filmmaker Hiroshi Okuyama, "Viet And Nam" by Vietnamese filmmaker Truong Minh Quy, and "The Village Next to Paradise" by Somalian filmmaker Mo Harawe. These selections highlight the new creative talent spots for cinema.

With the evolving world, there is a deeper significance highlighted by the recognition of cinema as a potent tool of soft power by countries in the Global South. Across the continents of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, nations have increasingly acknowledged the power of storytelling through cinema as a means to amplify their cultural influence and enhance their global standing. Over the past two years Cannes Film Festival has seen a dynamic shift in programming, from a European narrative to a more perceptive Southern inclusion and interconnection. In the borderless world that we live in today, the prominence of the Global South as a group has risen despite being dominated by multipolarity. Enhanced communication and the growing effects of globalisation have blurred geographical



boundaries, ushering in a new era where technology plays a pivotal role in shaping interactions. This transition has reverberated across various realms, including the cinematic sphere, where soft power finds expression on prestigious platforms. Cannes truly give the Global South a platform for creativity on the silver screen. Nomination and participation in prestigious festivals like Cannes are not merely accolades but recognition of the importance of soft power in the creative ecosystem. By showcasing their cinematic prowess and an amalgamation of their creative skills on a global stage, countries in the Global South seek to assert their cultural identity, foster cross-cultural dialogue, and bolster diplomatic ties. In an era where cultural diplomacy holds increasing sway, the Cannes Film Festival serves as a creative platform for nations to assert their soft power through the medium of cinema. Through their cinematic endeavours, these filmmakers become cultural ambassadors, bridging divides and fostering mutual understanding between nations. At the helm of the 77th Cannes Film Festival jury stands Greta Gerwig, both an accomplished actor and a filmmaker. Gerwig's appointment signals a broader effort towards gen-



BY SHOWCASING THEIR CINEMATIC PROWESS AND AN AMALGAMATION OF THEIR CREATIVE SKILLS ON A GLOBAL STAGE, COUNTRIES IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH SEEK TO ASSERT THEIR CULTURAL IDENTITY, FOSTER CROSS-CULTURAL DIALOGUE, AND BOLSTER DIPLOMATIC TIES

der representation at Cannes, a realm historically dominated by male voices. Symbolising a step towards inclusivity and recognition of the invaluable contributions of women in shaping cinematic discourse. As the jury list for this year awaits announcement, anticipation brews for a lineup that mirrors the festival's commitment to diversity, echoing last year's eclectic mix of talents from Argentina, Afghanistan, Morocco, Zambia, and beyond. Amidst the glitz and glamour, the Marché du Film emerges as a vital nexus for industry professionals, offering a platform for networking, deal-making, and creative exchange. With its finger firmly on the pulse of evolving industry dynamics, the Marché du Film embraces innovation and adaptation. Recognising the need to cater to the ever-changing landscape of filmmaking, it champions emerging trends, technologies, and voices, fostering a conducive environment for the flourishing growth of the global film industry. As over 14,000 industry professionals converge in Cannes annually to present and explore nearly 4,000 films and projects, the Marché du Film serves as a catalyst, urging professionals to elevate their business acumen and seize new opportunities.

Indeed, Cannes itself is a reflection of society's evolution, a microcosm of shifting cultural paradigms and technological advancements. Embracing the ethos of change, the Festival de Cannes introduces innovative elements to its programming, staying at the vanguard of storytelling in the digital age. One of the nominations for this year's Immersive Competition includes "Maya: The Birth of a Superhero", an XR experience created by Poulomi Basu, an Indian artist and CJ Clarke. The announcement of eight projects as part of the Immersive Competition heralds a bold foray into uncharted territory, encompassing location-based virtual reality, mixed reality experiences, projection mapping, and holographic works. Amid these shifts, India shines bright with the participation of Payal Kapadia, Sandhya Suri's "Santosh", FTII's "Sunflowers Were the First Ones to Know" and the screening of Shyam Benegal's "Manthan". As the global cinematic landscape continues to evolve, Cannes remains steadfast in its mission to celebrate the myriad voices that enrich the tapestry of world cinema. (The writer is former additional director general, DFF and Festival Director, IFFI; Views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

