

**OPINION 6**

**EPIC ELECTION BATTLE ENTERS DECISIVE PHASE**

**WORLD 8**

**IRAN'S SUPREME LEADER PRAYS FOR LATE PRESIDENT, OTHERS**

**MONEY 10**

**MARKETS CLIMB ON BUYING IN RELIANCE, INFOSYS**

Published From  
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR  
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH  
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol.17 Issue 139  
\*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

RANCHI, THURSDAY MAY 23, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

Established 1864

# the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



GURBAZ SAYS KKR IS FAMILY TOO  
12 SPORTS

## EC makes its presence felt

**Underlines nation's inviolable socio-cultural milieu**

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

With only two phases of the seven-phase Lok Sabha elections remaining, the Election Commission has now upped the ante against political parties particularly the BJP and the Congress asking them to desist from campaigning along caste, community, language, and religious lines, asserting that India's socio-cultural milieu cannot be made a casualty to elections.

The two phases will see polls on 115 seats including in Delhi on Saturday. The Election Commission on Wednesday in a stern warning to both the BJP and the Congress, the EC has also directed them to issue a formal notice to its "star campaigners" disallowing them from making statements that "divide the society" and may cause tension between different castes and communities.

The EC had last month issued notices to JP Nadda on Opposition charges that Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave a divisive speech in Rajasthan's Banswara. A similar notice had been issued to Mallikarjun Kharge, too, based on the complaints filed by the BJP against him and the main Opposition party's senior leader Rahul Gandhi regarding their remarks. The commission rejected the defence by Nadda and Kharge and asked them to instruct their parties' star campaigners to desist from campaigning along caste, community, language, and religious lines.

The EC also asked the Congress not to politicise defence forces and make potentially divisive



statements regarding socio-economic composition of the armed forces.

The EC had broken from norms when it issued notices to the BJP and Congress presidents on April 25 on complaints against Modi by the Opposition and against Rahul and Kharge by the ruling party. While the EC did not name Modi or Rahul, it asked Nadda and Kharge for their "comments" on the "star campaigners" alleged MCC violations.

"Elections are periodic exercises, they come and go, but political parties like yours endure; even more enduring preserve is India's socio-cultural milieu; political parties are in the task of nurturing leaders for the country for present and future," the commission said. It also asked the Congress to ensure that its star campaigners and candidates do not make statements which give false impression that the Constitution may be abolished or sold. The EC asked the presidents of the two national parties to issue

formal notes to their star campaigners to correct their discourse, exercise care and maintain decorum.

Referring to their respective replies to the notices issued to them on April 25, the election authority said "technical loopholes or extreme interpretations of other political party's utterances" cannot discharge the parties and their campaigners from the core responsibility of their own content which ought to be corrective to the ongoing discourse "and not further plummeting the quality of campaign discourse".

It reminded the two parties of provisions of the model code which state that no party or candidate will include in any activity which may aggravate existing differences or create mutual hatred or cause tension between different castes and communities, religious or linguistic.



## Voter sympathy for Kejriwal ebbs

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Riding high on the electoral sympathy after the arrest of Arvind Kejriwal, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) seems to have lost its advantages after the alleged assault on Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal in the run up for the seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi.

The Maliwal incident has dented Kejriwal's image badly, who is facing corruption charges in the excise policy scam case, which is visible in the party's campaign. The saffron party seems to have an upper hand in all seven seats as this has not gone well among the women voters.

Top BJP leaders are confident to repeat the 2019 results. The BJP, which is banking on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's charisma and corruption free administration in his 10 years rule, has now focussed its strategy, utilising the alleged assault on Maliwal, to portray its top leadership, including Kejriwal, as responsible — first through "silence", acceptance, and then a "direct attack" on Maliwal — for "denigration" and "assault" of their own women colleagues.

On the other hand, Kejriwal who has maintained radio silence, seems to be on back foot, hurting the party's electoral prospects. The BJP's campaign strategy to counter the INDIA Bloc in Delhi has been to target the AAP more than the Congress.

Besides, the BJP has consistently raked up corruption allegations against the AAP, including the now-scrapped excise policy and 10 other alleged scams. AAP hopes Kejriwal's arrest will generate sympathy for the party in the general elections and help it win maximum seats in Delhi and Punjab.

