



**OPINION 6**  
CAN AAP SURVIVE ITS  
ULTIMATE RESILIENCE TEST?

**WORLD 8**  
ISRAEL FACES FALLOUT AS ALLIES  
BACK WARRANT REQUESTS

**MONEY 10**  
SENSEX DECLINES BY  
NEARLY 53 POINTS

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TO ARREST SLIDE  
AGAINST RCB  
12 SPORTS

# Power hungry but feeling the poll heat

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

The prevailing heatwave conditions and high humidity levels in the national Capital, giving a feel of temperatures hovering over 50 degrees Celsius, have not only pushed the peak power demand to an all-time high of 7,717 MW on Tuesday afternoon, but have also forced political parties to hold rallies in the evening to avoid the heat.

Most of the candidates have taken to indoor meetings during the morning and afternoon hours. However, the buzz around the elections on May 25 has been negligible during the day. Political parties are worried of low turnout of voters due to extreme heat and summer vacations in the national Capital.



Delhiites use scarves to shield themselves from the hot summer

Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

On Tuesday, Kejriwal held a roadshow in support of Congress candidate Kanhaiya Kumar for North East Delhi in Bhajanpura at 8:00 pm. BJP president JP Nadda also held two roadshows in support of his party candidates - South Delhi's Ramvir Singh Bidhuri and Chandni Chowk's Praveen Khandelwal in between 6:00 pm and 9:30 pm.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh also held roadshows during the same time for BJP candidates - Yogendra Chandolia for reserved North West seat and Harshdeep Malhotra for East Delhi, to avoid the scorching heat.

Road Minister Nitin Gadhkar also addressed three public meetings for BJP candidates which include West Delhi's Kamaljeet Sehrawat, New Delhi's Bansuri Swaraj and North east Delhi's Manoj Tiwari in the evening.

The IMD has also issued a red alert for the next four days. The maximum humidity stood at 62 in the national Capital. According to the seven-day forecast, the maximum temperature will be in the range of 44 to 47 degrees Celsius when Delhi goes to polls on May 25. A spell of intense heatwave, which has gripped the Capital, could impact voter turnout. In the last Lok Sabha elections, the voting percentage was 60.6 per cent. The mercury on May 12, 2019, was at 39 degrees Celsius. In the 2014 polls, the city saw a higher voting percentage of 65.1 per cent on April 10, 2014, when the day temperature was just 33 degrees Celsius.

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Phir Ek Baar Modi Sarkar

Press the lotus button Make BJP win

## BJP notice to sulking Jayant Sinha for not voting, campaigning

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/ RANCHI



Jharkhand BJP has issued a show-cause notice to sitting Hazaribagh Lok Sabha MP Jayant Sinha for not casting his vote in the election. The notice was issued by the party's State general secretary Aaditya Sahu who said the party's image had been maligned as Sinha did not exercise his right to franchise.

## Maliwal shared trauma, distress with L-G

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has for the first time reacted to the alleged assault on AAP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal on Tuesday, sharing that Maliwal called him a day earlier on Monday out of "sheer anguish".

Saxena on Tuesday said he was "deeply distressed" over the alleged assault on Maliwal and said "deafening silence" of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal "speaks volumes on his stance on safety of women". It wasn't a long time ago when Maliwal and Saxena were in the cross hairs for the removal of 223 Delhi Commission for Women (DCW), appointed by the former Chairperson of DCW.



letter has proved that Maliwal is "working for the BJP". Hitting back, the AAP said LG's letter proves "Maliwal is working at the behest of BJP". Responding to LG's statement, the AAP said the BJP is hatching a "new conspiracy" every day in the lead up to the polls.

They are trying to lift their status using Maliwal issue," the party alleged. In a statement on X by Raj Niwas, Saxena said the Delhi Police is investigating the matter and it will be brought to its "logical conclusion". He also called the alleged U-turn by the party on the matter "baffling".

## Aircraft hits flock, 39 flamingos die

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

As many as 39 flamingos died after an incoming aircraft hit a huge flock of birds over the Ghatkopar area, while it was on its final approach for landing at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) in Mumbai on Monday night.

environmentalists involved in the conservation of flamingos in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR). The Maharashtra Forest Department (MFD) has confirmed the death of 39 flamingos. The CSMIA officials have not commented on the incident so far. On its part, the Emirates that was operating the Dubai-Mumbai flight, said there was no injury to crew members or passengers.

## US says can't help Iran in crash probe

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The Iranian Government has requested the US to assist in probing the deadly helicopter crash that killed President Ebrahim Raisi, country's Foreign Minister, and six others but Washington won't assist Tehran largely due to "logistical reasons", according to a senior American diplomat.

## India leads campaign to control penguin tourism

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

As Antarctica evolves from a scientific haven to a sought-after tourist hotspot, intensifying concerns about its ecological fragility all eyes are now on India which is leading discussions at the ongoing ten days 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) in Kerala, on regulating tourism to safeguard the icy continent's pristine wilderness.

The gathering has over 350 participants from nearly 40 nations, deliberating on the climate change threats exacerbated by the increased tourists' footfalls at the continent's fragile ecosystem. This is leaving the continent's wildlife like Penguins at the receiving end.



India will be playing a key role as it is expected to bring a series of actionable recommendations to be incorporated into the broader framework of the Antarctic Treaty System.

While addressing the session at the meet, Dr M Ravichandran, secretary of the Union Ministry of Earth and Sciences and Head of the Indian delegation, said, "Antarctica represents one of the last frontiers of wilderness and scientific discovery. As stewards of this extraordinary region, it is our collective responsibility to ensure that all activities, including research and tourism, are conducted in a manner that preserves its ecological integrity for future generations."

The Antarctic Treaty System recognises the pressing need to address the growing tourism activities in Antarctica and their potential impact on the continent's fragile environment.

level global annual meetings conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Antarctic Treaty, a multilateral agreement of 56 Contracting Parties signed in 1959. An official from the Ministry said during these meetings, member countries of the Antarctic Treaty discuss issues pertaining to the science, policy, governance, management, preservation and protection of Antarctica.

# Nation's global identity established under Modi's leadership: Rajnath Singh

## Defence Minister addresses rally in Bokaro for BJP's Dhanbad candidate

PNS : BOKARO/RANCHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh today said that India's status on the international stage has been substantially uplifted in the 10-year rule of National Democratic Alliance. He said that over the past 10 years, banks in the country have recorded profits amounting to three lakh crore rupees.

Singh was addressing a huge public rally at Sector 2 Durga Puja Ground in Bokaro in the presence of several prominent leaders, including Jharkhand State President Babul Marandi, opposition leader Amar Bauri, MP candidate Dhullu Mahto, Bokaro MLA Biranchi Narayan, Bhanu Pratap Shahi, and Amit Yadav.

In his speech, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh highlighted the central government's achievements, stating



that they are operating with a zero-tolerance policy towards corruption. He mentioned that former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee created Jharkhand as a separate state to ensure its overall development.

Singh said that corruption is rampant here after the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha government came to power. He said that the process of corruption started as soon as the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha government was formed.

Forget about the Chief Minister, even the minister's PS servant is getting wads of notes. Bundles of notes are being found with his associate. This kind of work cannot be done without the encouragement and patronage of

the Chief Minister. Today ED has arrested him, so it is said that the BJP government is trying to harass all its opponents. If any person from the government led by Modi ji is caught in corruption, his place will also be jail.

The Defence Minister said that even after committing corruption, they are still making baseless allegations against our government. "For the first time I heard that the Chief Minister of a state disappeared for 24 hours. Neither the people of Jharkhand know, nor the agency knows. It was being searched where the Chief Minister of Jharkhand was. Today he is in jail and says that the government is mis-using ED and CBI," he said.

State BJP Chief Babul Marandi expressed full confidence in PM Narendra Modi's leadership, highlighting the transformative

impact of his policies at all levels. He praised Modi's vision and effective governance, which have led to significant economic growth, improved infrastructure, and enhanced national security. Confident in the party's prospects, Marandi predicted a comprehensive victory for the BJP in the upcoming elections in Jharkhand.

Bokaro MLA Biranchi Narayan took the opportunity to express his gratitude to all the workers of the Bokaro Assembly constituency. He congratulated the presidents of all nine mandals of the Bokaro Assembly, the mandal committees, Shakti Kendra co-coordinators and booth presidents for their hard work and dedication in successfully organizing the event. Narayan's acknowledgment of their efforts underscored the collective commitment for the BJP in the upcoming elections.

## Marwari Yuva Manch inaugurates Amritdhara



PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

Marwari Yuva Manch (MYM) Jamshedpur branch inaugurated the seventh Amritdhara of this session, marking a significant milestone in their ongoing community service initiatives. The inauguration ceremony took place at the Coin Collector Club premises and was presided over by branch president Yuva Ashwini Agarwal. The event was made possible through the generous courtesy of Archit Bagrodia.

The Amritdhara project, coordinated by youth member Hemant Agarwal, aims to provide clean and safe drinking water to the public, reflecting MYM's commitment to social welfare and environmental sustainability. The ceremony saw the presence of several notable members and guests including Archit Bagrodia, Sunil Bagrodia, Sandeep Murarka, Prem Piyush, Pritam Vasu, Jai Kumar, Abhishek Aggarwal (Goldie), Sunny Sanghi, Bablu Agarwal, Suresh Sharma (Lippu), Deepak Chetani, Anant Mohanka, Prakash Bajaj, Ashutosh Kabra, Amar Ganeriwal, and Harsh Moonka. In addition to President Ashwini Kumar Agarwal, the key office bearers of the Jamshedpur branch include Vikash Sharma (Secretary) and Prakash Bajaj (Treasurer). Hemant Agarwal played a pivotal role as the coordinator of the Amritdhara project. The successful inauguration of this permanent Amritdhara reinforces the Marwari Yuva Manch's dedication to enhancing community welfare through meaningful and sustainable projects.

## Expenditure monitoring team to take action against illegal transportation of cash, liquor

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

The administration has instructed the expenditure monitoring team to be active 24x7, no gift items including cash, liquor or food should be distributed at any place and strict action against illegal transportation of liquor, drugs, gift items through check naka. Instructions were given.



In preparation for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, District Election Officer Ananya Mittal convened a pivotal meeting with senior and in-charge officers of all operational cells to review the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the crucial final 72 hours before voting commences. The meeting was held in the Collectorate Auditorium, with significant attendance from key officials including Deputy Development Commissioner Manish Kumar, PD IDTA Dipankar Chaudhary, Civil Surgeon Dr. Jujhar Majhi, ADM Law and Order Ananth Kumar, and Additional Deputy Commissioner Rohit Sinha, among others.

Mittal directed the police and administration officials for additional coordination and communication to maintain law and order and said that monitoring should be done by setting up appropriate checkpoints. Voters

should not be tempted under any circumstances, take immediate action if any such activity is found. Remained active in FST field. Vehicles should be checked intensively, not a single vehicle should remain without checking.

The meeting meticulously covered the necessary arrangements to be implemented at the Co-operative College and the dispatch center at LBSM College. Specific attention was given to the provision of facilities for polling parties, ensuring these are ready by the evening of May 22. Mittal emphasized the importance of maintaining cleanliness, ensuring the availability of drinking water, and preparing reserve mobile toilets. He also mandated that polling personnel be provided with essential materials and ORS packets to combat heat-

related issues.

A detailed review of the labor deployment plan at the dispatch centers was conducted. Mittal instructed that bank stalls be set up to handle complaints related to the polling party, manage vehicle tagging, and facilitate the payment to polling personnel. The timely updating of estimated voting percentages on Encore was also highlighted as a priority for polling day. The installation and operational readiness of cameras for webcasting were assessed, with a directive to ensure completion on schedule.

For effective monitoring, control rooms at both district and block levels are to be operational from 3 pm on May 24 until the conclusion of voting and the safe return of polling parties to the strong room. Mittal stressed the

importance of continuous vigilance by the expenditure monitoring team to prevent illegal activities, including the transportation of cash, liquor, drugs, and gift items. Immediate actions are to be taken based on information received in the control room, with the team remaining active around the clock.

Mittal directed enhanced coordination between police and administrative officials to uphold law and order, with strategic checkpoints established for thorough vehicle inspections. He reiterated the necessity of preventing voter inducement and urged immediate action against any such attempts.

The meeting was attended by a broad spectrum of officials, including Executive Magistrate David Balihar, Special Division Officer Mahendra Kumar, Director NEP Ajay Sao, Additional Municipal Commissioner of Mango Municipal Corporation Ranjit Lohra, Deputy Municipal Commissioner of JNAC Krishna Kumar, DTO Dhananjay, Deputy Election Officer Priyanka Singh, SDO Dhalbhum Parul Singh, District Public Relations Officer Panchanan Oraon, DIO Kishore Prasad, Assistant Director of Social Security Neha Sanjana Khalkho, and other concerned officers.

## BJP MLA Raj Sinha gets show cause notice from party

PANKAJ : DHANBAD

Dhanbad BJP MLA Raj Sinha has been served a notice for allegedly supporting Congress candidates indirectly in a speech during voters awareness campaign organized by Chitragupta Maha Parivar.

Raj Sinha on Sunday during the meeting had said since we all are descendants of Lord Chitragupta and considered intellectuals, thus take a pledge that family members of the Chitragupta Maha Parivar should vote only for a candidate with a clean image in the Lok Sabha elections. This he said amidst an audience of around 1000 persons waving his left hand and also quoted sentences of BJP founder Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay . This has been considered as an anti party activity and has been served notice of indiscipline with directive to reply within two days. And Monday late evening he was served the showcase by party general secretary Aditya Sahu.

Besides, five mandal presidents of Dhanbad assembly constituency too have been served notice of not working (supporting)for party candidates here.

The issue of ignoring party candidates for Lok Sabha is supposedly the main reason. Yet, it's being said that this action is to contain the growing factionalism in the party since the party chose to field Dhulu Mahto as candidate from Dhanbad.

Now it's to be seen what effect this causes as Raj has a good command on common mass being two term MLA and the Chitragupta Maha Parivar has around 1.5.lakh voters in Dhanbad and Bokaro assembly segment that is part of Dhanbad Lok Sabha seat.

## SAIL declares record financial results for Q4 and FY'24

R SHARMA : BOKARO

Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) has announced its financial results for the fourth quarter and the fiscal year ending 31st March 2024. The company has reported its highest ever performance in both production and sales for the fiscal year 2023-24.

SAIL's crude steel production and sales volumes have surged by 5.2% and 5.1% respectively compared to the previous year, marking a significant achievement. This growth has propelled the company's Revenue from Operations to new heights, crossing the Rs. 1,00,000 crore mark for the third consecutive year.

The Board of Directors has recommended a final dividend of Rs. 1 per equity share, which constitutes 10% of the face value, pending approval from shareholders at the upcoming Annual General Meeting (AGM). This follows an interim dividend of Rs. 1 per equity share already disbursed during the year.

In his statement, the



Chairman of SAIL Amarendu Prakash emphasized the strong performance and robust demand in the Indian steel market. He highlighted the company's strategic initiatives aimed at increasing production volumes, diversifying product offerings with value-added products, and enhancing operational efficiencies. These efforts have been pivotal in SAIL's year-on-year improved performance.

"The Indian steel markets have remained quite robust, showcasing continual growth in demand. SAIL has been taking various initiatives

towards increasing volumes, adding value-added products to its product basket, and improving efficiency levels which are reflected in the improved physical performance year on year. The Company will continue to work on improving its performance further to tap into the buoyancy in the growing Indian Steel Market," said the Chairman.

With a focus on innovation and efficiency, SAIL is poised to capitalize on the promising outlook of the Indian steel industry, aiming for sustained growth and value creation for its shareholders.

## Tributes paid to Rajiv Gandhi on martyrdom day in Bokaro

PNS : BOKARO

Under the leadership of Bokaro District Congress President Umesh Prasad Gupta, a tribute was paid to the former Prime Minister, Bharat Ratna, and the architect of modern India, Rajiv Gandhi, at the statue in front of Bokaro Airport on his martyrdom day. The event included a discussion on his contributions and legacy.

Umesh Gupta highlighted that Rajiv Gandhi was the pio-

neer of the telecommunications revolution in India. He laid the foundation for the technology we use today, including mobile phones, television, and telecommunication devices. He emphasized that the entire nation remembers such an immortal martyr today. Furthermore, he pointed out that the current state of affairs in the country is the responsibility of the present government and reiterated the need for Congress to lead the nation once again.



Among those present at the event were Satyendra Yadav, Haji Abdul Malik, Jitendra Yadav, Qamrul Hasan, Prem

Paswan, Randhir Kumar, Amanat Rafiq, Ashok Singh, Neelu Dubey, Armaan Shah, and Ajay Sharma.

## Sreeleathers Sakchi pays Tribute to Founder

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

In a heartfelt ceremony at Sreeleathers Sakchi located in the bustling Sakchi market, a tribute was paid to the founder of Sreeleathers esteemed freedom fighter, Late Shri Suresh Chandra Dey, on the occasion of his 34th death anniversary. The event was marked by a solemn resolution to uphold the human and business values established by him.



The program commenced with a detailed presentation of Late Shri Suresh Chandra Dey's biography, highlighting his immense contributions to the nation and his unwavering commitment to social responsibilities. Remembered as a visionary and a patriot, Shri Dey founded Sreeleathers in 1952. His pioneering vision has seen the company flourish, providing employment

to thousands of families both within India and abroad.

During the tribute, the legacy of Shri Dey was celebrated not just as a successful entrepreneur but as a loyal son of the soil whose sacrifices during the freedom struggle remain inspirational. The ceremony underscored the company's dedication to continuing his principles and maintaining

the ethical standards he championed.

Additionally, homage was paid to Late Ashish Dey, the third son of Late Shri Suresh Chandra Dey, who faithfully carried forward his father's ideals in service to society and the nation. The Dey family reaffirmed their commitment to integrating these timeless values into their lives and business practices.

## Capital repair work of Sinter Plant Band-2 completed

PNS : BOKARO

The capital repair work of Sinter Plant Band-2 was successfully completed on May 21, and the plant was operationalized in the presence of Rajan Prasad, Executive Director (Personnel & Administration and Additional Charge works). On this occasion, B.K. Behera, Chief General Manager (Sinter Plant), Dhananjay Kumar, Chief General Manager (RMHP), J.V. Shekhar, Chief General Manager (Shops), M.P. Singh, Chief General Manager (Blast Furnace), D. Sarkar, Chief General Manager (Electrical), senior officials, and employees were present.

The capital repair of Sinter Plant Band-2 included critical tasks such as machine drive, gearbox, and battery roof changing, all of which were completed safely. Under the leadership of B.K. Behera, Chief General Manager (Sinter Plant), and with the cooperation of senior officers and employees from electrical and mechanical maintenance, including Anshumali, S.K. Singh, C. Thakur, A. Hazra, and A. Gupta, the work was completed on schedule.



## 63.66 % polling in Hazaribag parliamentary constituency

PNS : HAZARIBAG

Voting for the Lok Sabha Elections 2024 was held on May 20 in 14 Hazaribag constituencies. District Election Officer cum Deputy Commissioner Nancy Sahay addressed the press after the conclusion of the voting period. She said that till 5:00 pm the voting percentage of Hazaribag Lok Sabha constituency was 63.66 and the updated voting percentage report is yet to come. The



detailed report after the entire election process can also be seen on the ECI website. She said that no untoward or law and order related incident took place during the election process. She said that counting of votes is on June 4, the venue of which has been identified as Market Committee. On the matter of vote boycott, the DEO said that the matter of not voting by the local people at two booths of Kusumba of Katkamdag numbered 183

and 184 has also come to his notice. The local people have approached NTPC on local issues like railway siding and bridge construction. Boycotted the vote. The administration has made efforts to convince the locals in this regard by holding several meetings in the past. Regarding re-poll, she said that there will be no re-poll. He further said that when the EVM was reported to be malfunctioning in the initial moments of voting, it was repaired by an engineer and in case of failure, an alternative EVM was used.

An FIR has been lodged on two cases of violation of the Model Code of Conduct, in which this action has been taken taking into cognizance the cases of a particular political party's slip being pasted in the voter slip at two booths in Barhi and being distributed to the voters. In the end he also thanked the media. Superintendent of Police Arvind Kumar Singh, Deputy Development Commissioner Prerna Dixit, DPRO Rohit Kumar were present in this press conference.

## Sabita Mohalik of Dhanbad wins 'Meri Poushtik Rasoi' title

PNS : DHANBAD

Glenmark Foundation, in collaboration with Idobro Impact Solutions, announced the successful conclusion of the sixth season of the "Meri Poushtik Rasoi" cooking contest. This pan India initiative aimed at combating malnutrition through the celebration and promotion of nutrition-rich native recipes, empowering communities nationwide to embrace

healthier eating habits. Sabita Mohalik from Jharkhand with 'Moringa Drumstick Pulp Patties and Banana Flower Chutney', won the title in the Professional category.