JP AGGARWAL'S COMMITMENT

Madam — Apropos the news article, "I have not lost touch with Chandni Chowk people: Aggarwal," published on May 6, this is my response. In a political landscape rife with rhetoric and rivalry, Jai Prakash Aggarwal emerges as a steadfast figure, deeply rooted in Chandni Chowk's tapestry. Despite electoral setbacks, his commitment to constituents remains resolute. Aggarwal's recent critique of Prime Minister Modi's language underscores a concern for decorum in public discourse, a sentiment often lost in the cacophony of contemporary politics. His indictment of the BJP's alleged misuse of investigative agencies reflects a broader apprehension about democratic norms and the rule of law. Beyond partisan skirmishes, Aggarwal's focus on local issues—traders' welfare, infrastructure, and healthcare—reveals a genuine concern for Chandni Chowk's residents. His vision for the area, encompassing tourism, urban renewal, and social welfare, speaks to a holistic approach to governance. Amidst shifting political alliances, Aggarwal's unwavering commitment to his constituency stands out as a beacon of stability. As he embarks on his eighth electoral campaign, his pledge to serve remains unyielding, a testament to the enduring spirit of public service. Zoia Chatterjee | Chandigarh

VOTERS' DISILLUSIONMENT

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Narendra Modi introduces India to its Ashtalakshmis," published on May 4, this is my response. The narrative of electoral promises, unfulfilled commitments, and regional disparities echoes through the decades of Indian politics. From the inception of the democratic process to contemporary times, the saga persists. The cyclical pattern of pledges made during elections, often forgotten once power is secured, perpetuates a sense of disillusionment among the populace. Despite significant milestones like the Green

Make mistakes to learn something new



Apropos the news article, "Oops, I Dropped The Lemon Tart," published on April 28, this is my response. Gyaneshwar Dayal's piece in The Pioneer paints a vivid canvas of Chef Massimo Bottura's recent culinary odyssey in New Delhi. Bottura, not merely a chef but a maestro of gastronomy and a beacon of philanthropy, brought the essence of Osteria Francescana to India's capital once more. His partnership with The

Leela Palace New Delhi illuminated the culinary scene, offering an unforgettable experience steeped in innovation and sustainability. The narrative delves into Bottura's culinary philosophy, highlighting his penchant for turning mistakes into masterpieces, epitomised by the iconic "Oops! I Dropped the Lemon Tart." His interactive session at The Leela, where he shared the genesis of this dish, revealed profound insights into creativity and embracing imperfection. Through his culinary prowess and philanthropic endeavours, Bottura transcends the role of a chef, becoming a global inspiration. His anticipation for a simple breakfast with underprivileged children reflects his humility and dedication to making a difference beyond the kitchen. In essence, Bottura's visit not only tantalised taste buds but also stirred hearts, leaving an indelible mark on India's culinary landscape. Neha Gupta | Delhi

Revolution, persistent challenges like hunger and malnutrition endure, revealing systemic failures in addressing agricultural productivity. The poignant juxtaposition of floods ravaging the North while droughts parch the South underscores the urgent need for holistic solutions, like river interlinking. However, bureaucratic inertia and political apathy have impeded meaningful progress. Amidst this backdrop, the Northeast emerges as a beacon of transformation, propelled by visionary leadership and concerted efforts to integrate the region into the national fabric. The narrative of Modi's North East Story encapsulates this metamorphosis, beckoning readers to witness the evolution firsthand and embrace the region's vibrant culture and potential. Amaira Singhania | Bengaluru

WORK FROM HOME CHALLENGES

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Mastering self-leadership during work from home," published on May 6, this is my response. The transition to remote

work has been a mixed bag, with some relishing newfound flexibility while others struggle to delineate between work and home life. Blurred boundaries breed conflicts, taxing individuals' energy and focus. Boundary theory sheds light on these dynamics, emphasising the impact of role transitions on work-home conflicts. Employers must support employees, but self-leadership is equally vital. As remote work becomes ubiquitous, individuals must proactively manage their roles. Yet, challenges persist, from lacking managerial support to battling distractions. Self-leadership emerges as a beacon amid these complexities. Its principles empower individuals to adapt, innovate, and thrive in remote environments. As remote work becomes the norm, mastering self-leadership will be indispensable for professional success and personal well-being alike. Reyansh Joshi | Mumbai

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FIRST COLUMN

OVERCOMING BONDAGE OF THINKING

God's grace frees us from anguish, guides us on the right path



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

This is a cruel fact. We are hopelessly tied down by our thinking, especially negative. What do you see on roads? Older folks are engrossed in thoughts. What happened? They realized that they were not so great after all. But the obstinate ego would not allow them to seek help where it is available. If a solution to a problem is to be found, it must be; this is their thinking. Sure, but how long would you meditate on it? There should be a time limit. No, that is why obsession is a very common problem.