With your vote

Our economy moved from Fragile-5 to

Top-5 in the last 10 years



This time with your vote

# Will make Bharat the third largest economy of the world

## Modi rips into INDIA Bloc's Communal plank

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday tore into the INDIA Bloc accusing it of being extremely "communal, extremely casteist and extremely nepotistic" as he alleged that the Congress is to be blamed for the anti-Sikh riots.

Addressing a rally in West Delhi's Dwarka sector 14, the Prime Minister said the BJP's development model is committed to 'nation first' but for the Congress and the INDIA grouping, the only agenda is 'family first'.

Modi denounced the communal and casteist agendas of the INDIA Bloc, accusing them of prioritising vote-bank politics over the welfare of the nation. He criticised their divisive tactics and highlighted instances of communal violence and corruption under their rule. "The country also understands



Delhites throng Dwarka sector 14 to welcome Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday

Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

that if by mistake any vote is cast in favour of the INDIA alliance, that vote is not going to be of any use to the country. Every vote given to BJP will strengthen the resolve of 'Viksit Bharat'. That is why this huge sea of people is also

saying in one voice 'Phir Ek Baar Modi Sarkar', he said. He said, "The BJP's development model says, Nation First. On the other hand, Congress and the INDIA alliance's only agenda is family first. This INDIA alliance is a

symbol of every evil that exists in the country today. They are highly communal, casteist, and family-oriented. Our Delhi has been a direct witness to their communalism." Attacking the Congress and the INDIA Bloc, he referred

to 1984 riots when Sikhs were burnt alive. "It was in this very Delhi that my Sikh brothers and sisters were burned alive with burning tires around their necks. Whose crime was this? Congress. Today, every party standing under the Congress umbrella is guilty of the Sikh riots. It is Modi who is delivering justice to the victims of the Sikh riots. As soon as Modi came to power, an SIT was formed. Hundreds of cases were reopened. The Congress leaders who were roaming freely have been punished by us," he said.

During his speech, Modi emphasised the stark differences between the governance models of the BJP and the Congress-led INDIA Bloc. He underscored the BJP's commitment to fast-paced development and efficient

governance, contrasting it with the slow progress and systemic injustice perpetuated by the Congress and its allies.

Speaking about the Congress and INDIA Bloc's misrule and caste-based politics, Modi said, "Who doesn't know about the prestigious Jamia Millia Islamia, a Central University in Delhi? For 60 years, it remained a regular educational institution, even there, Dalits, backward classes, and tribals used to get reservations. But in 2011, the Congress Government played a trick. Suddenly Jamia was declared a minority institution. This imposed a 50 per cent reservation for Muslims in Jamia. Earlier, all SC/ST/OBCs used to get reservations in admissions. Now even that has been restricted based on religion."

## SC slams Soren for half truths, he withdraws plea

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Jailed former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Wednesday failed to get any relief from the Supreme Court which pulled him up for "suppressing material facts" in his plea against his arrest in a money laundering case linked to an alleged land scam.

A vacation bench of justices Dipankar Datta and Satish Chandra Sharma allowed Soren's counsel Kapil Sibal to withdraw the pleas for interim bail for Lok Sabha poll campaigning and against his arrest after the apex court indicated that it would dismiss them as Soren has not approached the court with clean hands.

The court pointed out that Soren did not apprise it of the April 4 order of the special



PMLA court taking cognisance of the prosecution complaint, which is the Enforcement Directorate's equivalent to a charge sheet, and also that his regular bail petition was filed on April 15 and dismissed on May 13. "... You had approached two courts for the same relief... We have doubts that your client (Soren) was acting in a bonafide manner..." it said.

## WORST NOT OVER YET! Brace up for more fire from the skies

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

With the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issuing a red alert in Delhi forecasting the city to sizzle at 47 degrees Celsius on May 25, the day of the Lok Sabha polls, political parties are grappling with speculations about voter participation. A million dollar question is: Whether or not voter turnout in Delhi will surpass the 60 per cent mark recorded in 2019 general elections.