Over 800 entries were received from 24 states and four union territories, spanning 250+ towns and cities, including entries from Lakshadweep, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and first-time participation from Jammu &

Kashmir.

Cheryl Pinto, Executive Director - Corporate Services, Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Ltd. Said that, at Glenmark Foundation, we are committed to preserving and celebrating our rich food heritage, often overshadowed by modern lifestyles. Through 'Meri Poushtik Rasoi,' we have witnessed the profound impact of traditional cooking in addressing critical health issues like malnutrition.

# Vote for INDI Alliance to bring Hemant Soren out of jail: Kejriwal

## APP leader lauds Kalpana Soren, likens her to 'Jhansi ki Rani'

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal, who is currently out on interim bail till June 1 for campaigning in the Lok Sabha elections, addressed a vibrant poll rally in Jamshedpur, Jharkhand, in support of JMM candidate Samir Kumar Mohanty.

In his address, Kejriwal said that the 2024 elections are special to save democracy. He said that if the INDI Alliance wins the elections on June 4, Hemant Soren will be among the people outside jail on June 5.

He praised Kalpana Soren, wife of jailed JMM leader Hemant Soren, comparing her to the iconic freedom fighter Jhansi ki Rani for her defiant stance against Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "With the intention PM



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal being welcomed by JMM leader Kalpana Soren in Jamshedpur Airport on Tuesday. PNS

Modi put Soren and me behind bars has backfired on him. AAP governments in Delhi and Punjab and the JMM government in Jharkhand have not collapsed; instead, all AAP and JMM leaders have united against PM Modi," Kejriwal asserted.

Kejriwal criticized the legal actions against Hemant Soren, pointing out that no court has found Soren guilty yet. "An inquiry is underway. So, why is he in jail? This is Modi's 'goondagardi' (hooliganism). There is no court order against me, but I was jailed. Tomorrow, anyone can

### Kejriwal recalls his Jamshedpur days

Jamshedpur: In a heartfelt moment during his campaign rally in Jamshedpur, Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal took a trip down memory lane, reminiscing about his early career days spent in the city. Addressing the crowd, Kejriwal shared his personal connection to Jamshedpur, where he worked with Tata Steel from 1989 to 1992. "This city holds a special place in my heart. I used to stay at the GT Hostel, and those were some of the most formative years of my life," he said, evoking a warm response from the audience.

be jailed," he stated emphatically.

Expressing confidence in the upcoming elections, Kejriwal declared, "We will win all 14 seats in Jharkhand." After his speech, Kejriwal engaged with the crowd by playing a drum, energizing supporters as part of the election campaigning for the I.N.D.I.A bloc in Jamshedpur.

Kejriwal said that the INDI alliance is going to win 14 out

of 14 seats in Jharkhand. He said that 2.5 crore people of Delhi are grateful to Hemant Soren because he had delivered oxygen to Delhi during Corona, which saved the lives of many people. He said that dictatorship is going on in the country. If Hemant Soren is sent to jail, then tomorrow Champai Soren will be put in jail. The time has come to answer this. He said that Narendra Modi hates the tribal society.



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Jharkhand CM Champai Soren, JMM leader Kalpana Soren among others during an election rally in Jamshedpur on Tuesday. PNS

He thanked Hemant Soren for lending crucial help to Delhi during the pandemic. The CM said that at the time of crisis Jharkhand

Government led by Soren reached out to Delhi in combating the situation.

This rally in Jamshedpur marks a significant moment

in the ongoing election campaign, highlighting the solidarity and resilience of opposition leaders amidst political turmoil.

## 4- Day Jharkhand Cricket League 2024 kicks off in City

PNS : RANCHI

The Jharkhand Cricket League (JCL) 2024 is a four-day tennis ball cricket tournament which kicked off in the City on May 21 and the final match is scheduled for May 24. With 12 teams vying for the trophy, all matches are being played at the Mecon Stadium from 9 am to 5:45 pm.

JCL 2024 Season 1 is a premium cricket tournament which is aimed to bring together cricketers from across the State to compete for the title. The league offers a platform to both seasoned players and emerging talent with an opportunity to hone their talent and showcase their skills. The prize money for the winning team is Rs 5 lakh while the first runner up team will be awarded Rs 3 lakh.

The main organisers for the JCL 2024 are Md. Irshad Hussain, Shabbir Hussain, Irfan Ahmed and Md. Shahid.



"I have been a tennis ball cricketer myself and in my personal experience I never got an opportunity to showcase my talent in Ranchi and Jharkhand. The main idea to organise this tournament was that we wanted to provide a platform for tennis ball cricket players in Jharkhand and also so that the upcoming generations are motivated towards the sport. This is the first time this tournament is being organised and we plan to make this an annual sporting event," said the organizer Md. Irshad Hussain.

The twelve teams competing for the prize are namely Jamshedpur Kings, Garhwa Sixers, Ramgarh SuperGiants, Khunti Blasters, Dumka

Capitals, Dhanbad Heat, Pakur Thunders, Ranchi Royals, Palamu Stars, Bokaro Challengers, Gumla Titans and Chaibasa Strikers.

A total of 180 cricketers will be participating in the league. Players for all the teams were selected at an auction ceremony on May 17 at Hotel Raso, Birsa Chowk in the City where team owners strategize to assemble their squads. Each team has 11 playing players and four reserve players. For the tournament, 36 iconic players were selected on the basis of a trial out of which each team had to select three- one batsman, one bowler and one all-rounder. Each match is of eight overs.

A total of 15 matches will be played at the Mexon Stadium. The matches are also being broadcasted on the popular platform 7070 sports official YouTube channel. Cricket fans can also enjoy the matches at the venue free of cost.

## Hearing on Soren's bail plea to continue at SC today

PNS : RANCHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday adjourned by a day the hearing of former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren's plea challenging a high court order refusing him bail. The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) chief was arrested in January on charges of money laundering.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta said it will hear the plea on May 22 after hearing the case for an hour.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, representing Soren cited the case of Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and asked the court to release the JMM leader him to campaign for the Lok Sabha elections.

The adjournment was sought by Soren's lawyer senior advocate Kapil Sibal after the court questioned him on how he could have challenged the constitutional validity of his arrest while the special court had already taken cognisance of the offence.

The court also asked if the arrest could be challenged after the special court rejected Soren's bail plea.

Sibal argued that the case was about 8.86 acre of tribal land which couldn't be transferred. Soren is accused of forcibly occupying the land in 2009-10 but the action against him was taken in 2023. The issue was a civil dispute over a piece of land and Soren did not have anything to do with the case, Sibal said.

The ED concluded Soren's involvement merely by relying on some statements, he said.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) had opposed Soren's bail plea on May 20. In its affidavit, the ED argued that evidence establishes Soren's involvement in the illegal acquisition and possession of properties.

Contending that a politician can claim no special status higher than that of an ordinary citizen, the ED told the apex court that if Soren is granted interim bail for poll campaigning, then all incarcerated politicians would seek a similar treatment claiming that they are a "class of their own".

Emphasising that elections are all-year-round phenomena in the country, the probe agency said no politician can be arrested and kept in judicial custody if Soren's prayer for grant of "special treatment" is accepted to.

In a counter-affidavit filed in Soren's plea against his arrest and seeking interim bail for electioneering, the ED said, "Therefore, there is an active attempt on the part of the petitioner (Soren) to subvert the investigation by misusing state machinery and to project the proceeds of crime as untainted through his stooges." It added the materials on record establish that the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader is involved in the acquisition/possession of properties, which are proceeds of crime, illegally.

"Under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) alone, presently, there are many politicians who are in judicial custody and their cases are examined by competent courts upholding their custody," the ED counsel had pleaded.

## Cong amended Constitution many times in past: BJP



State BJP spokesperson Pratul Shadeo and others during a press conference in Ranchi on Tuesday. PNS

PNS : RANCHI

BJP state spokesperson Pratul Shahdeo taunted the INDIA bloc leaders alleging that INDIA bloc leaders are shedding crocodile tears in the name of protecting the Constitution, but the reality is that people of this bloc have insulted the Constitution the greatest number of times.

Pratul said that the first amendment to the Constitution was done by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1951 when he was the Prime Minister of the interim government. Many restrictions were imposed on freedom of expression. Pratul said that in 1975, when Indira Gandhi lost the case in the Rajnarayan case, she suspended the entire Constitution and imposed emergency in the country. People's fundamental rights were snatched away. In the name of population control,

forceful sterilization started. In 1976, Indira Gandhi made the biggest change in the Constitution through the 42nd Amendment, in which 20% of the Constitution was changed. The powers of the State Government, Supreme Court, High Court were reduced and given to the PMO. The Supreme Court in the Minerva case, its controversial provisions were repealed in the Union of India case.

Pratul said that after that, in 1986, Rajiv Gandhi changed the decision of the Supreme Court in Shah Bano case just for Muslim appeasement and went against the basic spirit of the Constitution and got the decision of the court overturned. Apart from this, freedom of the press is mentioned in the Constitution. But Rajiv Gandhi had tried to curb the press by bringing in a defamation MLA in 1988. Pratul said that Rahul

Gandhi had insulted the country's Constitution in 2013 by publicly tearing the ordinance passed by the Cabinet of Parliament, born from the womb of the Constitution. Pratul said that Congress and its allies do not have faith in the Constitution of the country.

Pratul said that the central government crossed all limits of minority appeasement even during the UPA regime. Pratul said that it is clearly mentioned in the UPA government's outcome budget of 2013-14 that 15% of the budget amount will be used in different schemes for minorities.

He said that on the contrary, the basic mantra of Modi government is Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas. For Congress, minority means only Muslims. Because if Jains, Buddhists, Parsis and Christians were also in their minority list, then they would not have opposed CAA.

Pratul said that today Congress is in alliance with CPM directly and indirectly in the entire country. Which has promised to remove Article 370 in its manifesto. Apart from this, CPM has played with the sovereignty of India by talking about CAA, ED and ending the stockpile of nuclear weapons. Pratul said that Congress has made efforts to implement its hidden agenda through its allies. No Congress leader has condemned this announcement of CPM. Tariq Imran was also present in today's press conference.

## Youth can improve voting percentage: CEO



CEO K Ravi Kumar addresses media persons at his office in Ranchi on Tuesday. PNS

PNS : RANCHI

Voter awareness closing ceremony, felicitation ceremony cum award distribution program was organized on Tuesday at Aryabhata Auditorium of Ranchi University, Ranchi. The Chief Guest of the program was Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Jharkhand., K Ravi Kumar. He said that youth have played a big role in improving the voting percentage in the Lok Sabha elections and youth have helped in voter awareness.

The CEO said that the volunteers of Youth National Service Scheme (NSS) have been working to make people aware about voting. Said that on the day of voting, it is the respon-

sibility of NSS volunteers to bring voters from every house to the booth for voting. "Apart from this, people associated with election work and aware citizens also have a big responsibility. With the help of NSS volunteers the voting percentage will increase. This will bring glory to the state including Ranchi," he added.

Kumar said that for voter awareness, there is a need to carry out registration for registering people's names in the voter list and sending voters to the booth on the day of polling. He said that it is your right to vote. Be sure to vote and encourage others to vote as well.

Ranchi University Vice Chancellor, Dr Ajit Kumar Sinha said that voting is not only our right but also our duty. Encouraging the NSS volunteers, he said that the fruits of your hard work will be visible on the day of voting. Giving examples of this from admit card distribution and examination, he said that cooperating with voters on the day of voting and getting them to vote as much as possible is like getting better marks. He said that you all are the future of the nation. Understand your duties and discharge them and inspire voters to vote.

Under the programme, voters were made aware by organizing various competitions including NSS Volunteer Rally, Poster Making Competition, Poetry Competition, Rangoli Competition, Mobile Rings Competition, Quiz etc. In the closing ceremony, the volunteers who stood first in various competitions were awarded. Controller of Examinations Ashish Kumar Jha, Dean of the Faculty of Student Welfare Sudesh Kumar Sahu, Program Officer of NSS, volunteers and professors of Ranchi University were present in the programme.

## JSSPS cadet to represent India in World Weightlifting Championship



Babulal Hembron, a cadet of the Jharkhand State Sports Promotion Society (JSSPS) will represent India in the upcoming Youth World Weightlifting Championship (22-26 May, 2024) to be held at Peru, South America. JSSPS is a joint venture between Central Coalfields Limited and Jharkhand Government for promoting sports talents in the state by setting up Sports Academy.

PNS : RANCHI

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Babulal will represent India in the international event under 49 Kg category of under 17 Age cate-

gory.

Earlier Babulal Hembron has performed outstanding at various national-level championships in his age category. In the National Youth / Junior / Senior Weightlifting Competition, which was organized in Itanagar (28 December 23 to 08 January 2024), Babulal not only won the Gold medal by lifting a total weight of 193 kg in the 49 kg weight category of U - 17 age group but also created a new national record by breaking the old national record of 190 kg.

JSSPS is a unique CSR initiative

of Central Coalfields Ltd which administers and operates the Mega Sports Complex, Khelgaon. In this connection, an MoU was signed between CCL and State Govt of Jharkhand in September 2015 to establish a Sports Academy, one of its kind in the country.

In the Sports Academy, 338 cadets are undergoing training under 11 sports disciplines like weightlifting, cycling, boxing etc.

JSSPS and CCL family congratulated Babulal for his splendid performance and best wishes for the upcoming international event to be held in South America.

## State likely to witness strong winds in next 2 days

PNS : RANCHI

The weather patterns in Jharkhand are changing every day.As per the information provided by Ranchi Meteorological Center, there will be thunder and strong winds at many places of the State on May 22 and May 23. The wind speed is expected to be 40 to 50 kilometers per hour.

The Centre also informed that there is a possibility of thunder and lightning at isolated places in the southern parts of the state on May 24 and May 25.

The strong wind will also blow during this period. Its speed can be 30 to 40 kilometers per hour. Its impact will be seen in East Singhbhum, West Singhbhum, Seraikela-Kharsawan, Simdega, Gumla, Khunti districts.

As per the Meteorological Center, there is no possibility of any major change in the maximum temperature during the next 5 days in the state.

The Centre also informed that there is a possibility of light to moderate rain at isolated places in the southern part of the State on May 24 and May 25. Its effect will be seen in East Singhbhum, West Singhbhum, Seraikela-Kharsawan, Simdega, Gumla, Khunti districts. According to the Centre, there is a possibility of light to moderate rain at some places in the State on May 26 and May 27.

## EVERYONE CONTRIBUTED IN RAM MANDIR CONSTRUCTION: CONGRESS

PNS : RANCHI

Indian National Congress Spokesperson and Star Campaigner, Sadhvi Sadhna Bharti said that Lord Ram resides in every particle. "There is no one in this entire universe who can bring Lord Ram. There is a strange situation in the country. People are roaming around with contracts to bring Lord Ram to themselves. Everyone has contributed to the Ram Mandir movement, including tribals, Dalits and backward people," she added.

Bharti said this during a press meet held at the party headquarter in the State Capital on Tuesday.

Bharti said that after all,

why were the leading leaders of the Ram Mandir movement, Uma Bharti, Vinay Katiyar, Advani and even India's tribal woman President kept away. "Why would we go to the temple program on his invitation, or would we go to get photographs taken with him? The job of these people is to chant Ram-Ram and take someone else's property as their own. These people did the work of donating donations and doing business in 10 years," she added. The party Spokesperson also said, "Do we need anyone's certificate to be Hindu and Ram devotee? Ram temple has been built, we can go anytime. Our leader MLA also went. Ram temple is not owned by any-



one. As soon as elections come, all arrangements are made in BJP to make religion a business. To lick the scratches of power, many mongooses in BJP also have relations with snakes. BJP is not Ramwadi, but Ravanwadi. Not Krishnawadi, it is Kanswadi. Sanjay

Nishad, who was involved in BJP's thugbandhan, had said that Lord Ram is not the son of Dashrath, Sanjay-Nishad expressed doubt on the existence of Mata Kaushalya, yet BJP made Sanjay Nishad a member of the Yogi cabinet. Till date Sanjay Nishad has not been removed from the

post of minister. BJP leader Naresh Aggarwal compared Lord Ram with rum and Mother Sita with liquor in Rajya Sabha. Still BJP sent Naresh Aggarwal to Rajya Sabha. His son was included in the Yogi cabinet."

Bharti said that BJP is neither Ramist, nor Krishnaist, nor religious. "BJP is only a note seeker. There is only one work of BJP, give donations and take business, chant Ram-Ram, someone else's property is yours. Therefore, BJP people, run away now, otherwise the public will beat you," she added. Rakesh Sinha, Kamal Thakur, Abha Sinha, Neetu Devi, AAP's Saurabh Srivastava and others were present on this occasion.

## AFFIDAVIT

I, Jitendra Kumar, S/o Bharat Prasad resident of 3rd floor E3 Uma Shanti Vihar Station Road Chutia Near FCI Road Ranchi, G.P.O. Dist. Ranchi, Jharkhand- 834001 do hereby solemnly affirm and declare That my correct and actual name of my Son SWAYAM RAJ in School Identity Card as per record, 10/09.2010 Date of Birth, That in Aadhar Card being Aadhar no. 8170 6664 427 my Son name was wrongly mentioned as KISHU RAJ and Date of birth - 2009, which wrong .That Swayam Raj and Kishu Raj both are same and on person i.e. my Son name. That this affidavit is made for the purposes of correction name of my son in Aadhar Card. Vide Affidavit No. - 47, dated - 21 may 2024.

# Nation's strength resides in its ability to leverage its heritage: MoS Defence

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

Union Minister of State for Defence Ajay Bhatt on Tuesday said here the strength of a country resides not only in its military might but also in its ability to adapt to changing circumstances and leverage its cultural heritage as a source of power. He made this assertion while addressing an event at the National Museum to mark the culmination of Project Udbhav, which aims to promote indigenous discourse

in the Army by integrating India's ancient strategic acumen into a contemporary military domain with a focus on making the force "future-ready". The project is a collaboration of the Indian Army and Delhi-based think-tank United Service Institution of India (USI). Praising the Army and USI, Bhatt said, "The aim of this project envisioned by USI is to find invaluable insights into our strategic culture by finding ancient texts and oral traditions... The geopolitical landscape is continuously

evolving and it is necessary for our armed forces to be adaptive and innovative in their thinking." In his address, the minister also praised the ancient Indian philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', which was part of the tagline used by India during its year-long presidency of the G20. "The ancient principle of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'... Has transcended cultural boundaries and become a guiding light in international diplomacy," Bhatt said. Bhatt said in the last decade,



the government of India has started a significant journey towards promoting indigenisation initiatives in various areas. "Today, we are nearly atmanirbhar, we are progressing to become fully self-reliant in future. And, Project Udbhav is going to play an important role in this," the minister said. "There is a need to honestly make efforts to imbibe Indian thoughts and values even in our works and decisions. The dream of 'Viksit Bharat' can only be realised when we

fully understand the priceless wisdom of our ancient past and implement it contextually in shaping modern ambitions and policies," he said. The event was also attended by Army Chief General Manoj Pande and other senior officials of the force. Bhatt further said that by delving into India's ancient texts and traditions, Project Udbhav "not only enriches our understanding of strategic culture but also lends a valuable discerning thinking on unconventional war strategies, diplomatic tradi-

tions, and moral thoughts in a war". Bhatt also said India's history is an amalgamation of different thoughts and accomplishments which is a source of inspiration not only for Indians but also for people around the world. Bhatt also inaugurated an exhibition themed on the 'Evolution of Indian Military Systems, Warfighting, and Strategic Thought -- from Antiquity to Independence', which showcases the evolution of India's military systems and strategy.

## VP Dhankhar to represent India at Raisi's funeral

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

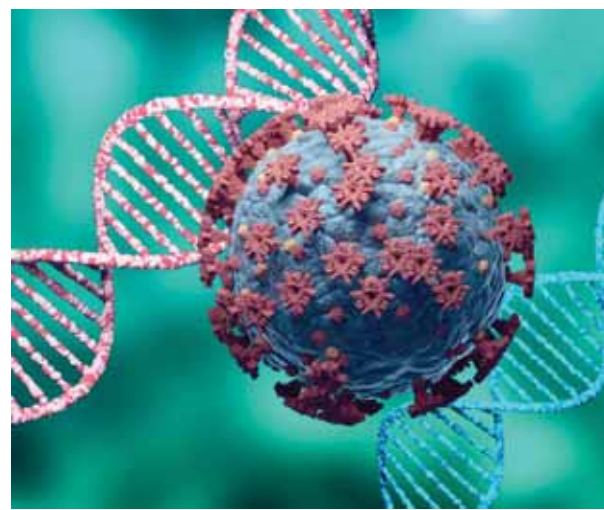
Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar is likely to represent India at the funeral of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, who died in a helicopter crash, sources said on Tuesday. They said Dhankhar is likely to leave for Iran on Wednesday. A one-day state mourning is being observed across India on Tuesday as a mark of respect for Raisi. The Iranian president, the country's foreign minister and several other officials were found dead on Monday, hours after their helicopter crashed in a foggy, mountainous region in the northwestern part of the country, Iran state media reported. Raisi, 63, and his entourage were heading to the city of Tabriz after returning from a visit to a locality on the Azerbaijan-Iran border on Sunday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Congress president Malliarjun Kharge on Monday expressed shock and sadness at the demise of Iranian President Raisi. Modi said "India stands

with Iran in this time of sorrow." Prime Minister Modi said "Deeply saddened and shocked by the tragic demise of Dr. Seyed Ebrahim Raisi, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran," Modi said on X. "His contribution to strengthening India-Iran bilateral relationship will always be remembered. My heartfelt condolences to his family and the people of Iran. India stands with Iran in this time of sorrow," the prime minister said. India stands with the people of Iran at this time of tragedy, External Affairs Minister Jaishankar said while expressing shock over the death of Iranian President Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian. "Deeply shocked to hear of the passing away of Iran's President Dr Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister H. Amir-Abdollahian in the helicopter crash," Jaishankar said on X. "Recall my many meetings with them, most recently in January 2024. Our condolences to their families. We stand with the people of Iran at time of this tragedy," he said.