Other ages are no better. The younger ones are guilty of lusty thoughts. With the advent of cell phones and the internet, age is no longer a bar. What a shame when one is supposed to be in the 'brahmacharya' (celibacy) stage. As one gets older, thoughts of earning the maximum amount of money capture the imagination. There is nothing wrong with it except our expectations should be based on reality. Otherwise, there will be a lot of pain. What is common to all ages is fear of different kinds. This is a real problem, which causes all kinds of mental diseases. This particular problem requires help at the highest level, that is from God, but will we turn to Him? Also common to all ages are hate, anger, enmity, etc. There is hardly any chance of relief when we think that we are the centre of the universe, even though there are eight billion of us. If that were true, there would be eight billion centres of the universe. See, how silly such thinking is. This is what is the basis of our thought process. The frog mentality of thinking one's limited knowledge is everything leads many to dismiss spiritual practices as simplistic, when in fact they are meant to be easily accessible to all.



Let us get to the bottom of this all-pervasive problem. What is this mind? It is a faculty given to us for thinking, willing and feeling. It is subtle, i.e. far more strong than the gross body. The mind affects the body, as we all have experienced. When we are disturbed, our bodies get affected; their working is disturbed. Why has God given us a faculty, which can hurt us so much? He had to do to give us free will, which can bring bliss, as indicated by Lord Krishna, 'A person, having consciousness, unattached to external sense objects, enjoys that happiness within, which is extraordinary. He who, with consciousness united to Brahman, finds eternal joy. God's kindness lies in our return to Him, part of the Cosmic Design, where independence is limited, and control rests with God. So we must turn to God to control our uncontrolled and negative thinking. Lord Krishna States, "Undoubtedly the mind is very difficult to control due to its fickle nature, but it can be brought under control by practice and by detachment from inappropriate sense objects." (6.35) This practice has to be with help from God. Otherwise, there will be partial success only. As we age, our focus shifts towards God, as our physical pleasures diminish, highlighting the purpose of the "Ashram" system for spiritual growth in later years. Therefore, God has made provisions for unlimited mental enjoyment. But we have to seek shelter from God for that. We should not be turning to drinks, etc. for compensation to get over our woes, because they send us deeper into more suffering. Fear is a defence mechanism but only in the limited sense. It should alert us to take curative action. But if it overtakes our thinking, fear becomes a serious problem, as all mental diseases point to. The conclusion is: that we must turn to God with determination sooner than later. Then God will not only free us from the bondage of painful thinking but will also help us in all matters with His guidance and help. This is the way the System has been designed.

(The writer is a spiritual guide; views are personal)

Elected leaders need to rethink

It is time that elected representatives live up to the expectations of their electors as responsible, honest and devoted community leaders



JS RAJPUT



These are election times and each one of us is a part of the process. These are also times of model code of conduct in the shape of guidelines for political parties and candidates. There are restrictions imposed by the election commission on the maximum expenditure a candidate could incur. Everyone knows what happens to it! In general, people are no more worried about spiralling high expenses that the spread of elections imposes on the candidate and State exchequer.

The spread of elections leads to avoidable wastage of manpower and other resources required to conduct and complete the process. The worst sufferers are the schoolchildren, as teachers are the most easily available manpower for elections at every stage! Once elected, no one is willing to pave the way for the generation next! Election times also reveal the behavioural decline amongst those who had tasted the fruits of power earlier but were dethroned by the people. Their frustrations even bring forth utterances that may be blatantly unsocial, personal and not acceptable in a civil society. The elders have created conditions that demand innovative action by the young 'millennials' who must realize how their elders have decimated the basic principles of democracy by taking recourse to caste combinations, igniting regional and linguistic sentiments, and creating communal antagonism at the cost of deteriorating social cohesion! Independent India began its new journey at around 18% of literacy, today its boosts to nearly 80% of it despite the population increase of over 100 crores. We are a learning society. Our international standing is at its best after independence. One wonders why the language used by politicians against each other should become so coarse and uncivil. It could put to shame any decent educated person. Respect for the learned, committed and experienced is one of the most liked of the treasures of our heritage which unfortunately stands torn to tatters. India shall never be in a position to ignore the