## Surge in new COVID 19 variants: No reason to panic, says Health Ministry

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

Amidst surge in sub-lineages of COVID-19 — 290 cases of KP.2 and 34 cases of KP.1 in India—the Union Health Ministry here has clarified that they are all sub-variants of JN.1, with no associated increase in hospitalisation or severe cases. It also stressed that mutations are expected in viruses like SARS-CoV-2. "So there is no reason for concern or panic. The mutations will keep happening at a rapid pace and this is the natural behaviour of viruses like SARS-CoV2," said a senior official from the Ministry. Singapore is seeing a new COVID-19 wave as the authorities recorded more than 25,900 cases from May 5 to 11 with KP.1 and KP.2 accounting for over two-thirds of cases in that country. However, the officials here said that there was nothing to worry as the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) surveillance is sensitive and is able to pick up the emergence of any new variant and samples are also picked from hospitals in a structured manner to detect any change in the severity of disease due to virus.



Data compiled by the INSACOG showed that 34 cases of KP.1 have been found across seven states and UTs with 23 cases registered from West Bengal. The other states are Goa (1), Gujarat (2), Haryana (1), Maharashtra (4) Rajasthan (2) and Uttarakhand (1). As many as 290 cases of KP.2 have been registered with Maharashtra reporting the highest number at 148, according to the data. The other states and Union territories are Delhi (1), Goa (12), Gujarat (23), Haryana (3), Karnataka (4), Madhya Pradesh (1), Odisha (17),

Rajasthan (21), Uttar Pradesh (8), Uttarakhand (16) and West Bengal (36). Globally, the predominant COVID-19 variants are still JN.1 and its sub-lineages, including KP.1 and KP.2. KP.1 and KP.2 belong to a group of COVID-19 variants scientists have nicknamed 'FLiRT', after the technical names of their mutations. The strains in FLiRT are all descendants of the JN.1 variant, an offshoot of the Omicron variant. KP.2 was classified by the World Health Organization as a Variant Under Monitoring.

## Rajnath slams Rahul at rally

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
BOKARO (JHARKHAND)/NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday attacked Rahul Gandhi, questioning whether a leader who has been "praised by the enemy" be allowed to form the Government. Singh, while addressing an election rally in Jharkhand's Bokaro, was referring to former Pakistan Minister Fawad Hussain Chaudhry's praise for the Congress leader. "Former Pakistan minister Fawad Hussain Chaudhry, who had claimed that Pakistani terrorists were behind Pulwama and Uri attacks, had not praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi but had praised Rahul Gandhi with comments such as 'Rahul on fire'." "I want to ask you (people) whether such a leader who has been praised by the enemy be respected or allowed to form the government? Which direction do they want to take the country? I appeal to everyone to save the country," Singh said. Chaudhry, who was a minister in the Imran Khan government in Pakistan, had shared a video featuring Rahul Gandhi on X, with a caption 'Rahul on fire'. Singh asserted that "no force on earth" can prevent the estab-



lishment of 'Ram Rajya' in India. Singh said that under the Congress rule, banks ran into losses but under the BJP government, all banks recorded huge profits. He also attacked the Congress, stating that the grand old party was promising reservations on the basis of religion, which is not permissible under the Constitution. Singh said all prime ministers of the Congress had promised to eradicate poverty and failed but under Modi rule, 25 crore people have been brought out of poverty. Attacking the JMM-led alliance and jailed former chief minister Hemant Soren for "plunder of wealth", he said corruption peaked in Jharkhand under the present regime and without the CM's

patronage it was not possible. He appealed to the people to show the "exit door" to the ruling coalition in the state. "The CM who mysteriously went missing for 24 hours, which is unprecedented in India's history, is languishing in jail," he said, while referring to Hemant Soren. Singh said although INDIA bloc accuses BJP of misusing ED and CBI against opposition but these agencies could seize only Rs 32 lakh under the previous Congress regime, whereas under Modi government, they seized Rs 1 lakh crore besides property worth Rs 22,000 crore. "In our party, if any worker or leader is found indulged in corruption, he will be sent to jail. Nobody could raise an accusing finger at any of the CMs of BJP-ruled states," he added.

## Need to create joint culture of three services, says CDS Chauhan

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan on Tuesday called upon the three services to create a joint culture as they move towards forming Joint Operational Structures to fight modern day war. Speaking here on 'Jointmanship : The Way Ahead' as part of 22nd Major General Samir Sinha Memorial Lecture organised at United Service Institution (USI), the CDS termed developing Joint Culture in Armed Forces as Jointness 2.0, which is the way forward. General Chauhan said Jointness 1.0 was about better bonhomie and consensus among the services, and as there were no major differences, there is an impetus to move towards the next level of Jointness which is Jointness 2.0. Acknowledging the distinct culture of all the three Services,



the CDS underscored that there was a need to create a fourth culture in the services. "Joint Culture though different from Service specific Culture, needs to respect the uniqueness of each service. We must be able to distill the best of each service, and incorporate the Highest Common Factor, rather than settle for the Least Common Denominator," said the Chief of Defence Staff. He mentioned various initia-

tives of symbology that were being processed towards fostering the Joint Culture, including Tri-Services participation in national events. The CDS termed Jointness and Integration as pre-requisites to the creation of functional Integrated Theatre Commands, and explained the significance of such Commands. "The creation of such commands will separate the 'operational' functions from the Raise-Train-

Sustain (RTS) and other administrative functions, and will allow greater focus of the operational commander to matters of security," he said. The CDS said the Theatre Commands will not be an end state but the beginning of the next set of reforms. He said, Integrated Theatre Commands will lead to many reforms like Single to Multi Domain operations, fusing space and cyber space into traditional domains, digitisation of battlefield information and visualisation, net centric to data centric among others. Stressing that the reforms in Indian defence eco-system are necessary, the CDS said, nation states across the globe are facing a new set of challenges, and current flux in world order is forcing nations to review their security strategies. The rapid and unbridled march of technology is transforming the way future wars will be fought, he added.

## Modi, Congress pay tributes to Rajiv on death anniversary



Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi pay tributes to former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on his death anniversary at Veer Bhumi, in New Delhi, on Tuesday

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday paid tributes to former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on his death anniversary. India's Prime Minister between 1984 and

1989, Rajiv was assassinated by LTTE cadres at Sriperumbudur in Tamil Nadu in 1991 during an election campaign. "On his death anniversary, my tributes to our former PM Shri Rajiv Gandhi ji," Modi said in a post on X. The Congress leaders also paid tributes to Rajiv.

## Baggage delivery time improves at major airports in last four months in India

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

The baggage delivery time at Delhi, Mumbai and four other major airports has improved significantly in the last four months, with more than 90 per cent of the passengers getting their baggage arriving within 30 minutes of an aircraft landing. The Ministry of Civil Aviation has also advised all domestic and international airlines operating at other airports to improve baggage delivery timings. "From 62.2 per cent of passengers getting on-time baggage delivery in January, the number increased to more than 90 per cent from March 2024 onwards...The percentages of bags arriving within 30 mins has reached a high of 92.5 per cent in May 2024," the Ministry said. In January, the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) start-

ed an exercise to boost the baggage delivery system of the domestic airlines at the country's six major airports -- Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru. The exercise under the aegis of the civil aviation ministry was started after it was noticed that baggage was getting delivered late after the landing of a plane. As per the global standards prescribed by IATA (International Air Transport Association) and the provision under the OMDA (Operation, Management and Development Agreement) with airports, baggage should be delivered to passengers within 30 minutes of the arrival of the aircraft. In a release on Tuesday, the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) said that when the exercise was started on January 14, only 62.2 per cent of the passengers were getting their baggage within IATA-prescribed timelines.

## Disturbed sleep, hallucinations warning signs of onset of lupus: Research

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

Mental health and neurological symptoms such as disturbed dream sleep, hallucinations or depression and loss of balance may act as a warning signal for the onset of autoimmune disease such as lupus, also known as Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), according to an international research team. Lupus is an autoimmune inflammatory disease known for its effect on many organs, including the brain. The team led by researchers at the University of Cambridge and King's College London in the UK, maintained that such symptoms can act as an early warning sign that an individual is approaching a "flare," where their disease worsens for a period. For the study, they surveyed 676 people living with lupus and 400 clinicians, as well as carried out detailed interviews with 69 people living



with systemic autoimmune rheumatic diseases (including lupus) and 50 clinicians. The results, published in the journal eClinicalMedicine, showed that disrupted dream sleep was the most common symptom experienced by three in five patients. Of these, a third went on to develop lupus disease a year

later. King's less than one in four patients reported hallucinations, seen in 85 per cent of people with lupus. Further, three in five lupus patients and one in three with other rheumatology-related conditions also reported increasingly disrupted dreaming sleep - usually vivid and distressing nightmares -

just before their hallucinations. The patients reported that the nightmares were often vivid and distressing, involving being attacked, trapped, crushed, or falling. Melanie Sloan from Cambridge University called on doctors to speak to their patients about these types of symptoms and write down each patient's progression. "Patients often know which symptoms are a bad sign that their disease is about to flare, but both patients and doctors can be reluctant to discuss mental health and neurological symptoms, particularly if they don't realise that these can be a part of autoimmune diseases," said Melanie, the lead author from the varsity's Department of Public Health and Primary Care. Dr Rudrarpan Chatterjee and Dr Amita Aggarwal, both from Department of Clinical Immunology and Rheumatology, Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences, Lucknow in

a separate review published in ScienceDirectlate last year noted that while the lupus is treatable, most patients in India bear healthcare costs as out of pocket expenses. "While this has been recently addressed by a new policy (Ayushman Bharat scheme) that offers low-cost insurance at the national level to everyone within the social security scheme of the Indian Government, a lot of rheumatological conditions at present do not have coverage under this scheme." The review titled, 'Challenges in the diagnosis and management of SLE in India,' further attributed the lack of financial aid to the rare nature of these diseases and a lack of awareness even in policy making circles. "Though SLE has recently been included in this scheme, the benefits are available only once the diagnosis is made and only for inpatient care." Researchers estimate that over 1 million cases of Lupus are diagnosed in India every year.

## NIA files chargesheet against pro Khalistani Arshdeep, three others

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed charge sheet against Canada-based pro-Khalistani terrorist Arshdeep Singh and three of his aides for being part of a conspiracy to unleash terror attacks in various parts of Punjab and Delhi, the agency Tuesday said. The action marks a big leap in NIA's efforts to destroy sleeper cells operated by Singh alias Arsh Dala to unleash terrorist attacks in various parts of Punjab and Delhi, it said. "Canada-based Arshdeep Singh alias Arsh Dala and his Indian agents Harjeet Singh alias Harry Maur, Ravinder Singh alias Rajvinder Singh alias Harry Rajpura, and Rajeev Kumar alias Sheela have been charge sheeted before the NIA Special Court, New Delhi (on Monday)," said the statement issued by the anti-terror agency.



The three aides were running a major terror-gangster syndicate in India on the directions of Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) terrorist Dala. Accused Maur and Rajpura were operating as sleeper cells and were being harboured by Rajeev Kumar, and the trio had planned to carry out a series of terror attacks on Dala's directions and with funds received from him, the NIA said. While Maur and Rajpura were the gang's shooters and had the mandate of executing targeted killings, Rajeev Kumar alias

Sheela was receiving funding from Arsh Dala for harbouring Harry Maur and Harry Rajpura, the statement said. NIA investigations have further revealed that Kumar was also providing logistics support and arranging weapons for the other two on the instructions of Dala. The probe agency had arrested Maur and Rajpura on November 23, 2023 and Kumar on January 12, 2024. "Investigations are continuing to destroy the entire terrorist-gangster syndicate," the NIA added.



# Nation cannot move forward with INDIA Bloc sins: Modi

PTI ■ MOTIHARI (BIHAR)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday alleged that the INDIA bloc stood for corruption, appeasement politics and a "perverted anti-Sanatan mindset", all of which would receive a "big blow" when the Lok Sabha poll results are announced on June 4.

Addressing an election rally in the East Champaran Lok Sabha constituency of Bihar, the PM also launched indirect attacks on leaders like Rahul Gandhi, Akhilesh Yadav and Tejashwi Yadav, who he said were "born with silver spoons".

"The nation cannot move forward with the sins of the INDIA bloc, which stands for corruption, appeasement politics, represents the 'tukde-tukde' gang and a perverted mindset that heaps scorn on Sanatan Dharma," he said.

"This is the reason why the INDIA bloc was exhausted in the very first phase of the elections. In the subsequent phases, it was battered. In the remaining two phases, the trend will continue and on June 4 when votes are counted, the results will come as a big blow to the intentions of the opposition alliance," he claimed.

Modi alleged that Congress



wants to change the Constitution to "snatch" reservations from SCs, STs and OBCs, and hand it over to those who indulge in "vote jihad".

"If Ambedkar was not there, Nehru would not have allowed reservation for SCs and STs," he claimed.

Modi also bristled at the opposition parties' criticism of welfare schemes run by his

government, claiming his opponents had "bundles of notes stashed away in Swiss banks" and could not understand the plight of the common people "the way I do, having been born in a poor family".

"They were opening accounts in Swiss banks, while the people of India were starving," he alleged.

Referring to Tejashwi Yadav,

whom he did not mention by name, Modi said, "I am told that the 'waaris of jungle raaj' has been saying I will be advised bed rest after the Lok Sabha elections. The 'shehzada' of Congress says he wants to see me in tears. His party openly chants slogans like 'Modi teri kabr khudegi' (your grave will be dug)." "These people have a

counterpart in Uttar Pradesh (an allusion to Akhilesh Yadav) who says I have reached the end of my life and hence contesting from Varanasi," said Modi, adding that the remarks betrayed a lack of sensitivity on the part of those "born with silver spoons, who have never known what is a life filled with struggles".

In his speech, Modi also made a reference to the much-talked-about feast Gandhi had enjoyed at Lalu Prasad's residence last year. "Those who refused the invitation to the consecration of Ram temple in Ayodhya had no problems in sharing a meal with the corrupt," he said. Modi also referred to East Champaran as Mahatma Gandhi's "karma bhoomi" and his own roots in Gujarat "the janmabhoomi (place of birth)".

"The Congress betrayed his ideals upon coming to power and devoted itself to promoting the interests of one family," he alleged.

"I have spent my first 10 years in power filling the potholes left by the Congress. I intend to speed up progress in the next term," said Modi as he spoke about his thrust on welfare measures like toilets for women "who had to suffer physical ailments because of the absence of this very basic of all amenities".

# Baramulla LS seat scripts history

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Baramulla Parliamentary Constituency purportedly scripted a 'change' by recording an approximately 60 per cent voter turnout, the highest-ever poll percentage since 1996 on Monday. Last time the highest polling percentage of 61.09 was recorded in the 1984 Lok Sabha polls in the same constituency. During the turmoil, the highest voter turnout of 46.65 percent was recorded during the 1996 Lok Sabha polls on the same seat. This time the higher voter turnout has once again prompted the poll pundits to analyze the assembly segment-wise voter turnout before predicting the poll outcome.

After the polling process was completed the contesting candidates made tall claims and predicted huge victories for their parties.

The National Conference Vice President and former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, contesting from the Baramulla Lok Sabha segment for the first time, claimed he was comfortably winning the Lok Sabha polls. Omar predicted the higher voter turnout has worked in his favor on ground zero.

Taunting his nearest rival Sajad Lone, who labeled Omar as a 'tourist' much to his chagrin during the entire campaign mode, Omar said after the entry of an independent candidate Abdul Rashid Sheikh in the fray Sajad Lone was fighting to grab the runners-up slot. PDP candidate Fayaz Mir is



coming on number four in the race.

In response after the polling concluded Peoples Conference Chairman Sajad Gani Lone announced, "Voters in the Baramulla scripted a change by stepping out in large numbers". In an informal chat with a visiting media person Lone said, "I am very confident, Hopefully, we will win".

Commenting on the higher voter turnout, Lone said, people have decided to come out. Staying in was always a disaster. Stepping out and scripting a change is better. Second, there was an anger vote as well.

Commenting on the tall claims made by the National Conference leader Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi that Omar is set to emerge victorious, Sajad Lone maintained, "I would not be surprised if NC would be taken aback on June 4". "After a drought of a few decades, the voters are visibly seeing signs of change," he added.

According to poll observers, the higher voter turnout has made the multi-corner contest on the Baramulla Lok Sabha seat a little more intriguing.

The surprise entry of Abdul Rashid Sheikh, who is contesting as an independent candidate from Tihar jail, in the fray has already created a buzz. His sons ran a low-profile campaign highlighting common problems of youth and the local electorate in the backdrop of the Abrogation of Article 370 while seeking votes in the name of their father. Their poll strategy worked wonders as the local youth and angry voters connected with them. His home constituency of Langate recorded over 66 percent voter turnout in Kupwara district.

Of all the 18 Assembly segments, the Handwara Assembly segment recorded the highest voter turnout of 72 percent while Gurez recorded the lowest turnout of 40.82 percent. Around 32 percent Kashmiri migrant voter turnout was reported across 26 special polling stations set up in Jammu, Udhampur, and New Delhi.

The North Kashmir district of Kupwara considered a strong bastion of Sajad Lone, remained the trendsetter as five assembly segments recorded over 60 percent voter turnout. Only the Lolab assembly segment recorded a 58 percent turnout.

Seven Assembly segments of Baramulla also recorded an impressive voter turnout. Gulmarg, Rafiaband, Uri, and Pattan recorded over 55 percent voter turnout. Sopore, which recorded only 4 percent voting in 2019, recorded an impressive turnout of over 44 percent on Monday.

# INDIA Bloc wants to loot country by dividing people on lines of caste, religion: Yogi

PTI ■ BALRAMPUR (UP)

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath here on Tuesday alleged that the INDIA Bloc is planning to loot the country by dividing the people on the basis of caste and religion.

Adityanath's statement came during a rally in Gaisdi where he was seeking votes for the BJP's Lok Sabha candidate from Shravasti constituency Saket Mishra and the party's nominee for by-elections in Gaisdi assembly seat Shailesh Kumar Singh Shailu.

"The BJP is serving the public under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. We do not practice discrimination and are working with the spirit of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas'. At the same time, INDI alliance wants to loot the country by dividing the country's people on the basis of caste and religion, which we will not allow to happen," he said.

The chief minister added that people have come to know of INDIA bloc's intentions, hence they are saying together in one voice — "Phir ek baar Modi sarkaar, ab ki baar, 400 paar". The people are replying to them (INDIA bloc), saying they "will bring back those who have brought Ram," he



added.

Adityanath also said that the members of Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Congress are "anti-Ram, anti-national and anti-poor".

"They are making malicious attempts to encroach on the rights of people in Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Backward Castes categories. We all need to be alert about the conspiracy being hatched by them," he added.

Sharpening his attack on the INDIA bloc, the chief minister said the opposition alliance was using all kinds of tricks to gain power.

"Their deeds are not hidden from the public. They are talking about conducting a survey of the property of our

ancestors to remove poverty from the country. We have to remain alert as they will impose inheritance tax, which is similar to Jajiyaa imposed by Mughal emperor Aurangzeb," he said.

"Not only this, they will distribute your property to Bangladesh, Pakistan and other countries, but the BJP will not let them accomplish their goal. Aurangzeb's spirit has entered the Samajwadi Party and the Congress," Adityanath claimed.

Voting for Shravasti parliamentary seat and Gaisdi assembly by-election will be held simultaneously in the fifth phase of Lok Sabha polls on May 25.

# Tsunami like wave for saffron party in UP, NDA to win 75 of 80 seats: BJP leader

PTI ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Uppbeat about BJP's "tsunami-like wave" in Uttar Pradesh due to schemes like PM Awas Yojana, Ujjwala and Ayushman Bharat, party leader Sunil Bharala has predicted the NDA will win 75 out of 80 Lok Sabha seats in the state.

Speaking to PTI on the sidelines of BJP's Lok Sabha campaign here, Bharala said the slogan of 'abki baar, 400 paar' given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is not merely a slogan, but a resolution.

"It's a complete wave like a tsunami (for BJP) in Uttar Pradesh and we (NDA) are going to get 75 out of the 80 seats in the state," he said.

In the 2019 parliamentary polls, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had won 62 seats in Uttar Pradesh, while its ally Apna Dal (Sonelal) had bagged two constituencies.

In 2014, the BJP had won 71 seats while Apna Dal (Sonelal) had secured victory in two constituencies.

"Through the PM Awas Yojana, we have provided homes to 80 lakh people in the state and you can't even imagine how popular the schemes of Ujjwala gas, toilets, Ayushman Bharat and Lakhpati Didi are," Bharala



told PTI.

On the BJP's performance in Allahabad and Phulpur constituencies in the sixth phase polling on May 25, the party leader said, "We are going to break our records of 2014 and 2019".

Both constituencies — Allahabad and Phulpur — are part of the Prayagraj district in Uttar Pradesh. The BJP has fielded Neeraj Tripathi from Allahabad and Praveen Patel from Phulpur.

BJP's Rita Bahuguna Joshi and Shyama Charan Gupta won from Allahabad in 2019 and 2014 polls, respectively. In

Phulpur, BJP's Keshari Dev Patel and Keshav Prasad Maurya won the polls in 2019 and 2014, respectively.

The Phulpur seat was briefly held by Samajwadi Party's Nagendra Dev Patel who won the bypoll in 2018.

Slamming the INDIA bloc, Bharala said claimed that the more the opposition tries to tarnish Modi's image, the stronger will be the performance of the BJP in the Lok Sabha polls.

"The INDI alliance is fighting the election out of arrogance. It is immensely arrogant and the way they talk about the

prime minister, the language that its members use for him is not being accepted by the public. The more they try to tarnish the image of the prime minister, the stronger will be the performance of 'lotus' (BJP symbol)," he said.

"I also want to tell the INDI alliance that till the time the BJP president (J P Nadda) and PM Modi are there, they will not allow reservation based on caste or religion. They will sacrifice their lives but will not allow such reservation on the basis of religion," he added.

On the opposition raising growing inflation, unemployment and communal disharmony as the key issues in this election, Bharala said the prime minister himself has said in interviews to the media that he is not making a scheme for 100 days but is laying out a plan for 125 days.

"Of these, he has allocated 25 days to the youth, for their future, for their employment and to make them self-reliant, to make them capable of giving jobs to others instead of seeking one. Prime Minister Modi and UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath are both resolved to making the youth in Uttar Pradesh self-reliant," he added.

# Karnal becomes test of BJP's ten years in Government

PTI ■ KARNAL (HARYANA)

Nayab Singh Saini is in his tiffin box to have his food in the moving vehicle to save on time amid hectic electioneering.

The Haryana Chief Minister pours some 'Khichdi' on his plate. "I like to have simple food," he says with a smile, as shown in a video uploaded on Facebook. Saini often carries his tiffin box with him in his car and the post shows he loves his 'Khichdi'.

Saini is fighting the Karnal assembly bypoll which was necessitated by the resignation of his predecessor Manohar Lal Khattar, who is fighting the parliamentary election.

Even as a heat wave is sweeping the entire northern belt, the 54-year-old has been criss-crossing the state, keeping up with meetings and rallies.

A few days ago, Saini was out on a morning walk in Karnal's Atal Park, where he played cricket with children. While campaigning recently in the Karnal assembly constituency, Saini talked about the developmental works undertaken by the "double-engine" government.

Saini said that Khattar's almost decade-long rule ended the "parchi-kharchi" system which was rampant in the previous Congress regime, when jobs were given on the basis of "favouritism and corruption".

In all his rallies, Saini makes it a point to attack the Congress and accuse it of failing to work for the welfare of the elderly and seeking power for the power's sake.

The BJP leader also makes it a point to talk about his party's scrapping of Article 370, enacting laws like Citizenship Amendment Act, and abolition of triple talaq system.

Saini claims that the BJP government in the state ensured equitable development and gave a transparent administration. Saini had won his first Lok Sabha polls in 2019 from Kurukshetra. Before that as Naraingarh MLA, he had been a minister in the first Khattar government.

"Lotus (BJP poll symbol) will bloom on all eleven seats (10 parliamentary plus Karnal assembly seat)," Saini says with confidence at all his rallies.

# Congress spreading lies that NDA intends to change Constitution, says Sitharaman

PTI ■ PATNA

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday slammed Congress leaders for spreading lies that the NDA intends to change the constitution and said leaders of the grand old party should stop talking about such things as they "failed" to protect the constitution of their own party just to promote one family.

"Congress and RJD leaders are spreading lies that the BJP-led NDA would change the Constitution after coming to power. Congress leaders should stop talking about protecting the Constitution. How can they talk about such things, when Congress leaders failed to protect the constitution of their own party? They must remember how former Congress president Sitaram Kesri was locked in a room to prevent any obstacle in Sonia Gandhi's elevation in the party," she said while interacting with media



persons here.

Alleging that the RJD and Congress are trying to "rob" SCs, STs and OBCs of quotas and divert these to Muslims, she said, "They want to give reservation on the basis of religion to benefit Muslims only, which is against the Constitution. The Congress and RJD are trying to rob SCs, STs and OBCs of quotas and divert these to Muslims. The Congress party in Karnataka has already done

this".

"When Congress was in power, it never gave due respect to Baba Saheb Ambedkar. He was given the Bharat Ratna in 1990. They don't deserve to speak about the Constitution or Baba Saheb Ambedkar. Modi Ji has taken several steps for uplift of the weaker sections of society....And also for the overall growth of the country," she said. She maintained that the

accelerated growth of eastern states has always remained a top priority of the NDA-led Central government.

"The Central government wants eastern states — Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha — to become engines of growth for the whole country as part of the goal to make India a developed country by 2047," said the Union Finance Minister.

As far as Bihar is concerned, she said, "Bihar's growth was adversely affected due to 'jungal raj' before 2005. The per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Bihar was Rs 21,282 in 1991, higher than Odisha. But during 'jungal raj' it came down to Rs 14,209, almost a 33 per cent drop in the Bihar per capita GDP. I must say that post-2002 per capita GDP in Bihar rose to Rs 37,000".

The NDA government has so far provided 40 lakh houses to poor people under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Rural and Urban), she added.

# Karnataka Government has written to MEA to cancel diplomatic passport of Prajwal, says Home Minister

PIT ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara on Tuesday said the state government has written to the Ministry of External Affairs to cancel the diplomatic passport of Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna, who is facing charges of sexual abuse, on the basis of an arrest warrant issued against him by a court.

The 33-year-old Prajwal, who is the grandson of JD(S) patriarch and former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda and is the NDA's candidate from Hassan Lok Sabha segment, is facing charges of multiple instances of sexually abusing women.

Prajwal reportedly left for Germany on April 27, a day after Hassan went to polls, and is still at large.

"CM (Chief Minister) has already written to the Prime Minister, but the department (Home) writing it in accordance with law is different. Warrant has been issued now, on the basis of the warrant, a letter has been written stating that -- warrant has been issued and the diplomatic passport has to be



cancelled," Parameshwara said. Speaking to reporters here, he said if the passport is cancelled, it will be impossible for Prajwal to stay anymore in the foreign country, and he will have to come back.

"We have written to the Ministry of External Affairs as matters related to passports come under them, they will have to respond to it," he added.

A Special Court for Elected Representatives issued an arrest warrant on Saturday against Prajwal Revanna, following an application moved by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) set up by the state government to probe the serial sex abuse charges against the MP.

Earlier, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had on May 1 written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging him to move the Ministries of

External Affairs and Home Affairs to take swift action to cancel the diplomatic passport of Prajwal Revanna.

A 'Blue Corner Notice' seeking information on Prajwal's whereabouts has already been issued by Interpol, following a request by the SIT via the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Responding to a question on JD(S) leader and former Chief Minister H D Kumaraswamy requesting Prajwal Revanna, who is also his nephew, to return to India and face the probe, Parameshwara said, "I have seen it in the media, it is their family's internal matter, let him (Prajwal) come and face the law".

Regarding Kumaraswamy alleging that 40 phones including his own and those of his family members and supporters are being tapped, the Home Minister said, "I have already said that the government has not tapped the phones of Kumaraswamy or 40 people that he has claimed. If he has accurate information that it has been done, let him give the information, we will get it investigated as to who has done it and why."



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Iran at crossroads

Ebrahim Raisi leaves behind a rich legacy and an uncertain future for his country

Iran is grappling with an unprecedented political crisis as both President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian were tragically found dead in a helicopter crash under mysterious circumstances. The sudden loss of these key figures has plunged Iran into uncertainty, creating a significant leadership void and fuelling various speculations and conspiracy theories. Raisi, known for his hardline stance and involvement in controversial actions, leaves behind a complex legacy. His death, alongside Amir-Abdollahian, not only creates a leadership void but also raises questions about the trajectory of Iranian politics and foreign relations. The circumstances surrounding the helicopter crash, which occurred in heavy fog near the Azerbaijan border, have fuelled speculation. Given Raisi's past, including his involvement in mass executions in 1988 and some contentious actions such as uranium enrichment and missile attacks on Israel, the possibility of foul play cannot be easily dismissed. Conspiracy theories abound, ranging from internal power struggles to foreign interference.



President Raisi had numerous domestic adversaries, from moderates marginalised by his policies to conservatives critical of his presidency. Israel, a long-standing rival of Iran, also enters the conjecture. Recent escalations, including the assassination of an Iranian General by Israel and subsequent missile exchanges, add fuel to speculations of Israeli involvement. Mossad has conducted such operations, but assassinating a head of state is a risky move even by Israel's standards. Both Israel and US Senate majority leader Chuck Schumer have denied involvement.

The big question is Raisi's succession and Iran's trajectory going forward. Md Mokhber has been appointed the Acting President, while Ali Bagheri Kani, who was Deputy Foreign Minister, has been elevated in the Ministry. The election date has been set for June 28. Raisi was a hardliner cleric but by no means a saint. During the summer of 1988, Raisi was a key member of the "Death Commission" responsible for the execution of thousands of political prisoners, primarily members of the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (MEK) and other leftist groups. A prominent figure in Iran's power structure, Raisi was poised for further advancement until his horrifying death. While his demise creates speculation about the successor to Supreme Leader 85-year-old Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, it's unlikely to significantly alter Iran's political trajectory. The conservative-dominated system will prioritise continuity and stability, albeit amidst internal jockeying for influence. Raisi's successor faces a daunting agenda amid economic turmoil and societal discontent, with the spectre of continued international sanctions looming large. With internal dissent simmering and external pressures mounting, the succession process becomes pivotal. The coming days will decide if any discernible change takes place or if the old order continues where moderates and leftists have no role to play.

### PICTALK



A man feeds a parrot's chick that fell off a tree, in Guwahati

PTI

## Can AAP survive its ultimate resilience test?



KALYANI SHANKAR

As Kejriwal presents himself as an underdog fighting against perceived persecution, this election will be pivotal in determining the trajectory of both his career and the AAP

Delhi's Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal, has overcome numerous obstacles in the past decade. Yet, his unwavering resilience has been a beacon of inspiration. He and his party are currently facing the biggest crisis in the liquor policy case.

Despite the challenges, Kejriwal's political journey is a testament to his indomitable spirit. From a brief 49-day tenure and losing all seven seats in Delhi in 2014, he orchestrated a remarkable comeback, securing 67 out of 70 seats in the 2015 Delhi Assembly polls.

The arrest of Kejriwal in the Delhi liquor policy case last month, which involves allegations of corruption and misuse of power, has cast a shadow of uncertainty over the future of the Aam Aadmi Party. Will this be the end of the party's road, or can they weather this storm and continue their political journey?

The Apex court's decision to grant bail to Kejriwal, allowing him to campaign for his party in the ongoing elections, is a beacon of hope for Kejriwal's supporters. This positive development paves the way for Kejriwal's success, especially if he garners public sympathy.

Kejriwal presents himself as the underdog, highlighting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's alleged persecution and his colleagues' imprisonment. Kejriwal and his party have been trying to show the public how he was mistreated in prison and how he was denied insulin and his diabetes medication.

Kejriwal's arrest is the biggest crisis for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) since its founding in November 2012. The party has faced numerous challenges, including internal conflicts, allegations of corruption and the need to maintain its image as a party for the common man. Over the years, many of Kejriwal's associates from the India Against Corruption (IAC) days have been dumped and he remains a despot. Kejriwal has introduced a personality cult centred around him.

The Aam Aadmi Party's rise to power has been quite dramatic.



It originated from the India Against Corruption movement led by Anna Hazare in 2012. The party came into power within months, but Kejriwal's resignation within 48 hours was unsurprising. However, he returned in 2015 and 2019, winning the Delhi Assembly polls with a significant majority. These events have sparked curiosity about the party's political trajectory and Kejriwal's resilience. Kejriwal has always been ambitious. He positioned himself as a prime ministerial candidate and even ran against Modi in Benares in 2014 but lost. This bold move significantly boosted Kejriwal's and his party's profile.

In the recently formed INDIA coalition, a significant political alliance that aims to challenge the dominance of the BJP, the AAP stands out as the only party other than Congress to rule more than one State. This alliance could pave the way for his party's expansion beyond Delhi and Punjab.

However, currently, AAP will have a significant political impact in only 20 constituencies. Kejriwal's national influ-



THE AAM AADMI PARTY IS NOT JUST A POLITICAL ENTITY. IT IS POISED TO FILL THE VOID LEFT BY CONGRESS AND TARGET POLITICALLY BIPOLAR STATES LIKE HIMACHAL PRADESH, HARYANA, RAJASTHAN AND GUJARAT

ence depends on his party's performance.

The AAP currently holds one seat in the Lok Sabha and ten in the Upper House. The party has expanded its influence to other States and was granted national party status in April 2023.

The Aam Aadmi Party's rise to power in Indian politics is fascinating. Unlike the BJP or the Left parties, it has no solid ideological stance. It has not relied on regional or socialist backgrounds like the AIADMK, DMK, Samajwadi Party, Biju Janata Dal, or Rashtriya Janata Dal. Instead, it has gained power by championing development and the freebie culture.

The AAP is now contesting elections in Delhi with the Congress party, while Punjab is contesting 13 seats independently. These alliances offer a promising outlook for Kejriwal's political journey. The Aam Aadmi Party is not just a political entity. It is poised to fill the void left by Congress and target politically bipolar States like Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Modi has promised a "Modi ki guarantee," while Kejriwal

has outlined a ten-point agenda. This agenda includes "freeing" Indian land from Chinese occupation if the I.N.D.I.A. bloc forms the Government at the Centre, attaining Statehood for Delhi, ensuring a 24/7 power supply and providing free education. These promises reflect Kejriwal's focus on national issues. The Delhi liquor policy case has become inconvenient for the AAP and convenient for the BJP, as elections are underway. It raises questions like, is it the end of the road? Can the second rung of ladders like Gopal Rai, Saurabh Bhardwaj, Sandeep Pathak, Raghav Chadha and Atishi Run the party, or will Kejriwal, with his usual luck, return? Kejriwal is optimistic and hopes that luck will be on his side. This positive outlook has served him well so far.

His popularity will rise if his party secures a respectable number of seats in the current Lok Sabha polls. Only the voters can decide and their decision will shape the future of Kejriwal and the Aam Aadmi Party in Indian politics.

(The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### MALIWAL CASE

Madam — Apropos the editorial, "An Intricate Puzzle," published on May 20. Wherein the Pioneer has truly asserted that the incident is likely to have ramifications beyond immediate political dynamics, potentially influencing voter perception and future elections. The cases booked under IPC Sections 308 (attempt to commit culpable homicide), 341 (punishment for wrongful restraint), 354D (stalking), filing the FIR under sections 506 (punishment for criminal intimidation) and 509 (word, gesture or intent to insult) against Bibhav Kumar aide Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in connection with the attack on Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal reflect seriousness.

Picking up Bibhav Kumar from the official residence of the Chief Minister and seizing CCTV, DVR, mobile etc. can prove helpful in revealing the secrets of the crime. But it seems that as part of a conspiracy, Bibhav Kumar was hiding at Chief Minister Kejriwal's house and was engaged in destroying the evidence. Delhi Police should make every effort to collect crime data by using the latest digital technology and present concrete evidence before the court. So that the perpetrators of this serious crime can be punished as per the rule of the law.

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

#### RISING LIFE EXPECTANCY

Madam — An individual's life span is dictated by a myriad of factors. According to the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) study, global life expectancy is expected to increase by 4.9 years in men and 4.2 years in women by the year 2050. From 73.6 in 2022, there may be a jump to 78.1 in 2050. This trend will tend to be more exemplified in nations with a history of very low life expectancy. It is no secret that nowadays people are more cautious about their health. While diseases and disorders have taught them lessons, mortality and morbidity around them have disciplined their lives. Past pandemics, in particular COVID-19, have instilled a sense of fear

#### Secularism over politics



Apropos the news article, "Economic crisis takes a backseat in elections", published on May 20, this is my response. It is a pity that religion rather than economic issues take the stage in the election campaign for the ruling party at the Centre in our secular country. Earlier in feudalism, a king or a feudal lord used to favour his religion over other religions. History witnessed that such a practice spelt disaster on every occasion. The people felt the need for a complete separa-

tion of religion from politics. This gave birth to secularism. All modern progressive nations have embraced secularism after learning how painful it would be to deviate from its path.

Mixing religion and politics destroys accountability, enables corruption and favours one religion over others, undermining democracy. Politicians should be elected based on policy, not religion and churches should focus on spirituality, not politics. It divides the citizens and damages the unity and integrity of the country. It does not allow the policymakers to follow the progressive ideals of equality and fraternity. Rather, it attracts negative things such as discrimination, marginalisation, conflict and unrest. Some of our neighbouring countries have experienced the danger of not walking in the path of secularism. India must follow secularism and let religion be a personal matter between God and a person.

Sujit De | Kolkata

as well as responsibility in them like never before.

An extended lifespan increases susceptibility to non-communicable diseases like cancer, diabetes and hypertension. As life expectancy in India is projected to rise, addressing behavioural and metabolic risks is crucial for healthy aging over the next two decades. Health outcomes can be significantly improved by efficiently addressing the risk factors. Furthermore, a safe environment and adequate vaccination can go a long way.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

#### HAPPINESS IS A SKILL

Madam — Apropos the feature article, "Connecting the Mind and Body," by Ravi Valluri, published on May 20, this is my response. Happiness is a skill that human beings must teach themselves. A lot of people spend so much time ruminating about the past or thinking about the future that they forget to enjoy the most beautiful gift they have received from God—the present moment. Our society is structured in a way that keeps reminding us of our

failures in the past and makes us anxious about our future. We need to consciously make efforts to silence our minds by incorporating daily practices into our daily routines. Spending time in nature is one of the best-known ways to reconnect with your inner self. Meditating for 20 - 30 minutes daily can also provide you with a treasure trove of peace. Journaling can help you manage your emotions and teach you to focus on the present moment. Expressing gratitude to loved ones for being a part of your lives also goes a long way in nurturing the relationships you have with people that eventually become a source of joy for you. Exercising daily is also a good way to take care of your health. Staying away from social media and all the unrealistic expectations it imposes on you is imperative. All these practices when done every day can help you augment your happiness levels and enjoy life to the fullest.

Charvi Kathuria | Delhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## The rise of online internships for students

Students are opting for online internships to gain practical experience, develop crucial skills and prepare themselves for the evolving job market

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, students are increasingly recognising the importance of proactive engagement in shaping their future careers. Embracing the adage of "building a door" to their professional aspirations, school students are turning to online internships as a means to gain valuable experiential learning opportunities and prepare themselves for the dynamic job market that awaits them upon graduation. Online internships have witnessed a surge in relevance in recent years, offering school students an array of benefits that extend beyond traditional in-person placements. **Flexibility and Accessibility:** Unlike traditional internships with fixed schedules, online internships provide students with a flexible work environment tailored to accommodate their schedules. This flexibility allows them to optimise productivity according to their peak hours of concentration while balancing other commitments such as classes or extracurricular activities. Additionally, the absence of commute time associated with virtual internships fur-



ther enhances students' ability to dedicate time to their roles.

**Skill Development:** Engaging in tasks aligned with their field of interest, interns acquire practical experience and hone essential competencies crucial for professional success. By demonstrating initiative and self-reliance in completing assigned projects remotely, interns showcase their readiness to thrive in diverse work environments. These experiences not only deepen their expertise but also bolster their resumes, setting them apart in competitive job markets.

**Access to Talent Beyond Geographical Boundaries:** Online internships offer employers access to a diverse pool of talent unrestricted by geographical boundaries. This expanded reach enriches organisations with diverse perspectives, skills and cultur-

al insights, fostering innovation and collaboration within teams. Additionally, it prepares companies for the evolving dynamics of the modern workforce by developing remote work capabilities.