ARTICULATING THE NORMAL EXPECTATIONS FROM THE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVE, APJ ABDUL KALAM WAS GIVING VOICE TO EVERY SANE INDIAN: "IT HAS BECOME CRUCIAL FOR US TO BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT WE CAN RIGHTLY EXPECT FROM OUR LEADERS, FROM PANCHAYAT MEMBERS TO MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT"

presence of great luminaries of contemporary times like Gandhi, Patel, Subhash Bose, Nehru, Rajendra Prasad and others. How could anyone who wishes to understand India do so without getting familiar with Swami Vivekananda, Ramkrishna Paramhans, Tagore or Sri Aurobindo? Hope lies only in those who were in schools a couple of years ago, and were mesmerized by a saint-scientist; the indomitable APJ Abdul Kalam. I had personally witnessed on numerous occasions how children of India fell in love with him. It was not because of his position or the Pokhran II, it was because of the love his persona emanated for every child, every Indian! India stands blessed with numerous such luminaries who could make a change in the area around their place. One wishes political aspirants learn from APJ, and other luminaries how to deal with people! APJ Abdul Kalam was one of the most admired and loved celebrities during the millennial transition to the 21st century. He was a professional leader who led by example, through heart-to-heart connections with one and all. His dedication and devotion to the national cause were of the highest order. He inspired, he motivated and he achieved his target with gusto.

He could win over every Indian irrespective of their socio-economic station in life, his profession or his ideological leanings. APJ endeared himself particularly to the children of India in whom he could see the emerging India, the future India! He ignited the curiosity and creativity of millions of children. He gave them 'wings of fire'. He entered the Rashtarpati Bhavan with two bags and left with the same after five years. India needs people with such

personalities right from the panchayat level to the Parliament with whom every individual could feel connected, who may be acknowledged as 'approachable'. All this, and much more; reverberates in one's mind as various inputs concerning the general elections float before everyone. Each one of us who has voted over a dozen times in general elections would love to talk about the drastic change that has occurred in the quality of leadership on a larger scale, the deterioration in mutual respect and regard amongst those in public life, in power or opposition. We are witness to the usage of a language for the opponents that would have shamed everyone some five decades ago. Today, no one seems to be worried about it. The only encouraging sign is that all this is being noted by the voters, and they are despising it. In the long run, one could say with confidence that it would not work in favour of the truants. Sadly enough, the defects of elections about whom Gandhi had written as early as 1922, have reached every stage of elections, including even those of panchayat Raj bodies.

One must not give up hope. And there is always hope for the better after having reached the bottom. Articulating the normal expectations from the elected representatives, APJ Abdul Kalam was giving voice to every sane Indian: "It has become crucial for us to be clear about what we can rightly expect from our leaders, from panchayat members to local councillors of a municipal corporation to members of parliament." In other words, there has to be ownership. Whether it is the panchayat member, development officer, councillor, MLA MP or minister, they have to at least try to be

the best of their ability to do what they are elected to do. We need a Parliament with a vision, one that has the larger picture in mind and can rise above petty party politics.

How would such a parliament perform? What are how it can play a far more constructive role than it has in the last Lok Sabha? I would also expect that the Hon'ble members of the next Lok Sabha shall firmly and sincerely resolve not to present before the nation any spectacles that disturb the functioning of the August House, and present a poor example before the young of India. What was happening till now, was a matter of serious concern for the last couple of decades. It was precisely articulated with great concern by the veteran politician C. Subramaniam: "The indiscipline that marks the proceedings of parliament and legislatures is a matter of great concern. Not only pandemonium is created obstructing the proceedings of the legislatures but also acts of violence among the members inside the legislatures are becoming common and an almost everyday occurrence. Nobody is prepared to observe the rules of the game. Then how can we expect the masses of the people to observe discipline and respect the laws and regulations?"

It is time that future MPs and other elected representatives live up to the expectations of their electors as responsible, honest and devoted community leaders. They have to be a source of inspiration to generations ahead. Let them resolve not to let even a minute of parliament's time be wasted! It would be a great gift to the nation!