**Exploration of Career Paths:** Online internships serve as a platform for students to explore different career paths and gain insight into various industries. This exploration phase allows students to clarify their interests, identify strengths and weaknesses and make informed decisions about their future career goals.

**Networking Opportunities:** Despite being remote, online internships provide students with networking opportunities that can be instrumental in their career development. Interacting with professionals within their chosen industry, connecting with fellow interns and building relationships with mentors and supervisors can lead to mentorship opportunities, job referrals and valuable insights into industry trends.

**Innovative Learning Experiences:** Through interactive projects, virtual meet-

ings and online training sessions, online internships offer innovative learning experiences that complement traditional classroom education. These immersive experiences bridge the gap between theory and practice, fostering critical thinking.

**Cultural Exposure:** Working with colleagues from diverse backgrounds exposes students to different perspectives, communication styles and work cultures, enriching their understanding of the global economy's interconnectedness.

Engaging in online internships significantly boosts students' resumes and bolsters their prospects for future employment. These experiences serve as tangible evidence of their initiative, adaptability and capacity to thrive in dynamic work environments, positioning them as desirable candidates poised for success in their chosen career paths. Thus, online internships not only enrich students' skill sets but also empower them to navigate the complexities of the modern job market.

(The author is the Founder, Zamit; views are personal)



AARUL MALVIYA



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Through spiritual purity, we can rise above limitations and obstacles



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We all end in death, i.e. our material bodies must die at some time in future, but we should avoid a dead end also, i.e. that leads to something not so good. We, souls, will go on in new bodies, but the problem is in what bodies and where. Are we going to a place where there is perpetual unrest? There are many areas in the world, which are in perpetual turmoil. Place of birth is one problem. Then, in what bodies are we born? Even in human bodies, there can be many handicaps like deformities, genetic defects and surely not-so-good looks, personality, level of intelligence, etc. There is a world of difference between ourselves and our material bodies. We, souls, are journeying eternally in various bodies, but our bodies have limited lifespans only. This thought should be uppermost in our minds. We should try to make sure that we make progress and avoid our end in a worse situation, condition, form or State.

Let us see how we can ensure it. We, souls, are parts of God. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 15.7) What does this mean? That we are very special, being parts of God. Imagine being the son of a very rich and cultured person. God is infinitely superior than any parent can be. God will always be favourable to us if we take His shelter because we have free will. In the case of parents, we receive shelter automatically, but in the case of God, it is a matter of choice. It shouldn't be too difficult to make this choice, but it is. Why? Taking shelter requires some basics. We must give up our egos; we need to do spiritual practices to qualify for God's attention. There is another big problem. Our lives are almost entirely controlled by our fate, which is what we have accumulated in our previous life/lives. One may question this premise. Yes, there is free will and liberty to do what we desire, feel or decide. But all these are controlled by our natures, which again are parts of our fate. What is the evidence? A person given to get angry readily continues to do so throughout his life, unless God intervenes on his or her behalf. And God wouldn't unless we take His shelter. Where does it leave us? In not a pleasant place. Life will go on almost automatically with not much improvement.



Are we doomed? We are not. God is very kind; He has left an opening for us; we just have to get started. We must have a desire. God has arranged to preach everywhere. If we bother to go and listen, we will be convinced. And the start is very simple. We just need to become better in whatever we do, not just in our work. In spiritual parlance, we must try to increase the mode of goodness in ourselves. Our whole being is made up of three modes, which are goodness, passion and darkness. They are in different percentages, with the mode of passion being predominant in most of us. It is no wonder that we are quite passionate about what we think, do, etc. Now we should try to be good in everything. For example, if we are habituated to eating foods, which are bitter, sour, salty, very hot, pungent, horse, etc. (17.9), we should choose tasty, not dry, not having too much liquid foods. (17.8) Similar improvements are required in what we speak, see, hear, etc. As purity increases, we will begin to get attracted to God and spiritual acts.

The next big decision is to control our egos. This is the biggest hindrance in taking shelter from God. Arjuna had a similar problem. His ego would not allow him to accept God's instructions. Lord Krishna had to warn him, "If you will not heed on account of the feeling of being the doer, you will perish." (18.58) Is this not the fate of almost all of us? Who can change fate? God can and only He can in a substantial way. There is no one to share one's tough times. The solution again suggests itself. Love God and you will be able to love others as well. You won't always look for faults in others. This attitude change will help in becoming friends with family members. The conclusion is: that God is the solution if we wish to avoid the dead ends of our lives. Will we take God's shelter?

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

## Raisi's tragic demise clouds Iran's future



SANTOSH MATHEW

The enigmatic President of Iran breathed his last in a helicopter crash, leaving behind a legacy as complex as the country he governed



In the heart of the Middle East, where history and geopolitics are deeply intertwined, a towering figure met a tragic end, sending shockwaves across the globe. Ibrahim Raisi, the enigmatic President of Iran, breathed his last in a helicopter crash, leaving behind a legacy as complex as the region he governed. Raisi's rise to power was nothing short of remarkable. Born in 1960, he emerged from humble beginnings to become one of Iran's most influential figures. His journey began in the hallowed halls of Tehran's judiciary, where he earned a reputation for his unwavering commitment to Islamic principles and his uncompromising stance against corruption.

Raisi truly made his mark on the political stage. In June 2021, he ascended to the presidency, promising to usher in a new era of prosperity and stability for his beloved nation. His tenure was marked by bold foreign policies and ambitious domestic reforms, as he sought to solidify Iran's position as a regional powerhouse. At the heart of Raisi's vision was Iran's role as a champion of Shia Islam, a beacon of resistance against oppression and injustice. Under his leadership, Iran forged alliances with like-minded nations, offering support to movements and groups fighting for their rights across the Middle East.

However, amidst the triumphs and accolades, tragedy struck with devastating force. On a fateful day, as Raisi embarked on a routine journey to Azerbaijan, fate intervened. His helicopter plummeted from the sky, claiming his life and those of several others onboard. The crash sent shockwaves rippling through Iran and beyond, leaving a nation in mourning and the world reeling from the loss of a visionary leader.

As the dust settled and the wreckage was cleared, the full extent of Raisi's legacy came into focus. His death left a void in Iran's political landscape, one that would be difficult to fill. But beyond the borders of his homeland, Raisi's impact was felt far and wide. In the halls of power in Moscow and Ankara, Raisi was revered



RAISI WIELDED IMMENSE INFLUENCE, SHAPING IRAN'S DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICIES WITH A FIRM HAND. HIS PRESIDENCY WAS MARKED BY A SERIES OF INITIATIVES AIMED AT STRENGTHENING IRAN'S ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE AND REDUCING RELIANCE ON FOREIGN POWERS

as a stalwart ally, a steadfast defender of Iran's interests on the global stage. Russia and Turkey had lent their support to the rescue efforts, a testament to the enduring bonds forged between nations in times of crisis. Meanwhile, in distant New Delhi, Raisi's passing was met with a mixture of sorrow and reflection. India had enjoyed a burgeoning partnership with Iran under his leadership, particularly through collaborative efforts at the Chabahar Port. His absence would be keenly felt in the corridors of diplomacy, where his influence had helped shape the course of history. But perhaps most intriguing were the whispers of conspiracy surrounding Raisi's untimely demise. Some speculated that external forces were at play, seeking to destabilise Iran and undermine its leadership. Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency, was mentioned in hushed tones, its shadowy hand suspected of orchestrating the tragedy. As the world mourned the loss of Ibrahim Raisi, it also grappled with the uncertainty of what lay ahead. His death cast a pall of uncertainty over Iran's future, raising questions about the country's leadership and its place on the global stage. But amidst the darkness, there remained a glimmer of hope, a testament to the resilience of the human spirit. For in the legacy of Ibrahim Raisi, there lay the seeds of inspiration, a reminder that even in the face of tragedy, the indomitable spirit of humanity endures, ready to rise again, stronger and more determined than ever before. Raisi's sudden demise not only revealed the depth of his ultra-conservative beliefs but also showcased his unwavering commitment to populism, positioning him as a champion of the people

and the right-hand man of Ayatollah Khamenei. As the Ayatollah's trusted confidant, Raisi wielded immense influence, shaping Iran's domestic and foreign policies with a firm hand. His presidency was marked by a series of initiatives aimed at strengthening Iran's economic independence and reducing reliance on foreign powers. He focused on bolstering the country's industrial base, improving infrastructure and promoting technological innovation. On the international front, Raisi pursued a policy of strategic partnerships, particularly with Russia and China. These alliances were seen as a counterbalance to Western influence and as a means of securing economic and military support. Raisi's administration also prioritised the expansion of Iran's influence in regional conflicts, providing support to allied groups in Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. His efforts to position Iran as a regional leader were often viewed through the lens of resistance against Western hegemony. Despite his achievements, Raisi's tenure was not without controversy. His hardline stance on social and political issues drew criticism from both domestic and international observers. Human rights organisations frequently condemned his administration for its treatment of political dissidents and minority groups. The suppression of protests and the enforcement of strict social codes were seen as hallmarks of his governance.

Raisi's death left a nation at a crossroads. The mourning period was marked by both grief and reflection, as Iranians contemplated the future of their country without the man who had steered it through turbulent times. The

question of succession loomed large, with potential candidates vying for the position of leadership. The uncertainty surrounding Iran's political future was palpable, with analysts speculating on the potential shifts in policy and power dynamics. In the international arena, Raisi's passing was met with a range of reactions. Allies expressed their condolences and reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining strong ties with Iran. In contrast, adversaries viewed his death as an opportunity to reassess their strategies towards the country. The geopolitical landscape of the Middle East, already fraught with complexity, faced the prospect of further upheaval. Despite the challenges, there was a sense of resilience among the Iranian populace. The nation's history of overcoming adversity served as a reminder of its enduring strength. Raisi's legacy, with its blend of conservatism, populism and strategic acumen, would continue to influence the country's trajectory. His vision of an Iran that stands firm against external pressures and champions the cause of Shia Islam would remain a guiding principle for future leaders. As the world continued to navigate the aftermath of Raisi's death, one thing was clear: his impact on Iran and the broader Middle East would be felt for years to come. The region, shaped by his policies and leadership, would continue to evolve, reflecting the enduring legacy of a man whose life and career were as multifaceted as the history of the land he loved. In the end, Ibrahim Raisi's story was a testament to the complexities of leadership in a region where past and present are forever intertwined.

(The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)

## Rajasthan healthcare challenges despite Government efforts

The Government's health programmes fail to sufficiently support rural women and girls affected by anaemia, a significant public health concern

In Rajasthan, the healthcare system is facing significant challenges, particularly in rural areas. Despite numerous Government initiatives aimed at improving healthcare access and quality, the benefits of these programs are not reaching their intended targets.

This issue is especially pronounced among women and adolescent girls suffering from anaemia. While the State Government has enacted the Right to Health Act and conducts monthly campaigns to combat anaemia, these efforts have yet to bring about substantial improvements in the health sector across rural Rajasthan. An example of this can be seen in the village of Manoharpura located just four kilometres



NASEEM BANO

from the heritage city of Udaipur. This village falls under the Badgaon Panchayat and has a population of around one thousand. Predominantly inhabited by Scheduled Tribes, the village has a low level of education, which impacts the awareness of its residents. Despite its proximity to the district headquarters, Manoharpura lags significantly in the health sector. Many families in the village lack even basic identification documents, which prevents them from accessing healthcare services.

The reason for not having documents is that most children in the village were born at home rather than in hospitals, resulting in the absence of birth certificates and Aadhar cards. For young girls



and women, the State Government has launched the 'I Am Shakti Udaan Yojana'. This scheme aims to empower economically weaker women and girls and the goal is to include about 2.8

million women and adolescents in this benefit by 2024. As part of this scheme, menstruating girls and women aged 11 to 45 receive sanitary pads. However, most adolescent girls and women miss

out on this benefit. Due to both a lack of awareness and poverty, many girls still use dirty clothes during menstruation instead of buying pads. Additionally, about half of the adolescent girls and women in the village suffer from anaemia, despite the State Government's monthly Shakti Diwas events aimed at eradicating anaemia in Rajasthan. It is important to note that various activities are organised under this campaign to reduce anaemia rates among children, women and adolescents. 'Shakti Diwas' events are held at Anganwadi centres, Government schools, health and wellness centres, sub-health centres, primary health centres, CHCs, dispensaries and sub-district and district hospitals. These

events include anaemia screenings, haemoglobin tests and treatment, distribution of iron tablets and activities to raise awareness and promote behaviour change regarding anaemia. On 'Shakti Diwas', targeted activities are conducted for children aged 6 months to 59 months, out-of-school children aged 5 to 9 years, adolescents aged 10 to 19 years and married women aged 20 to 24 years. Efforts are also made to combat anaemia in pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers. However, this issue extends beyond Manoharpura village to the entire Udaipur district, where ineffective implementation has affected district rankings. During the health department's monthly review

meeting last November, the CEO Kirti Rathore expressed dissatisfaction with the situation. She emphasised the urgent need to ensure that benefits reach all children, adolescents and women and to strictly enforce measures to make the district anaemia-free. These shortcomings reveal that Manoharpura residents are still not receiving full healthcare benefits and the village has not met its health targets. Addressing this requires both administrative action and increased community awareness, involving as many families as possible.

(The writer is a social worker from Grameen Awam Samajik Vikas Sansthan, Ajmer; views are personal. Charkha Features)

# Mourners begin days of funerals for Iran's pres killed in chopper crash

AP ■ DUBAI

Mourners in black began gathering Tuesday for days of funerals and processions for Iran's late president, foreign minister and others killed in a helicopter crash, a government-led series of ceremonies aimed at both honoring the dead and projecting strength in an unsettled Middle East.

For Iran's Shiite theocracy, mass demonstrations have been crucial since millions thronged the streets of Tehran to welcome Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1979 during the Islamic Revolution, and also attended his funeral 10 years later. An estimated 1 million turned out in 2020 for processions for the late Revolutionary Guard Gen Qassem Soleimani, who was slain in a US drone strike in

Baghdad. Whether President Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian and others draw the same crowd remains in question, particularly as Raisi died in a helicopter crash, won his office in the lowest-turnout presidential election in the country's history and presided over sweeping crack-downs on all dissent. Prosecutors already have warned people over showing any public signs of celebrating his death and a heavy security force presence has been seen on the streets of Tehran since the crash. But Raisi, 63, had been discussed as a possible successor for Iran's supreme leader, the 85-year-old Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. His death now throws that selection into question, particularly as there is no heir-apparent cleric for the presidency ahead

of planned June 28 elections. "Raisi's death comes at a moment when the Islamist regime is consolidated," wrote Alex Vatanka, an Iran expert at the Middle East Institute. "In short, there will be no power vacuum in Tehran; nonetheless, post-Khamenei Iran suddenly looks far less predictable than it did just a few days ago." A procession Tuesday morning led by a semitruck carrying the caskets of the dead slowly moved through the narrow streets of downtown Tabriz, the closest major city near the site of the crash Sunday. Thousands in black slowly walked beside the coffins, some throwing flowers up to them as an emcee wept through a loudspeaker for men he described as martyrs. On Wednesday, a funeral presided over by Khamenei will then turn into a procession



Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Mowahedi Kermani arrives to attend the first session of Assembly of Experts after an election that decided the new assembly, in Tehran, Iran, Tuesday. Under Iranian constitution the 86-member all-cleric assembly has the right to monitor the performance of supreme leader, and choosing or dismissing him. Mowahedi Kermani was picked Tuesday as head of the assembly.

as well. The caskets later arrived in Tehran to an honor guard at the airport. They will go on to the holy Shiite seminary city of Qom before returning to the Iranian capital.

It remains unclear what international presence that funeral will draw, as Raisi faced US sanctions for his part in mass executions in 1988 and for abuses targeting protesters and dissidents while leading the country's judiciary. Iran under Raisi also shipped bomb-carrying drones to Russia to be used in its war on Ukraine. "I don't feel comfortable sending condolences while Iran is sending drones that are used against civilians in Ukraine," wrote Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis on the social platform X. United Kingdom Security Minister Tom

Tugendhat echoed that in his own message on X: "President Raisi's regime has murdered thousands at home, and targeted people here in Britain and across Europe. I will not mourn him."

On Thursday, Raisi's hometown of Birjand will see a procession, followed by a funeral and burial at the Imam Reza shrine in the holy city of Mashhad, the only imam of the Shiite's faith buried in Iran. That shrine has long been a center for pilgrims and sees millions visit each year. Over the centuries, its grounds have served as the final burial site for heroes in Persian history. It's an incredibly high, rare honor in the faith. Iranian President Mohammad-Ali Rajai, the only other president to die in office when he was killed in a 1981 bombing, was buried in Tehran.

Iran's theocracy declared five days of mourning, encouraging people to attend the public mourning sessions. Typically, government employees and schoolchildren attend such events en masse, while others take part out of patriotism, curiosity or to witness historic events. Across Iran, its rural population often more closely embraces the Shiite faith and the government. However, Tehran has long held a far different view of Raisi and his government's policies as mass protests have roiled the capital for years. The most recent involved the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini, a woman detained over her allegedly loose headscarf, or hijab. The monthslong security crack-down that followed the demonstrations killed more than 500 people and saw over 22,000 detained.

# Israel faces fallout as allies back warrant requests

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israel sought Tuesday to contain the fallout from a request by the chief prosecutor of the world's top war crimes court for arrest warrants for Israeli and Hamas leaders, a move supported by three European countries, including key ally France.

Belgium, Slovenia and France each said Monday they backed the decision by International Criminal Court prosecutor Karim Khan, who accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, his Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, and three Hamas leaders — Yahya Sinwar, Mohammed Deif and Ismail Haniyeh — of war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip and Israel.

While no one faces imminent arrest, the announcement deepens Israel's global isolation at a time when it is facing



Police use water cannon to disperse demonstrators blocking a road during a protest against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, and calling for the release of hostages held in the Gaza Strip by the Hamas militant group, outside the Knesset, Israel's parliament in Jerusalem on Monday.

growing criticism from even its closest allies over the war in Gaza. Support for the warrants from three European Union

countries also exposes divisions in the West's approach to Israel. Israeli Foreign Minister Israel

Katz headed to France on Tuesday in response, and his meetings there could set the tone for how countries navigate the warrants — if they are eventually issued — and whether they could pose a threat to Israeli leaders.

Israel still has the support of its top ally, the United States, as well as other Western countries that spoke out against the decision. But if the warrants are issued, they could complicate international travel for Netanyahu and Gallant, even if they do not face any immediate risk of prosecution because Israel itself is not a member of the court.

As Israeli leaders came to grips with the prosecutor's decision, violence continued in the region, with an Israeli raid in the occupied West Bank killing at least seven Palestinians, including a local doctor, according to Palestinian health officials.

# Israeli officials seize AP equipments

Jerusalem (AP): Israeli officials seized a camera and broadcasting equipment belonging to The Associated Press in southern Israel on Tuesday, accusing the news organisation of violating the country's new ban on Al Jazeera.

The Qatari satellite channel is among thousands of clients that receive live video feeds from the AP and other news organisations. The AP denounced the move. "The Associated Press decries in the strongest terms the actions of the Israeli government to shut down our long-standing live feed showing a view into Gaza and seize AP equipment," said Lauren Easton, vice president of corporate communications at the AP. "The shutdown was not based on the content of the feed but rather an abusive use by the Israeli government of the country's new foreign broadcaster law. We urge the Israeli authorities to return our equipment and enable us to reinstate our live feed immediately so we can continue to provide this important visual journalism to thousands of media outlets around the world."

Officials from the Communications Ministry arrived at the AP location in the southern town of Sderot on Tuesday afternoon and seized the equipment. They handed the AP a piece of paper, signed by Communications Minister Shlomo Karhi, alleging it was violating the country's new foreign broadcaster law.

Shortly before the equipment was seized, it was broadcasting a general view of northern Gaza. The AP complies with Israel's military censorship rules, which prohibit broadcasts of details like troops movements that could endanger soldiers. The live shot has generally shown smoke rising over the territory. The seizure followed a verbal order Thursday to cease the live transmission — which the news organisation refused to do. Israeli officials used the new law to close down the offices of the Qatar-based broadcaster on May 5 and confiscated of its equipment, banned the channel's broadcasts, and blocked on its websites.

# US Police break up pro-Palestinian camp at Michigan University

Ann Arbor (US) (AP): Police broke up a pro-Palestinian encampment Tuesday at the University of Michigan, less than a week after demonstrators showed up at the home of a school official and placed fake body bags on her lawn.

Video posted online by Detroit-area TV stations showed police moving people away from the camp on the Diag, a common site for campus protests. The encampment had been set up in late April near the end of the school year. President Santa Ono said in a statement that the encampment had become a threat to safety, with overloaded power sources and open flames. Organisers had refused to comply with requests to make changes following an inspection by a fire marshal, he said. "The disregard for safety directives was only the latest in a series of troubling events," Ono said. Protesters have demanded that the school's endowment

stop investing in companies with ties to Israel. But the university insists it has no direct investments and less than \$15 million placed with funds that might include companies in Israel. That's less than 0.1% of the total endowment.