(The author works in education, social cohesion and religious amity, views are personal)

Benevolent hearts: Dynamics of begging and household donations

Despite legal prohibitions in many States, begging persists with beggars being one of the highest recipients of household donations

Begging is a ubiquitous phenomenon in India and is hidden in plain sight. Perceptions of 'persons engaged in Beggary' may vary but it is also evident that many households donate to them. 'Persons engaged in Beggary' are largely missing from the discussions on public policy in the country. A recent study by the Centre of Social Impact and Philanthropy (CSIP) at Ashoka University showed that 'persons engaged in Beggary' are one of the highest recipients of household donations, ranking only after 'religious organisations'. This leads us to question, what are the motivations that lead households in such a large proportion to donate to 'persons engaged in Beggary'. Who are the biggest donation-makers to



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'beggars' with respect to gender, geography and age? And in what 'form' donations are received by the 'persons engaged in Beggary'? Even though begging is not a crime it is legally prohibited in more than twenty States and Union Territories and can invite punishment for one year to 10 years and even beyond under special circumstances. The pros and cons of the existing laws are another

debate. The study by CSIP showed a 14% increase in total 'cash' donations by Indian households from INR 23.7 thousand crores in 2020-21 to INR 27 thousand crores in 2021-22 of which 'persons engaged in Beggary' are one of the preferred recipients of household giving among 'religious organisations', 'non-religious organisations', 'family and friends', 'household staff', and 'supporting a cause or signing a petition'. They are the second highest recipient of household donations both in terms of overall market size and the proportion of households who made donations to them among other recipient groups in the study. The report further notes that the market size and the average cash payments to

the 'persons engaged in Beggary' have increased from 2020-21 to 2021-22. While 'persons engaged in Beggary' are one of the preferred recipients, households do not trust them with their money but with materials. Despite a high proportion of households who donated to 'persons engaged in Beggary' they received the lowest value of 'cash' donations from households (under INR 100). While 'persons engaged in Beggary' were least preferred for 'cash' donations as compared to other recipient groups in the study, a clear preference to donate 'in-kind' was noted for this recipient group. More than half of those donating to 'persons engaged in Beggary' donated 'in-kind' which is starkly different from 'in-kind'

donations received by other recipient groups. Households are mostly driven by their intrinsic motivations when giving to the 'persons engaged in Beggary'. 'Religious beliefs' are one of the top motivators. It guided 55% of households that gave to the 'persons engaged in Beggary'. Religious beliefs can be understood as 'helping others is a way to serve God', and 'good karma/ Almighty rewards good deeds'. Furthermore, 'family traditions' play an important role in motivating households to give to the 'persons engaged in Beggary'. They are also affected by the visible hardship due to poverty and are driven to donate in order to support someone in financial distress. Rendering 'seva' or service

also emerged as a significant motivation for giving to 'persons engaged in Beggary'. Households also find it easier to give in smaller amounts in 'cash', which leads many households to offer some money to 'persons engaged in Beggary'. About 60% proportion of households responded to have donated to them. The study also found that donations made to 'persons engaged in Beggary' were in the range of smaller amounts 'under INR 100'. It was intriguing to find that the givers who are more empathetic to the 'persons engaged in Beggary' are the people who have a 'vulnerable' position in society and are mainly dependent on others for social and economic security. Older women and households from

rural areas and from lower socio-economic categories are primary givers to 'persons engaged in Beggary'. More households from rural India donate to 'persons engaged in Beggary' than households from large towns. In fact, the proportion of households making offerings to 'persons engaged in Beggary' in rural India was higher than the national average of the proportion of households who gave to 'persons engaged in Beggary'. Similarly, 'giving' by lower socioeconomic category (SEC D/E) to 'persons engaged in Beggary' was higher than the national average. While about 53% of households from higher and middle socio-economic categories (SEC A, SEC B and SEC C) contributed, more

than 65% of households contributed towards 'persons engaged in Beggary' from the lower socioeconomic groups (SEC D/E). In terms of gender and age, older women between the ages of 46 to 60 years are the biggest and primary donation-makers to the 'persons engaged in Beggary'. Beggary in many forms has been in existence for ages. Due to the hardships faced, persons engaged in Beggary usually suffer from negativity, hopelessness, low self-esteem and stigma. In India, 'people engaged in Beggary' are often seen outside religious places. The writer is Senior Research Manager at the Centre for Social Impact and Philanthropy (CSIP), Ashoka University. Views expressed are personal

Markets settle lower

HDFC Bank, Reliance, ICICI Bank major drags

Equity benchmark indices declined on Tuesday dragged by HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries and ICICI Bank amid concerns over rich valuation of equities.