"There's nothing to talk about. That issue is settled," Sarah Hubbard, chair of the Board of Regents, said last week. A group of 30 protesters showed up at her house before dawn last week and placed stuffed, red-stained sheets on her lawn to resemble body bags. They banged a drum and chanted slogans over a bullhorn. Masked protesters also posted demands at the doors of other board members.

"This conduct is where our failure to address antisemitism leads literally — literally — to the front door of my home," board member Mark Bernstein, a Detroit-area lawyer, said at a board meeting

# Greek judge dismisses case against nine in shipwreck

AP ■ KAMALATA

A Greek judge dismissed charges against nine Egyptian men accused of causing a shipwreck that killed hundreds of migrants last year and sent shockwaves through the European Union's border protection and asylum operations, after a prosecutor told the court Greece lacked jurisdiction.

Shortly after the trial opened in the southern Greek city of Kalamata, public prosecutor Ekaterini Tsiironi recommended that the charges be dismissed, saying that Greek jurisdiction could be established because the overcrowded trawler sank outside Greek territorial waters. More than 500 people are believed to have gone down with the fishing trawler, which had been travelling from Libya to Italy. Following the sinking, 104 people were rescued — mostly migrants from Syria, Pakistan and Egypt — and 82

bodies were recovered. Supporters clapped and cheered as the judge announced the dismissal of a case that had faced criticism from international human rights groups, who argued that the accused's right to a fair trial was compromised because they faced judgment while an investigation into the Greek coast guard's rescue attempt is still under way.

Earlier, a small group of protesters clashed with riot police outside the courthouse. There were no reports of serious injuries but two people were detained. Officers from the special police forces maintained order in the courtroom. The defendants, most in their 20s, faced up to life in prison if convicted on multiple criminal charges over the sinking of the "Adriana" fishing trawler on June 14 last year off the southern coast of Greece. Defence lawyer Spyros Pantazis had earlier asked the court to declare itself incompetent to try

the case, arguing that the sinking occurred outside Greek territorial waters.

"The court should not be turned into an international punisher," Pantazis told the panel of three judges.

Kontaritou questioned all nine defendants through an interpreter. The accused said their intention was to travel to Italy, not Greece, and several declared their innocence. Kontaritou acknowledged that there "were no Greeks on board, it was not under a Greek flag and all the documents refer to the (vessel being) 47 nautical miles away."

United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres last year described the shipwreck as "horrific." The sinking renewed pressure on European governments to protect the lives of migrants and asylum seekers trying to reach the continent, as the number of people traveling illegally across the Mediterranean continues to rise every year.

# Macron makes surprise trip to New Caledonia

Paris (AP): French President Emmanuel Macron is making a surprise trip to riot-hit New Caledonia, the French Pacific territory that has been gripped by days of deadly unrest and where indigenous people have long sought independence.

"He will go there tonight," government spokesperson Prisca Thevenot said after a Cabinet meeting on Tuesday where the president said he'd decided to make the more than 33,000-kilometre (20,000-mile) round trip himself to the archipelago east of Australia.

Six people have been killed, including two gendarmes, and hundreds of others injured in New Caledonia amid armed clashes, looting and arson, raising new questions about Macron's handling of France's colonial legacy. There have been decades of tensions between indigenous Kanaks who seek independence for the archipelago of 270,000 people, and descendants of colonisers who want to remain part of France. The unrest erupted May 13 as the French legislature in Paris

debated amending the French Constitution to make changes to New Caledonia voter lists. Opponents fear the measure will benefit pro-France politicians in New Caledonia and further marginalise Kanaks who once suffered from strict segregation policies and widespread discrimination.

The violence is the most severe to shake New Caledonia since the 1980s, when France also imposed emergency measures on the island that became French in 1853 under Emperor Napoleon III. Paris last Wednesday declared a 12-day minimum state of emergency on the island and rushed in 1,000 reinforcements to bolster security forces that lost control of parts of the capital, Nouméa.

"Faced with the outbreak of violence, the priority is the return of order to allow dialogue to resume in New Caledonia," Thevenot, the government spokeswoman, said. "We are clear: Much remains to be done before the return to normal."

# Congo names third American in foiled coup plot

AP ■ KINSHASA

Congo's army spokesman on Tuesday released the name of the third American involved in a foiled coup plot in Kinshasa, while family members in Utah gathered to mourn Christian Malanga, the eccentric leader of the brazen and ill-fated attack targeting the presidential palace over the weekend. Brig Gen Sylvain Ekenge told The Associated Press the third American was Taylor Thomson. It wasn't immediately clear whether Thomson was among those arrested or killed on Sunday morning following the attack on the palace and another on the residence of a close ally of President Felix Tshisekedi.

Malanga, described as a naturalized American by Ekenge, was killed in a shootout at the palace after resisting arrest. The State Department said it could not confirm Malanga was a US citizen. The other two

Americans involved were a convicted marijuana trafficker and Malanga's 21-year-old son, Marcel. Authorities were still trying to untangle how the young man went from playing high school football in Utah to allegedly trying to unseat the leader of one of Africa's largest countries.

"My son is innocent," his mother, Brittney Sawyer, wrote in an email to The Associated Press on Monday, declining to elaborate.

Sawyer had regularly posted proud family photos on social media, including one in December showing Marcel, a young sister and a toddler hugging in matching Christmas pajamas. In 2020, she posted photos of Marcel lifting weights and dancing during COVID lockdown.

In a Facebook post early Monday, Sawyer angrily wrote that her son had followed his father. "This was an innocent boy following his father. I'm so

tired of all the videos being posted all over and being sent to me. God will take care of you people!" One video that circulated on social media over the weekend showed her son alongside a bloodied white man, whose identity was unclear, both covered in dust and surrounded by Congolese soldiers. Marcel has his hands raised and a frightened look on his face.

On Monday, at the West Jordan home of Malanga's mother, Chantal Malanga, relatives gathered to mourn the deceased leader. A steady flow of friends dropped by with plates of food and to offer condolences.

Sydney, a cousin of Christian Malanga's who answered the door, told AP the family was feeling "heartbroken" and "so raw" after learning of his death. They were discussing plans for a possible funeral in Utah, she said, without giving further details.

# Slovak Parl votes to condemn political violence

Bratislava (AP): Slovakia's Parliament voted unanimously on Tuesday to condemn politically motivated violence following an assassination attempt on Prime Minister Robert Fico, who is recovering from multiple wounds from last week's shooting, hospital officials said.

Fico "remains conscious and communicative" and "further actions are being taken to improve his health condition," said the hospital treating him in the central city of Banská Bystrica.

The hospital says that Fico, 59, is no longer in life-threatening condition after being shot in the abdomen as he greeted supporters last Wednesday in the town of Handlova, about 140 km (85 miles) northeast of the capital, Bratislava.

Fico underwent five-hour surgery immediately after the shooting, followed by another two-hour operation last Friday.

# Haiti's main airport reopens

AP ■ PORT-AU-PRINCE

Haiti's main international airport reopened Monday for the first time in nearly three months after relentless gang violence forced authorities to close it. The reopening of the Toussaint-Louverture airport in the capital of Port-au-Prince is expected to help ease a critical shortage of medications and other basic supplies. The country's main seaport remains badly affected. Gangs control 80% of the capital.

U.S.-based airlines are not expected to start using the airport until late May or early June.

The first commercial passenger flight since March left for Miami nearly two hours behind schedule, with sweating passengers complaining to local carrier Sunrise Airways about the lack of air conditioning until takeoff.

Before Monday, the sole airport operating in Haiti was located in the north coastal city of Cap-Haitien. It was out of reach for many seeking to flee the country, with roads leading from

# peaceful communities, leaving thousands homeless.

More than 2,500 people have been killed or injured in Haiti from January to March, a more than 50% increase compared to the same period last year, according to the United Nations.

At the Couronne Bar near the sole airport gate operating on Monday, 43-year-old manager Klav-Dja Raphael welcomed her first clients. But her smile belied her fear.

"We are scared because they can still attack us here," she said. "We must come in. It's our job, but we're afraid."



Port-au-Prince controlled by gangs that have opened fire on cars and buses passing through. The U.S. government had evacuated hundreds of citizens by helicopter out of a hilly neighborhood in Port-au-Prince, as did nonprofit organizations, as gangs laid siege to parts of the capital.

The attacks began on Feb. 29, with gunmen seizing control of police stations, opening fire on the Port-au-Prince airport and storming Haiti's two biggest prisons, freeing more than 4,000 inmates. Gangs since then have directed their attacks on previously



# British man dies, passengers hurt in Singapore airlines turbulence

AP ■ BANGKOK

An elderly British man died and more than two dozen passengers were injured when a Singapore Airlines flight from London was struck by severe turbulence and plunged 6,000 feet in the span of some a few minutes Tuesday over the Indian Ocean.

The flight was then diverted and landed in stormy weather in Bangkok. Authorities said the British man may have suffered a heart attack, though that has not been confirmed. His name was not immediately released.

The Boeing 777-300ER flight from London's Heathrow airport to Singapore, with 211 passengers and 18 crew members aboard, landed at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport at 3:45 pm local time, the airline said in a Facebook post. Emergency medical crews rushed to help

the passengers. Videos posted on the LINE messaging platform by Suvarnabhumi Airport showed a line of ambulances streaming to the scene.

In a statement posted on Facebook, Singapore Airlines said that as of four hours after the emergency landing, 18 people remained hospitalized while another 12 were treated on outpatient basis. "The remaining passengers and crew are being examined and given treatment, where necessary," at the airport, it said.

Airports of Thailand group said the lightly injured and non-injured passengers are being assisted at a specially assigned location inside the terminal at the Suvarnabhumi Airport. Thailand's Transport Minister Suriya Jungrungkit said in a statement that Singapore would dispatch another plane later Tuesday night to trans-

port the lightly injured and non-injured passengers to the city-state's Changi airport. He said that plane was expected to arrive in Bangkok at 9:45 pm. Kittipong Kittikachorn, general manager of Suvarnabhumi Airport, told a news conference on Tuesday night that the British man was 73 years old and appeared to have suffered a heart attack.

Tracking data captured by FlightRadar24 and analysed by The Associated Press show the Singapore Airlines flight SQ321 cruising at an altitude of 37,000 feet (11,300 metres). Just after 0800 GMT, the Boeing 777-300ER suddenly and sharply plummets to 31,000 feet (9,400 metres) over the span of some three minutes, the data shows. The aircraft then stayed at 31,000 feet (9,400 metres) for under 10 minutes before diverting and landing in Bangkok less than half an

hour later. The sharp descent in turbulence happened as the flight was over the Andaman Sea, near Myanmar. The aircraft sent a "squawk code" of 7700 at that time, an international emergency signal. "Singapore Airlines offers its deepest condolences to the family of the deceased," the airline said. "We are working with the local authorities in Thailand to provide the necessary medical assistance, and sending a team to Bangkok to provide any additional assistance needed."

Singapore Transport Minister Chee Hong Tat also extended condolences on his Facebook page. He said his ministry and Singapore's Foreign Ministry, as well as the country's Civil Aviation Authority and Changi Airport officials, along with airline staff, "are providing support to the affected passengers and their families."

# Amnesty chief criticises military trial of civilians in Pakistan

PTI ■ KARACHI

Military courts in Pakistan should not try more than 100 people for their alleged role in attacks on army installations during the riots that followed former premier Imran Khan's arrest on May 9 last year, Amnesty International chief has said, urging the government to uphold its international obligations.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights clearly state that civilians should not be tried by military courts, Amnesty International's Secretary General Dr Agnes Callamard said.

The Amnesty chief, who is on her first regional visit to South Asia, was on Tuesday quoted by Dawn News as saying that although military trials for civilians are a "no-no" under international law, "sadly it has happened throughout Pakistan's political history... [and] is not a novelty."

## Pak court rejects petition to disqualify Imran over election nomination allegations

Islamabad (PTI): A Pakistani court on Tuesday rejected a petition seeking jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's disqualification in a case in which he allegedly provided incorrect information while submitting his nomination papers for the general elections held in 2018.

The petition filed by an individual, Mohammad Sajid, had alleged that the 71-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder had not disclosed his alleged daughter —

Tyrian — in his nomination papers which were filed for contesting the 2018 general elections, the Geo News reported.

Khan's PTI party won the 2018 general elections and the former cricketer-turned-politician served as the prime minister of Pakistan from August 2018 to April 2022.

Sajid alleged that Khan provided incorrect information while submitting his nomination papers for the general elections held in 2018.

Callamard said Amnesty was quite alarmed by the shrinking space for freedom of expression in the country. Calling the ban "disproportionate, unnecessary and against international law", Callamard said it was particularly bad for individuals unable to access Virtual Private Networks (VPNs). "Everything is being targeted, the means of expression and the people who are expressing themselves. This includes journalists."

"The space for free speech in Pakistan is shrinking," Callamard said, noting that criticism of state institutions did not constitute a crime under international law. "Pakistan should do the opposite of what it is doing right now," she said. Her statement came amidst the decision by Pakistan to conduct the trial of more than 100 civilians for their alleged role in attacks on army installations during the riots that followed jailed former premier Imran Khan's arrest on May 9 last year.

Callamard, emphasising the principles of transparency, due process and judicial independence, urged Pakistan to uphold its international obligations and safeguard constitutional guarantees ensuring the

right to a fair trial. "The use of military courts is threatening the constitutionality of what's happening right now," she said. Regarding the ban on X (formerly Twitter) in Pakistan,

# Germany's foreign minister visits Kyiv

AP ■ KYIV

Germany's foreign minister Annalena Baerbock visited Kyiv on Tuesday in the latest public display of support for Ukraine by its Western partners, although deliveries of promised weapons and ammunition from NATO countries like Germany have been slow and have left Ukraine vulnerable to a recent Russian push along parts of the front line.

Annalena Baerbock renewed Berlin's calls for partners to send more air defense systems, as Russia pounds Ukraine with missiles, glide bombs and rockets. Germany is the second-biggest supplier of military aid to Ukraine after the United States. Ukraine's depleted troops are trying to hold off a fierce Russian offensive along the eastern border in one of the most critical phases of the war, which is stretching into its third year. Germany recently pledged a third US-made Patriot battery for Ukraine, but Kyiv officials say they are still facing an alarming shortfall of air defenses against the Russian onslaught. The Kremlin's forces have used their advantage in the skies to debilitate Ukraine's power grid, hoping to sap Ukrainian morale



Germany's Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock speaks to Ukrainian Energy Minister Herman Halushchenko during official visit to a thermal power plant which was destroyed by a Russian rocket attack in Ukraine, Tuesday.

itary and civilian areas. "This brings us back again and again to the need for air defense — for additional defense systems that could significantly mitigate the difficulties for our warriors and the threat to our cities and communities," Zelenskyy said late Monday on social media. Zelenskyy claimed Ukraine's forces are still in control of the contested areas, though Russia says it has captured a series of border villages.

It was not possible to independently verify either side's battlefield claims. Baerbock had planned to visit Kharkiv on Tuesday but the trip had to be called off for security reasons, German news agency dpa reported. Almost 11,000 people have been evacuated from Kharkiv border areas since Russia launched its offensive attacks there on May 10. A Russian overnight drone attack hit transport infrastructure in Kharkiv city, the regional capital, damaging over 25 trucks, buses, and other vehicles, regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said Tuesday. Seven people were injured, he said.

Ukraine's general staff said the frequency of Russian attacks in

Kharkiv slowed on Monday, though fighting continued. Russian troops are also conducting reconnaissance and sabotage raids in Ukraine's northern Sumy and Chernihiv regions, shelling border settlements and laying more minefields, according to Dmytro Lykhovii, Ukraine's general staff spokesman. The front line is some 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) long. Baerbock was due to meet with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba in Kyiv. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has been resisting appeals from Ukrainian officials to provide Taurus missiles, which are equipped with stealth technology and have a range of up to 500 kilometers (300 miles). The German- and Swedish-made missiles would be able to reach targets deep in Russia from Ukrainian soil. But Berlin has balked at that prospect, saying that sending the missiles would bring a risk of it becoming directly involved in the war.

The restriction on not allowing Ukraine to fire at Russia has denied Kyiv the ability to strike at Russian troops and equipment massing for attacks on the other side of the border, a Washington-based think tank said.

# 4.4 magnitude quake hits Italy, prisoners evacuated

AP ■ MILAN

A women's prison near Naples was evacuated as a precaution Tuesday following a 4.4 magnitude quake with an epicentre at an active volcano west of the southern Italian port city that forced hundreds of residents to sleep in tents or cars. No injuries and only minor damage was reported following the Monday evening temblor.

The quake was the strongest in recorded history around the Phlegraean Fields, a sprawling area of ancient volcanic centres near the Tyrrhenian Sea in a zone that encompasses western neighbourhoods of Naples and its suburbs, said Giuseppe De Natale, a volcanologist of Italy's INGV National Geophysics and Volcanology Centre.

During the last major event in 1984, 40,000 residents were evacuated during a period of intense seismic activity as a precaution against a feared eruption that did not occur. Some 140 inmates at a women's prison in the Pozzuoli suburb were evacuated while officials



check the structure for damage. A dozen apartment buildings also were evacuated for structural checks, displacing about 40 families, RAI state TV reported.

Some 150 smaller tremors overnight kept the population on edge. At least 500 people slept in tent cities erected by the civil protection agency, while others stayed in cars. Major traffic jams were reported as people tried to flee the area. The area around the Phlegraean Fields is both seismically and

volcanically active. The surface has been pushed up 1.3 metres since 2006, which is higher than prior to the last major event in 1984, but De Natale emphasised it was impossible to predict when an eruption or stronger quake might occur. At least 500,000 people live in the zone most at risk should the volcano erupt, and the INGV is calling for a governmental plan to ensure that structures can withstand a quake of at least a magnitude 5.0.

# Vatican makes fresh overture to China, reaffirms that Catholic Church is no threat to sovereignty

AP ■ MOSCOW

The Vatican made another big overture to China on Tuesday, reaffirming it poses no threat to Beijing's sovereignty and admitting that Catholic Western missionaries had made "errors" in past centuries in their zeal to convert the Chinese faithful.

The Vatican hosted the head of China's bishops conference to an unprecedented, high-level commemoration of a landmark 1924 meeting that affirmed the need for foreign missionaries in China to give way to local leaders of the Catholic Church. The presence of Shanghai Bishop Joseph Shen Bin alongside the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, at the Pontifical Urbaniana University was in itself noteworthy. It marked the first time in memory that a mainland bishop has been allowed by Beijing to participate in a public Vatican event



as the keynote speaker. It was also significant given the controversy over Shen's 2023 appointment. Pope Francis in July was forced to recognize China's unilateral appointment of Shen as bishop of Shanghai. The appointment seemingly violated the Holy See's 2018 accord with Beijing over bishop appointments. Francis opened the conference with a

video message in which he made no mention of recent troubles but instead pointed to the 1924 meeting in Shanghai as a turning point for Vatican-China relations. The first and only Chinese church council, he said, recognised that the church in China must "increasingly have a Chinese face."

"But the Council of Shanghai did not only serve to forget the erroneous approaches that had prevailed in previous times," Francis said. "The participants of the first Chinese Council looked to the future. And their future is our present."

It was a reference to the French, Italian and other Western missionary religious orders that evangelised China over the centuries but refused to cede leadership authority to local Chinese clergy. Their attitudes helped fuel the anti-Western and anti-Christian sentiment behind the Boxer Rebellion, which aimed to rid China of foreign influences.

The Vatican has been working for years to try to improve relations with China that were officially severed over seven decades ago when the Communists came to power. The aim is to unite the country's estimated 12 million Catholics, who were divided into an official, state-recognised church and an underground church that stayed loyal to Rome.

# Trump campaign calls 'The Apprentice' 'blatantly false,' director offers to screen it for him

AP ■ CANNES

Donald Trump's reelection campaign called "The Apprentice," a film about the former US president in the 1980s, "pure fiction" and vowed legal action following its premiere at the Cannes Film Festival. But director Ali Abbasi is offering to privately screen the film for Trump.

Following its premiere Monday in Cannes, Steven Cheung, Trump campaign spokesperson, said in a statement that the Trump team will be file a lawsuit "to address the blatantly false assertions from these pretend filmmakers."

"This garbage is pure fiction which sensationalises lies that have been long debunked," Cheung said.

"The Apprentice" stars Sebastian Stan as Trump. The central relationship of the movie is between Trump and Roy Cohn (Jeremy Strong), the



defence attorney who was chief counsel to Joseph McCarthy's 1950s Senate investigations of suspected communists. Asked about the Trump campaign's statement Tuesday in

also struck a less combative tone as he discussed the film at its festival press conference. He offered to screen "The Apprentice" for Trump and talk it over.

"I don't necessarily think that this is a movie he would dislike," said Abbasi. "I don't necessarily think he would like it. I think he would be surprised, you know? And like I've said before, I would offer to go and meet him wherever he wants and talk about the context of the movie, have a screening and have a chat afterwards, if that's interesting to anyone at the Trump campaign."

In the film, Cohn is depicted as a longtime mentor to Trump, coaching him in the ruthlessness of New York City politics and business. Early on, Cohn aided the Trump Organisation when it was being sued by the federal government for racial discrimination in housing.

# Seoul summit opens with Google, Meta pledging safe AI development

AP ■ SEOUL

The world's leading artificial intelligence companies pledged at the start of a mini summit on AI to develop the technology safely, including pulling the plug if they can't rein in the most extreme risks.

World leaders are expected to hammer out further agreements on artificial intelligence as they gathered virtually Tuesday to discuss AI's potential risks but also ways to promote its benefits and innovation.

The AI Seoul Summit is a low-key follow-up to November's high-profile AI Safety Summit at Bletchley Park in the United Kingdom, where participating countries agreed to work together to contain the potentially "catastrophic" risks posed by breakthrough advances in AI.

The two-day meeting — co-hosted by the South Korean and UK governments — also comes as major tech companies like Meta, OpenAI and Google roll out the latest versions of their AI models.

They're among 16 AI companies that made voluntary commitments to AI safety as the talks got underway, according to a British government announcement. The companies, which also include Amazon, Microsoft, France's Mistral AI, China's Zhipu.ai, and G42 of the United Arab Emirates, vowed to ensure safety of their most cutting edge AI models with promises of accountable governance and public transparency. The pledge includes publishing safety frameworks setting out how they will measure risks of these models. In extreme cases where risks are severe and "intol-

erable," AI companies will have to hit the kill switch and stop developing or deploying their models and systems if they can't mitigate the risks.

Since the UK meeting last year, the AI industry has "increasingly focused on the most pressing concerns, including mis- and dis- information, data security, bias and keeping humans in the loop," said Aiden Gomez, CEO of Cohere, one of the AI companies that signed the pact. "It is essential that we continue to consider all possible risks, while prioritising our efforts on those most likely to create problems if not properly addressed."

On Tuesday evening, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak are to meet other world leaders, industry bosses and heads of international organisations for

a virtual conference. The online summit will be followed by an in-person meeting of digital ministers, experts and others on Wednesday, according to organisers.

"It is just six months since world leaders met at Bletchley, but even in this short space of time, the landscape of AI has changed dramatically," Yoon and Sunak said in a joint article published in South Korea's JoongAng Ilbo newspaper and the UK's online news site Monday. "The pace of change will only continue to accelerate, so our work must accelerate too."

While the UK meeting centred on AI safety issues, the agenda for this week's gathering was expanded to include "innovation and inclusivity," Wang Yun-jong, a deputy director of national security in South Korea, told reporters

Monday. Wang said participants will subsequently "discuss not only the risks posed by AI but also its positive aspects and how it can contribute to humanity in a balanced manner." The AI agreement will include the outcomes of discussions on safety, innovation and inclusivity, according to Park Sang-wook, senior presidential adviser for science and technology for President Yoon. Last year's Bletchley meeting attracted world leaders and tech luminaries like Elon Musk and OpenAI CEO Sam Altman. The Seoul summit, serving as an interim meeting until another in-person event next year in France, drew less important representatives from government and tech companies.

China, which attended the Bletchley gathering, isn't joining the virtual summit though it will

send a representative to Wednesday's in-person meeting, the South Korean presidential office said. Governments around the world have been scrambling to formulate regulations for AI even as the technology makes rapid advances and is poised to transform many aspects of daily life, from education and the workplace to copyrights and privacy. There are concerns that advances in AI could take away jobs, trick people and spread disinformation. This week's meeting is just one of a slew of efforts to draw up AI guardrails. The UN General Assembly has approved its first resolution on the safe use of AI systems, while the US and China recently held their first high-level talks on AI and the European Union's world-first AI Act is set to take effect later this year.

# No more cute snaps of Mount Fuji!

Tokyo (AP): Sorry, the screen is now up — no more snapping cute photos of Mount Fuji from a popular sidewalk spot in the Japanese town of Fujikawaguchiko.

Known as a place that offers some of the best views of the iconic Japanese mountain, the town last month started erecting a large black screen on a stretch of a street to block the view and deter tourists from overcrowding the place.

A particularly popular photo location was outside a Lawson convenience store, from where a photograph taken at a particular angle would make it seem as if Mt Fuji was sitting atop the store roof.

The tourists, mostly foreigners, even dubbed the spot "Mt Fuji Lawson." But the townspeople

were unhappy — visitors would block the narrow sidewalk, take photos on the busy road or walk into neighbors' properties in pursuit of their shot, officials said.

On Tuesday, construction of the 2.5 meter (8.2 feet) high black mesh net — stretching for 20 meters (66 feet) along the sidewalk — was completed.

Still, there are other places tourists can find their sweet photo spot.

The Yamanashi prefecture, also home to the Yoshida Trail — the most popular of the four routes to summit the 3,776-meter (12,300-foot-) high mountain — introduced a booking system ahead of this year's Fuji climbing season to ease overcrowding, littering and safety risks.

# Markets regulator Sebi changes rule to determine m-cap of listed firms

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi has revamped the method for calculating the market capitalisation of listed companies under the Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements (LODR) rules. Instead of using the market capitalisation of a single day (currently March 31), listed companies will now use the "average market capitalisation" for a six-month period. Market experts believe the market capitalisation of a listed entity keeps fluctuating on a daily basis based on market dynamics and, therefore, an average of market capitalisation figures over a reasonable period of time (six months) would more accurately reflect the market size of the listed entity and consequently the ranking, vis-a-vis its peers. The changes came after a recommendation of an expert committee chaired by Sebi's former whole-time member S K Mohanty in a bid to promote ease of doing business. The amendment aims to specify a defined



period for calculating average market capitalisation. The new amendment would come into force with effect from December 31, 2024, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a notification on May 17. The ranking of compliance would be based on average market capitalisation from July 1 to December 31, with December 31 as the cut-off date. After determining the market capitalisation on December 31, there would be a three-month transition period, or from the beginning of the immediate

next financial year, whichever is later, before the relevant provisions become applicable. Amending LODR norms, Sebi said, "Every recognised stock exchange shall, at the end of the calendar year i.e., December 31, prepare a list of entities that have listed their specified securities ranking such entities on the basis of their average market capitalisation from July 1 to December 31 of that calendar year". In case ranking of an entity changes for three consecutive years, the new provisions would cease to be applicable

for the listed entity, providing relief to entities experiencing fluctuations in market capitalisation. In addition, Sebi has given relaxation pertaining to filling up vacancies of key managerial personnel (KMP) with increasing the time limit to six months in certain cases from the current three months. In cases where the listed entity is required to obtain approval of regulatory, government or statutory authorities to fill up such vacancies, these should be filled up by the listed entity at the earliest and in any case not later than six months from the date of vacancy, Sebi said. In order to maintain uniformity, the timeline for prior intimation of board meetings has been harmonised to two working days for all types of events. Current LODR regulations require a listed company to intimate stock exchanges about board meetings for certain proposals such as financial results, share buyback, fundraising, etc, within 2-11 working days.

# India's global travel and tourism index rank rises to 39th: WEF

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's rank on the World Economic Forum's Travel & Tourism Development Index 2024 has risen to 39th place, with global tourism activities returning to pre-pandemic levels, the annual report showed on Tuesday. While the US topped the list, India is ranked highest in South Asia and among the lower-middle-income economies, the WEF said. India was ranked 54th in the previously published index in 2021, though changes made to the index parameters limit its comparability to earlier years. After the US, Spain, Japan, France and Australia figure among the top five in the 2024 list. The index, prepared in collaboration with the University of Surrey, showed India is highly price-competitive (18th) and boasts competitive Air Transport (26th) and Ground and Port (25th) infrastructure. In particular, India's strong Natural (6th), Cultural (9th) and Non-Leisure (9th) Resources help drive travel, and the country is only one of three to score in the top 10



for all the resource pillars, the WEF said. Moreover, despite a decline compared to 2019, the country still scores well for travel and tourism demand sustainability, especially thanks to more sustainable long stays among inbound visitors. It further said that as with many economies, travel and tourism enabling conditions in India have been impacted by global inflationary supply-

side trends for the sector, with price competitiveness declining, while air transport and tourist services infrastructure are yet to recover to the 2019 level. As a result, the country's overall TTDI (Travel and Tourism Development Index) score is 2.1 per cent below its 2019 level. High-income economies in Europe and Asia-Pacific continued to lead the index. "International tourist arrivals

and the travel and tourism sector's contribution to global GDP are expected to return to pre-pandemic levels this year, driven by the lifting of COVID-19-related travel restrictions and strong pent-up demand," the WEF said. The Middle East had the highest recovery rates in international tourist arrivals (20 per cent above the 2019 level), while Europe, Africa and the Americas all showed a strong recovery of around 90 per cent in 2023. The biennial index analysed the travel and tourism sectors of 119 countries around a range of factors and policies. Germany was ranked 6th, followed by the UK, China, Italy and Switzerland in the top ten. The results highlighted that high-income economies generally continue to have more favourable conditions for travel and tourism development. This was helped by conducive business environments, dynamic labour markets, open travel policies, strong transport and tourism infrastructure, and well-developed natural, cultural and non-leisure attractions.

# Sensex declines by nearly 53 points in volatile trade amid weak global trends

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark BSE Sensex declined by nearly 53 points in a volatile trade on Tuesday amid weak trends from Asian and European markets and fresh foreign fund outflows. The 30-share Sensex declined 52.63 points or 0.07 per cent to settle at 73,953.31. During the day, it hit a high of 74,189.19 and a low of 73,762.37. The broader Nifty of NSE, however, closed higher by 27.05 points or 0.12 per cent to 22,529.05. Among the Sensex components, Nestle, Maruti, IndusInd Bank, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, HDFC Bank and Axis Bank were the major laggards. Tata Steel, JSW Steel, Power Grid, Tech Mahindra and State Bank of India were among the gainers. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower. European markets were trading in the negative territory. Wall Street ended mostly higher on Monday. Foreign Institutional



Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 92.95 crore on Saturday, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.55 per cent to USD 83.25 a barrel. The BSE benchmark climbed 88.91 points or 0.12 per cent to end at 74,005.94 in a special trading session on Saturday. The NSE Nifty advanced 35.90 points or

0.16 per cent to 22,502. The National Stock Exchange (NSE) and BSE conducted a special trading session in the equity and equity derivative segments on May 18 to check their preparedness for handling major disruptions or failures at the primary site. Markets were closed on Monday due to general elections in Mumbai.

# ONGC net profit jumps 19 times in Q4

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation's (ONGC) March quarter net profit soared 19 times as the year-ago period had a one-time exceptional provision, while it posted a record earning for the full fiscal. The company's standalone net profit of Rs 9,869 crore in January-March — the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2023-24 — compared with a profit of Rs 528 crore in the same period of the previous financial year, according to a company statement. India's top oil and gas producer had made a provision of Rs 9,235 crore in the January-March 2023

quarter towards disputed taxes for the period from April 1, 2016, to March 31, 2022. ONGC reported a 4.3 per cent rise in crude oil production in the fourth quarter this year to 4.71 million tonnes. The price realised for the same also was higher at USD 80.81 per barrel compared to USD 77.12 a barrel in January-March 2023. Gas price was, however, lower at USD 6.50 per million British thermal units as opposed to USD 8.57 in the previous year. Also, gas production fell 2.4 per cent to 4.95 billion cubic metres. Its revenue from operation was 4.6 per cent lower at Rs 34,637 crore. For the full 2023-24 fiscal (April 2023 to March 2024),



ONGC reported the highest-ever standalone net profit of Rs 40,526 crore on a revenue of Rs 1.38 lakh crore. This includes an interim dividend of 195 per cent (Rs 9.75 per share) already paid during the year and a final dividend of 50 per cent (Rs 2.50 per share) recommended by the Board. ONGC said it has invested around Rs 37,000 crore of capex in FY24 (2023-24 fiscal)

Corporation Ltd (HPCL) and MRPL, ONGC had a record consolidated net profit of Rs 57,101 crore for FY24. Oil production for the full year was 0.7 per cent lower at 18.4 million tonnes while gas output fell 3.2 per cent to 19.97 bcm. The company declared a total dividend of 245 per cent (Rs 12.25 per share of face value Rs 5 each) with a total payout of Rs 15,411 crore. This includes an interim dividend of 195 per cent (Rs 9.75 per share) already paid during the year and a final dividend of 50 per cent (Rs 2.50 per share) recommended by the Board. ONGC said it has invested around Rs 37,000 crore of capex in FY24 (2023-24 fiscal)

compared to Rs 30,208 crore in the previous fiscal. Its overseas arm, ONGC Videsh Ltd ended the year with 17.178 million tonnes of crude oil production and 3.34 bcm of gas output. This compared with 6.349 million tonnes of crude oil production in FY23 (2022-23) and 3.822 bcm of gas output. OVL posted a net profit of Rs 639 crore against Rs 1,660 crore in FY23, mainly due to higher impairment, the company statement said. Its turnover decreased 18.2 per cent to Rs 9,553 crore "mainly due to non-accounting of revenue from Sakhalin-1 (project in Russia) and lower crude price realisation", it added.

# Glenmark unit ties up with BeiGene to market cancer drugs in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Glenmark Pharmaceuticals on Tuesday said its unit has inked a marketing and distribution agreement with BeiGene to commercialise the latter's oncology medicines, Tislelizumab and Zanubrutinib in India. Glenmark Specialty SA, a unit of Mumbai-based drug maker, has inked exclusive marketing and distribution agreement with BeiGene. "The addition of Tislelizumab and Zanubrutinib to our oncology portfolio underscores our dedication to the cancer patients' community and our commitment to provide access to novel therapies across India," said Alok Malik, Glenmark Pharmaceuticals President and Business Head, India Formulations. As per the collaboration, Glenmark will be responsible for locally required development, registration and distribution providing access to the two medicines for cancer patients across India. BeiGene Vice President and Head of Asia-Pacific Adam



Roach said the collaboration is a testament to both companies' shared vision of enhancing healthcare access across Asia. "We take great pride in advancing mission-driven access, especially given the significant disease burden in India, where rising cancer rates require comprehensive healthcare solutions - a commitment we share with our partners at Glenmark," he added. Glenmark said recent statistics indicate that India has the third highest number of cancer cases worldwide, with predictions suggesting this could reach 2.08 million cases by 2040 — a 57.5 per cent increase from 2020. Currently, cancer claims around 9,00,000 lives annually in India.

# Global Vaishya Federation demands social security for high tax paying traders: Goyal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Jai Bhagwan Goyal, chairman of the Global Vaishya Federation, senior BJP leader, and International executive president of the United Hindu Front, strongly raised the long-standing demand for social security by traders and professionals at a seminar held today at Constitutional Club, Rafi Marg, New Delhi. He emphasised that those who fill the nation's coffers have

never received due attention from the government. Although the issue of their social security has been discussed, no concrete measures have been implemented by the Government. The Global Vaishya Federation organised this special seminar to bring this demand to the government's notice. Traders, Chartered Accountants (CAs), and other professionals attended the seminar.

# Revamping of BOT model tactical move to attract private capex: Ind-Ra

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) on Tuesday said the revamping of the built-operate-transfer (BOT) model is a tactical move to attract private capex, which is estimated to surpass Rs 1 trillion by 2030, as per the government. According to the rating agency, during the past seven years, the government has successfully rolled out about 400 Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM) road projects in

India, worth over Rs 4 trillion. This approach has balanced risk appropriately between private and public partners, thereby boosting public-private partnership activity in the sector. Also, the government's enhanced focus on monetisation via the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) has attracted foreign investors, including various sovereign wealth funds and pension funds, it added.

Ind-Ra asserted that developers need to be mindful of aggressive bidding, taking projects beyond the appetite of their balance sheet, and overestimating toll revenue for greenfield projects to protect them from volatilities in the longer run. The road sector in India has been at the forefront of performance and innovation and has played a crucial role in shaping the country's economic growth trajectory, with a CAGR of about 14 per cent over the past decade, it said.

# Custom Manufactured Chemicals phase II expansion on track: Chemplast Sanmar

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Chemplast Sanmar Ltd, part of the CSHL Chemicals Group on Tuesday said the phase II expansion of the Custom Manufactured Chemicals division was on track for completion. The city-based company, engaged in the manufacturing of specialty chemicals declared revenues of Rs 1,051 crore for the January-March 2024 quarter as compared to Rs 1,147 crore registered during the same quarter of last year. Net loss for the quarter under review stood at Rs 31 crore as against a net profit of Rs 46 crore registered in the same period of last year. In a statement, the company said Custom Manufactured Chemicals business was adversely impacted during the year by the overall slowdown in the global agrochemicals industry.

"The impact was partly offset by the commencement of supplies of new products under the first two Letter of Intent (LoI) signed in the last 12-15 months. As a result Custom Manufactured Chemicals division revenues were lower by 13 per cent," the company said. The positive impact of the new products would be seen in the upcoming quarters, it said. On the status of the company's projects, Chemplast Sanmar Ltd Managing Director Ramkumar Shankar said, "Construction of Phase 2 of the CMC expansion project is underway and we expect to complete this by the end of Q1-FY25." "With the recent signing of the 4th Letter of Intent, the CMC division continues to make significant strides in growing the business. The pipeline of the CMC

division continues to be robust," he said in the statement. On the financial performance, Shankar said, "FY24 has been one of the toughest years for the company in recent times. The year was marked with challenges on all fronts including pricing and margin pressures due to excessive dumping of PVC resins by China and other countries, the sharp correction in prices of Caustic Soda due to oversupply situation." "Amidst these headwinds, we closed FY24 with a topline of Rs 3,923 crore and an EBITDA of Rs 26 crore," he said. On the outlook for the future, he said, "while the short-term challenges persist, we have laid the foundation to capitalise on the long-term prospects of each of our businesses and are confident of delivering a stronger performance in the future."

# Rupee rises 6 paise against US dollar as crude oil prices ease

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee appreciated 6 paise to close at 83.31 against the US dollar on Tuesday following a weak greenback against major currencies overseas and softening crude oil prices in international markets. However, a sluggish trend in the domestic equity markets restricted the sharp upside in the local currency, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened strong at 83.32 and touched an intraday high of 83.26 and a low of 83.36. The domestic unit finally settled at 83.31 (provisional), a gain of 6 paise from its previous close.

On Friday, the rupee had settled at 83.37 against the US dollar. The forex market was closed on Monday on account of general elections. "A decline in crude oil prices and fresh foreign inflows also supported the rupee. US Dollar softened on rate cut expectations by Fed but hawkish comments by Fed officials supported the US dollar at lower levels," Anuj Choudhary — Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said. On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share BSE Sensex fell 52.63 points or 0.07 per cent to settle at 73,953.31, while the broader NSE Nifty rose 27.05 points or 0.12 per cent to 22,529.05.

# WFI EXEMPTS OLYMPIC QUOTA WINNERS FROM TRIALS BUT WILL ASSESS THEM IN HUNGARY

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) on Tuesday decided to exempt all six Olympic quota winners from selection trials but their form and fitness will be assessed at the upcoming Ranking Series event and the subsequent training camp in Hungary.

The WFI said the decision to not hold trials has been taken under peculiar circumstances and should not be used as a precedent in future.

The WFI also made it clear that if any wrestler is found to be lacking in fitness, the federation would consider a replacement through trials before July 8, the deadline for sending entries.

India have got six quotas for the Paris Games where Aman Sehrawat (57kg), Anshu Malik (57kg), Nisha Dahiya (68kg) and Reetika Hooda (76kg) are the women wrestlers who have qualified.



The wrestlers had requested the WFI not to hold trials, arguing that it could lead to injuries and the selection committee, led by President Sanjay Singh, accepted the plea.

"We discussed the issue and both chief coaches were also of the view that trials could lead

to injuries and impact India's medal chances. So we have decided not to hold trials," Sanjay Singh told PTI after the meeting.

The quota winners will compete in a UWW Ranking Series in Budapest from June 6-9 and will also participate in a training camp after the

conclusion of the tournament from June 10-21.

"We have to ensure that no wrestler carries any injury into the Olympics. So, instead of trials, the Indian coaches will assess the quota winners at the Ranking Series event and at the following training camp in Budapest.

"If the coaches find that someone is not fit, we may then look for a replacement in that particular category. We will hold selection trial before July 8 in that weight class," the president added.

The WFI decision has shut the Paris Olympic door on Tokyo Games silver medalist Ravi Dahiya (men's 57kg) and World Championship bronze winner Sarita Mor in women's (57kg), who were preparing for trials.

It also means that Vinesh Phogat will now have to compete in women's 50kg event only. She had the chance to compete in 53kg also if she defeated Antim in trials.

Women's head coach Virender Dahiya and freestyle head coach Jagminder Singh also attended the selection committee meeting.