Services and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the other major gainers. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Shanghai settled with gains while Hong Kong ended lower.

The 30-share BSE Sensex went lower by 383.69 points or 0.52 per cent to settle at 73,511.85. During the day, it tanked 636.28 points or 0.86 per cent to 73,259.26.

Rupee settles on flat note, higher by 1 paisa at 83.51 against US dollar

The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and settled higher by 1 paisa at 83.51 against the US dollar on Tuesday, amid a negative trend in domestic equities and strong dollar demand.



On Monday, the rupee settled 7 paise lower at 83.52 against the US dollar. The Indian rupee traded almost flat on weak domestic markets and positive US

JSW Energy profit rises 29 per cent in March quarter

JSW Energy on Tuesday posted a 29 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit to Rs 351 crore in the March quarter compared to a year ago mainly on the back of higher revenues.

Indian FMCG industry sees 6.5 per cent volume growth in Q4FY24: Report

The Indian FMCG industry experienced a 6.5 per cent growth in volume terms at a national level in the January-March period of 2024, with rural consumption surpassing urban for the first time in five quarters, according to consumer intelligence firm NielsenIQ.



Both food and non-food sectors contributed to the growth in consumption in the first quarter of 2024, but non-food saw almost double the growth as compared to food, NielsenIQ (NIQ) said in its quarterly snapshot for Q1 2024.

According to the snapshot, at a pan India level, both food and non-food sectors contributed to the growth in consumption but non-food saw almost double the growth as compared to food.

Sebi rejects NSE's proposal to extend trading hours

Capital markets regulator Sebi has rejected a proposal by the National Stock Exchange (NSE) to extend the trading hours in the equity derivatives segment citing a lack of feedback from the stock brokers community.



This came after the NSE had urged Sebi to extend trading hours in the equity derivatives segment in a phased manner. This was aimed at potentially curtailing the overnight risk arising from global information flow.

efforts to enable the integration of stocks and commodities trading on a single exchange. With regard to NSE's IPO, Chauhan said that "situations remain as in". Last month, he said that NSE is awaiting approval from Sebi to kickstart the initial public offering process.

SRMIST celebrates World Intellectual Property Day



SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST) marked the World Intellectual Property Day 2024 with a grand event held on May 7, 2024, at the TP Ganesan Auditorium Mini Hall-2.

SRF Q4 profit falls 25 per cent to ₹422 crore

Chemical firm SRF Ltd on Tuesday reported a 25 per cent decline in its net profit to Rs 422 crore for the quarter ended March 2024 on lower income.

The consolidated revenue of the company declined 6 per cent to Rs 3,570 crore in the fourth quarter of the last fiscal from Rs 3,778 crore in the year-ago period. In the 2023-24 fiscal, SRF's revenue decreased 12 per cent to Rs 13,139 crore from Rs 14,870 crore in the preceding year.

Number of ghost shopping malls rise to 64 in 2023 across eight major cities, reveals report



The number of ghost shopping malls — those with vacancy of more than 40 per cent — increased to 64 last year from 57 in 2022 across eight major cities as retailers and consumers are preferring premium properties, according to Knight Frank.

Real estate consultant Knight Frank India on Tuesday released a report titled 'Think India Think Retail 2024' capturing the dynamics of shopping centres and high streets across 29 cities.

Toy exports marginally down at USD 152.34 million in 2023-24: GTRI report

The country's toy exports declined marginally to USD 152.34 million in 2023-24 from USD 153.89 million in the previous financial year, according to a report by economic think tank GTRI.



The report recommended setting up specialized toy manufacturing hubs to reduce costs and increase efficiency; modernising traditional Indian toys while preserving their cultural value to create unique products.

This move could help shift part of the global toy production market to India. Further, it asked to reduce dependency on imports by developing local production capabilities for critical toy-making materials and components, such as glass eyes for dolls, beads, imitation stones, various types of plastics, electric motors, and remote control apparatus.

(world trade is about USD 7 billion); educational toys (world trade is about USD 6 billion); construction toys like LEGO (USD 10 billion); action figures and dolls (USD 10 billion); electronics (USD 15 billion); board games and puzzles (USD 9 billion); and outdoor and sports toys (USD 5 billion).

is minimal, totalling USD 167 million, which represents only 0.3 per cent of the global exports, ranking it 27th, the report said.