London Olympic bronze medalist Yogeshwar Dutt, former wrestler Geetika Jakhar, WFI vice-president and Olympian Jai Prakash, WFI treasurer Sandeep Deshwal also attended the meeting. Geetika attended the meeting through video call.

# Juventus rallies from 3-0 down to draw with Bologna in first match without Allegri

**AP ■ BOLOGNA (ITALY)**

In its first match since Massimiliano Allegri was fired, Juventus came from 3-0 down to draw with Bologna 3-3 in Serie A on Monday.

Allegri was sacked on Friday, two days after berating the referees while winning the Italian Cup final. Under-19 coach Pablo Montero agreed to oversee Juve's last two games.

Bologna, third, and Juventus, fourth on goal difference, have already qualified for the Champions League next season but played like they hadn't.

A double by Riccardo Calafiori helped a dominant Bologna to 3-0, and in their grasp was a first home win over Juve in 26 years.

But Juventus began its comeback with 14 minutes left of regulation time, starting with Federico Chiesa's goal.

Within eight more minutes, Arkadiusz Milik struck from a free kick and the equalizer was by Kenan Yildiz, the 19-year-old forward who Juve consider a star in the making.

In this breakthrough season, Yildiz debuted for Juventus and became its youngest foreign scorer, and debuted



and scored for European Championship-bound Turkey. Meanwhile, Verona guaranteed its Serie A status for another season after beating Salernitana 2-1.

Marco Baroni's men are four points clear of the relegation zone with one game to go.

Salernitana and Sassuolo are already down and Verona's win means Udinese, Empoli, Frosinone and Cagliari are fighting to avoid joining them.

Verona's third win in five games was timely given its last league match is against champion Inter Milan, which has lost only twice all season.

Tomas Suslov's second goal in the league was the opener, and Darko Lazovic crossed for Michael Folorunsho to poke home from close range on the stroke of halftime.

Giulio Maggiore scored a consolation for the home side in the final minute.



# Messi in, Dybala out in Argentina squad for preCopa America friendlies

**AP ■ BUENOS AIRES (ARGENTINA)**

Lionel Messi is in and Paulo Dybala is out of Argentina's squad for friendlies against Ecuador and Guatemala before defending its Copa America title next month.

The squad of 29 players announced on Monday will be cut by three by coach Lionel Scaloni when he finalizes the group on June 12.

Midfielder Dybala was part of Argentina's World Cup-winning squad in 2022.

Argentina will play Ecuador on June 9 in Chicago, and five days later Guatemala in Landover, Maryland.

Argentina begins at the Copa America on June 20 against Canada in Atlanta. Chile and Peru are also part of Group A.

**ARGENTINA:**  
**Goalkeepers:** Emiliano Martinez (Aston Villa), Franco Armani (River Plate), Gerónimo Rulli (Ajax).  
**Defenders:** Gonzalo Montiel (Nottingham Forest), Nahuel

Molina (Atletico Madrid), Leonardo Balerdi (Marseille), Cristian Romero (Tottenham), Germán Pezzella (Real Betis), Lucas Martínez Quarta (Fiorentina), Nicolás Otamendi (Benfica), Lisandro Martínez (Manchester United), Marcos Acuña (Sevilla), Nicolás Tagliafico (Lyon), Valentín Barco (Brighton).

**Midfielders:** Guido Rodríguez (Real Betis), Leandro Paredes (Roma), Alexis Mac Allister (Liverpool), Rodrigo De Paul (Atletico Madrid), Exequiel Palacios (Bayer Leverkusen), Enzo Fernández (Chelsea), Giovanni Lo Celso (Tottenham).

**Strikers:** Ángel Di María (Benfica), Valentín Carboni (Monza), Lionel Messi (Inter Miami), Ángel Correa (Atletico Madrid), Alejandro Garnacho (Manchester United), Nicolás González (Fiorentina), Lautaro Martínez (Inter Milan), Julián Álvarez (Manchester City).

# Rafael Nadal returns to Roland Garros

**AP ■ PARIS**

Rafael Nadal returned to Roland Garros on Monday to practice and try to figure out whether to compete at the French Open, a tournament he has won a record 14 times.

The 37-year-old Spaniard showed up late in the afternoon with his coach, Carlos Moya, and a couple of sparring partners at Court Philippe Chatrier, which was open to the public.

About 6,000 fans were there at the French Open's main stadium, cheering loudly as Nadal stepped onto the court. After the practice, which lasted about an hour and a half, Nadal signed several autographs before disappearing through a doorway and into a tunnel that leads toward the locker rooms.

The training session gave



Nadal a chance to reacquire himself with the red clay at Roland Garros - he hasn't played a match there in two years - and test his fitness.

The tournament begins on Sunday and it remains uncertain if Nadal will enter. He is still regaining his match readiness after missing nearly

himself ready for the French Open.

"Let's see what's going on, how I feel myself mentally tomorrow, after tomorrow, and in one week," Nadal said in Rome. "If I feel ready, I (am) going to try to be there and fight for the things that I have been fighting (for) the last 15 years, (even) if now (that) seems impossible."

As of Monday, Nadal still had not announced whether or not he would play in Paris. This is expected to be his final season on tour - and so this would be his final appearance at a tournament he has won more times than any other tennis player has won any Grand Slam title.

He won the French Open in 2022 for his 22nd major championship overall, which ranks second among men to Novak Djokovic's 24.



# Chandru G knocks out Jaskaran to win WBC India national title

**PTI ■ HYDERABAD**

Tamil Nadu's rising star Chandru G clinched the WBC India Cruiserweight Championship title with a spectacular fourth round knockout victory over Punjab boxer Jaskaran Singh.

Entering the fight with a flawless 10-0 record, the 27-year old Chandru had a slow start, allowing Jaskaran (9-3) to take advantage of his height.

However, by the second round, Chandru began to dominate, landing heavy three-punch combinations and right crosses.

In the decisive fourth round, a powerful right cross from Chandru hit Jaskaran square in the face, sending him crashing to the ropes. Referee Kevin David halted the fight and declared Chandru the winner.

"This victory is not just for me, but for the whole of Tamil Nadu, for my team, my family, and all my supporters who have stood by me throughout this journey," Chandru said.

"Jaskaran Singh is a formidable opponent, and a very hard puncher. But training over the past 40 days paid off. I hope this win inspires more boxers from Tamil Nadu to start making a move to Pro Boxing. This is just the beginning, I have a possible shot at the WBC Asian title in the coming few months. Thank you to everyone who believed in me," he added.

The eight-round contest between Akshay Chahal (14-0) and Ram Singh (3-0) ended in a draw. Both fighters, who are seasoned amateurs, showcased their skills in a thrilling bout.

Ram Singh dominated the early rounds, while Akshay made a strong comeback in the final rounds, resulting in a dramatic fight.

Haryana's Ashish Choudhary triumphed over Punjab's Manish Sharma by unanimous decision.

Renu Phogat of Haryana pulled off a technical knockout victory over Delhi's Ruby in the first round.

# Saudi Arabia going to sponsor WTA women's tennis rankings under new partnership

**AP ■ NEW YORK**

Saudi Arabia's move into tennis will now include a multiyear deal to sponsor the WTA women's rankings.

The WTA released word of its partnership agreement with Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) on Monday, a move that follows last month's news that the kingdom will host the tour's season-ending championships in Riyadh starting this year and February's announcement that it will sponsor the ATP men's rankings.

Both tours' rankings deals are for five years. The PIF is the first naming-rights partner for the WTA rankings and the new arrangement also includes plans to promote tennis at lower levels of the sport.

Tennis has been consumed lately by the debate over whether the sport should



follow golf and others in making deals with Saudi Arabia, where rights groups say women continue to face discrimination in most aspects of family life and homosexuality is a major taboo, as it is in much of the rest of the Middle East.

Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova are among those who urged the WTA to stay out of Saudi Arabia, while another former

star player and Hall of Famer, equal rights pioneer Billie Jean King, advocated for engagement.

The WTA Finals will be in Saudi Arabia as part of a three-year deal that will increase the prize money for this November's season-ending championship to a record \$15.25 million, a 70% increase from 2023.

Saudi Arabia's Private Investment Fund formed the LIV Golf tour and put money into soccer, for example, and the kingdom's role in tennis has been rising.

The ATP Tour moved its Next Gen Finals for leading 21-and-under players to Jeddah in November; 22-time Grand Slam champion Rafael Nadal recently became an ambassador for the Saudi Tennis Federation; he will join 24-time major champion Novak Djokovic and rising stars Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner at an exhibition event in Riyadh in October.

# Liverpool confirms Arne Slot as Jurgen Klopp's replacement

**AP ■ LONDON**

Arne Slot will take on one of the most daunting challenges in soccer by replacing Jurgen Klopp as Liverpool manager.

Slot was confirmed on Monday after he signed a long-term contract with the six-time European Cup winner and 19-time English champion.

He will follow in the footsteps of an Anfield icon in Klopp, who ended Liverpool's 30-year wait for the English title in 2020 and won a full set of major trophies in his time at the Merseyside club.

Slot comes in with a winning record of his own after leading Feyenoord to the Dutch title last year and following that with the Dutch Cup this season.

He will formally take up his role on June 1 and his contract runs through to 2027, a person with knowledge of the deal told The Associated Press.

The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because the details of the contract have not been made public.



Slot's appointment was expected for some time, as the 45-year-old Dutchman said he was in talks with Liverpool in April and announced he would be Klopp's successor last week.

Slot has coached Feyenoord since 2021 and was previously with AZ Alkmaar. His work with both clubs has seen his reputation rise for his coaching methods and achievements in a short time.

Klopp stunned the world of soccer when he declared in

January he would step down at the end of the season. The German established himself as one of the finest managers of his generation.

He won the Champions League in 2019, the Premier League in 2020, and the English League Cup and FA Cup in 2022. He departed with one final trophy, the League Cup in February.

Under his watch, Liverpool also won the UEFA Super Cup and Club World Cup and was a beaten finalist in two more Champions Leagues.

Liverpool took its time identifying Klopp's successor. Michael Edwards, its former sporting director, returned in March as chief executive of football for the club's American owners Fenway Sports Group and led the search.

Edwards was a key figure in Klopp's success — overseeing the signings of star players like Mohamed Salah, Alisson Becker, and Virgil van Dijk. Liverpool fans can only hope he is as adept at identifying coaching talent after putting his faith in Slot.

# With Djokovic awaiting the winner, Murray trails Hanfmann at rain hit Geneva Open

**AP ■ GENEVA**

Needing a win to face Novak Djokovic next at the Geneva Open, Andy Murray was saved by a heavy rainstorm when he trailed unseeded Yannick Hanfmann 7-5, 4-1 in a first-round match on Monday.

Murray and top-ranked Djokovic both got wild cards to enter the last clay-court event to prepare for the French Open, and were drawn to meet in the second round. They have not faced each other on tour since February 2017.

Ranked No. 75, Murray began to struggle in his first tour match in two months when heavy rain and strong winds swept across the stadium court in a lakeside park.

The 85th-ranked Hanfmann broke Murray's service twice in a row to lead 4-1 with his service game to come when play was suspended.

In the opening set, Murray found some big serves to get out of trouble in the ninth game when he saved two break points.

It was just a respite, as Murray was



broken to love in his next service game, sealed by a Hanfmann forehand service return winner.

The German served out the set taking his first chance at 40-0. The serve pushed Murray wide to his backhand and he netted the return.

The winner is expected to play Djokovic on Wednesday, the 37th birthday for the record 24-time Grand Slam singles champion. Murray, who has a 2-5 career record against Djokovic in Grand Slam finals, turned 37 last Wednesday.

# Indian junior men hockey team begins Europe tour with thrilling win over Belgium

**PTI ■ ANTWERP**

Shardhanand Tiwari struck twice as the Indian junior men's hockey team beat Belgium via penalty shootout in the opening match to kick off its tour of Europe with a thrilling win here.

Tiwari (3', 27') scored a brace as the two teams ended the regulation time 2-2 before India won the penalty shootout 4-2 on Monday. India took the lead early with Tiwari firing in a penalty stroke. They maintained their tempo throughout the first

quarter to hold onto their lead going into the break.

In the second quarter, Tiwari (27') doubled the lead with yet another penalty stroke as the first half ended with the visitors leading 2-0.

Belgium converted a penalty corner early in the third quarter to reduce the goal deficit to one.

No further goals were scored in the quarter as the score read 2-1 in favour of the Indian team at the end of the third quarter.

Although the Indian colts had a one-goal lead going into the final quarter ended with the scoreline reading 2-2, taking the game into a shootout.

Gurjot Singh, Sourabh Anand, Kushwaha, Dilraj Singh and

Manmeet Singh scored for the Indian colts in the penalty shootout while goalkeeper Prince Deep Singh made two brilliant saves as they won the penalty shoot-out 4-2 to begin their Europe tour with a win.

India will play their next match against Belgium in Breda, Netherlands on Wednesday.

the game, the Belgians converted yet another penalty corner to equalise.

As no more goals were scored in the regulation time, the fourth quarter ended with the scoreline reading 2-2, taking the game into a shootout.

Gurjot Singh, Sourabh Anand, Kushwaha, Dilraj Singh and



# RR DESPERATE TO ARREST SLIDE AGAINST RCB

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Sanju Samson's Rajasthan Royals will face a stern test of character as they look to arrest a shocking slide in a do-or-die IPL Eliminator against an in-form Royal Challengers Bengaluru, here on Wednesday.

The Royals, at one stage, had looked set for a top-place finish in the league stage before a string of four defeats and a washout in the last game against KKR resulted in Sanju Samson's side finishing third behind Sunrisers Hyderabad. On the other hand, RCB have sensationally fought their way back from the brink of elimination. After losing seven of their first eight games this season, the team led by Faf du Plessis hit a dream run and finally knocked out defending champions Chennai Super Kings a few nights ago to seal a playoffs berth.

If Rajasthan Royals are coming off four losses and a rained-off game, RCB have notched up six consecutive wins to sound a warning to their rivals that they mean business in the playoffs.

RR, the 2008 IPL winners, suddenly find themselves as the underdogs, when a couple of weeks ago they were red-hot favourites. When on song, Rajasthan Royals have shown they are unbeatable, but the last four games have exposed frailties in their batting and bowling. The exit of Jos Buttler has taken a lot of firepower out of their batting and a lot will depend on Yashasvi Jaiswal (348 runs), skipper Samson (504) and Riyan Parag (531) to



halt the slide. Samson and Parag will once again be expected to deliver the goods for RR, with England's Tom Kohler-Cadmore expected to partner Jaiswal in what seems like a frail opening pair going by form and experience. Shimron Hetmyer is expected to be available for the contest giving Rajasthan solidity in the lower order, which has not made a big contribution with the bat this season. RR's strong bowling lineup could come in handy given the venue for the Eliminator has not been a batting paradise like the other grounds, where shorter boundaries and docile tracks have made the bowlers' job tougher. The 200-run mark has been breached only twice in 12 innings this season at the Narendra Modi Stadium, which means the team having

a disciplined bowling attack and a strong batting lineup is more likely to win here. On the other hand, RCB's Virat Kohli continues to be the highest run-getter this season with 708 runs from 14 matches and could make the difference in the contest. After initial struggles, RCB skipper Faf du Plessis has also found form with the bat to forge a dominating partnership at the top with Kohli, while Rajat Patidar (five half-centuries this season) has also given solidity at the top. RCB have not been impacted much by the exit of England's Will Jacks, while veteran Dinesh Karthik is firing on all cylinders with a strike rate in excess of 195 lower down the order. In their last match, left-arm seamer Yash Dayal turned around his fortunes to dish out a splendid final over against

CSK to deny them a win and lead RCB into the playoffs. For a bowler who was devastated after conceding five consecutive sixes in an over last year, Dayal has proved his mettle this year.

**TEAMS (FROM):**  
**Rajasthan Royals:** Sanju Samson (c&wk), Abid Mushtaq, Avesh Khan, Dhruv Jurel, Donovan Ferreira, Kuldeep Sen, Kunal Singh Rathore, Nandre Burger, Navdeep Saini, Ravichandran Ashwin, Riyan Parag, Sandeep Sharma, Shimron Hetmyer, Shubham Dubey, Rovman Powell, Tom Kohler-Cadmore, Trent Boult, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Yuzvendra Chahal, Tanush Kotian.  
**Challengers Bengaluru:** Faf du Plessis (c), Glenn Maxwell, Virat Kohli, Rajat Patidar, Anuj Rawat, Dinesh Karthik (wk), Suyash

Prabhudessai, Will Jacks, Mayank Dagar, Vijaykumar Topley, Himanshu Sharma, Tom Curran, Lockie Ferguson, Mahipal Lomror, Karn Vyshak, Akash Deep, Rajan Kumar, Cameron Green, Swapnil Singh and Saurav Sharma, Manoj Bhandage, Mohammed Siraj, Reece Alzarri Joseph, Yash Dayal, Chauhan.

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Declaration about criminal antecedents of candidates set up by the party  
 (As per the judgment dated 25 September. 2018 of hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 211 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr)

Name of Political Party : **JHARKHAND MUKTI MORCHA**  
 \*Name of the Election : **PARLIAMENTARY GENERAL ELECTION 2024**  
 Name of State/UT : **JHARKHAND**

1	2	3	4	5			
Sl. No.	Name of Constituency	Name of Candidate	(A) Pending criminal cases	(B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences			
			Name of Court, case no. & status of the case(s)	Sections of the Acts concerned & brief description of offence(s)	Name of Court & date(s) of order(s)	Description of offence(s) & punishment imposed	Maximum Punishment Imposed
1.	09, Jamshedpur	Samir Kumar Mohanty	SDJM, Ghatsila C.No. GR867/2021, Charged framed on 05/01/2008	147, 149, 341, 383, 353, 431 IPC	N/A	N/A	N/A
2.			SDJM, Sadar at Spl. Court for MP/MLA, Chaibasa C.No. GR 23/2020, Charge Not framed	379, 384, 353 IPC	N/A	N/A	N/A

\*In the case of election to Council of States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention The election concerned in place of name of constituency.

## OTHER SPORTS



### Hockey Pro League: Indian men's, women's teams hope to make most of European leg

PTI ■ ANTWERP (BELGIUM)

Indian men's hockey team will hope to iron out the flaws ahead of the Paris Olympics, while the women's team under new skipper Salima Tete will look to overcome the disappointment of not qualifying for the Summer Games, when the gruelling European leg of the FIH Pro League commences here with matches against Argentina on Wednesday. The men's team under drag-flicker Harmanpreet Singh is coming into the tournament following a 0-5 Test series whitewash at the hands of Australia and would look to make the most of the opportunity in Europe to get back to winning ways ahead of the Paris Games. "Undoubtedly, we are focused on the Olympics but we also need to give our best to finish as champions (in Pro League) and secure direct qualification for the 2026 Hockey World Cup as well," said Harmanpreet, whose team is currently placed third with 15 points from eight Pro League games. Netherlands are leading the charts with 26 points (12 matches), while Australia are on 20 points (8 matches). "To achieve both these targets (doing well ahead of Olympics and secure direct qualification for 2026 World Cup), we will strive to give our all on the pitch and win all our matches," the skipper added. Besides Argentina, the Indian men's team will also test their Olympic preparations against Belgium, Germany and Great Britain. The Indian women, currently placed sixth on the Pro League

### Vennam fourth in rankings, takes India to second spot in qualifying round



PTI ■ YECHEON (SOUTH KOREA)

Reigning Asian Games champion Jyothi Surekha Vennam's fourth place finish lifted compound women's team to second spot in the qualifying rankings of the Archery World Cup Stage 2 that got underway here on Tuesday. Fresh from winning a hat-trick of gold medals at the season-opening Shanghai leg of the World Cup last month, Jyothi missed the top-three spot in the rankings by just three points, finishing behind South Korea's Oh Yoohyun, who shot 707. Han Seungyeon took the pole position at 711, followed by Luxembourg's Mariya Shkolna one point adrift. At eighth and 15th places respectively, Parneet Kaur (704) and world champion Aditi Swami (702) were the next best Indians as overall as a team India grabbed the second seed behind South Korea. The Indian women's team will get a bye into the quarters where they will face seventh seeded Italy. It was a forgettable outing for the compound men archers and Priyansh at 16th place in the leaderboard was the best among the Indians. Prathamesh Fuge and multiple World Cup gold medalist Abhishek Verma, who seemed to have past his prime, were the next best Indians finishing lowly at 20th and 24th places. It impacted the team ranking as they slipped to fourth place. Priyansh and Jyothi combined to get a fourth spot in the

mixed team ranking as well. The qualifiers for the recurve archers will begin on Wednesday. Indian men's recurve team are coming back after upsetting South Korea for the first time in a World Cup final in the Shanghai leg in April. India topped the medal standings at the Stage 1 World Cup with five gold medals, two silver and one bronze, pushing South Korea to second spot (two gold, three silver and two bronze medals).

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