This phase six involves 58 Lok Sabha constituencies across six States, including Delhi, Haryana, Odisha, and Bihar, as well as two Union Territories. All seven seats in Delhi and all ten seats in Haryana will be contested in this phase amid fear of blistering heat with temperature going up. According to senior IMD



scientist Naresh Kumar, the rising temperatures, particularly in Rajasthan, have prompted the issuance of red alerts, indicating extreme heatwave conditions. In Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, while there has been a slight decrease in temperatures due to a western disturbance, the mercury is expected to rise again in the

coming days. As per the IMD, heatwave to severe heatwave conditions are very likely in most parts of West Rajasthan, in many/some pockets over Punjab, Haryana-Chandigarh, East Rajasthan and West Uttar Pradesh, in isolated pockets of northwest Madhya Pradesh and Delhi till Sunday. Mahesh Palawat, vice

president of Skymet Weather and a private Indian weather forecaster, was quoted by a media report that, "Our warning indicates that temperatures are likely to reach high heatwave levels in the national Capital."

The apprehension surrounding voter turnout in Delhi's upcoming elections is likely to be compounded by the heat index, which measures the apparent temperature that people feel outside due to a combination of high temperature and humidity. For example on Wednesday a Delhi faced scorching temperatures at 42 degrees Celsius, however, the heat index soared to a staggering 51.6 degrees Celsius, highlighting the severe heat stress and discomfort endured by residents.

## Israel honours Kerala caregivers

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Noor Gilon, the Ambassador of Israel to India, while celebrating National Day of Israel in India said both the Government and the people of India stood on the side of Israel since October 7. Gilon thanked the Government of India and the people for standing with the Jewish nation in its hour of crisis. "From October 7, both the Government and the people of India stood on the side of Israel. And this we will never forget. The amount of support we get here is nothing short of amazing. It's a testimony of the extraordinary relations between the Indian and the Jewish people," said the Israeli Ambassador. Ambassador also paid tributes to two Keralites who risked lives to save aged couple during the attack by Hamas on October 7. "I take



this occasion to salute the heroism of people of Indian descent: Meera and Sabitha, caregivers from Kerala, who saved an elderly couple during the terror attack; and Romi (6), an Israeli child of Indian descent, whose parents were murdered in front of her, tried to protect her little sister — Lia (3) during the attack. They have shown extraordinary courage and a strong spirit, inspiring the entire nation of Israel," said

Gilon. The 76th anniversary of Israel was observed on Tuesday at New Delhi with a call to the Hamas to release the 128 citizens of Israel who were taken hostage by the Hamas on October 7, 2023. Israel's National Day was organised by the Embassy of Israel in India with Vinay Mohan Kwatra, the foreign secretary of India, gracing the occasion as chief guest. Despite the deep wounds inflicted by the

Hamas terrorists on Israeli people, the Ambassador paid glowing tributes to the two caregivers from Kerala who saved an aged couple from the jaws of death.

He stated that this Independence Day was complicated and painful. "But our resolve is strong. While we mark this Independence Day, our thoughts are with the 128 loved ones who are still held captive. Their immediate release remains our sincere hope and ongoing mission. Speaking at the event, Foreign Secretary Kwatra said, "We join the people of Israel to celebrate this momentous occasion. It is deeply inspiring that the extraordinary journey of a nation that has not only survived and thrived against all odds, but also transformed itself into a flourishing landscape of innovation, advancement, and growth."

# Preparations on full swing for departure of polling parties, vehicle checks intensified

**PNS : JAMSHEDPUR:** With the Lok Sabha elections fast approaching, preparations for the departure of polling parties have intensified in East Singhbhum district. Voting for the 09-Jamshedpur parliamentary seat is scheduled for May 25, 2024. The District Election Officer, Ananya Mittal, along with Deputy Development Commissioner, Manish Kumar, conducted a thorough inspection of the material warehouse and the district control room to ensure readiness.



Mittal and Kumar visited the material warehouse where preparations for dispatching the polling teams on May 24 are underway in full swing. They reviewed the packaging process for the materials that will be distributed to polling personnel. The inspection included checking the quality and completeness of the items in the packets. These items include: Instruction books for the presiding officer and electronic voting machine (EVM), Various forms and envelopes for statutory and non-statutory packets, Pens, pins, indelible ink, and metal seals and Different types of posters and other essential materials. The officers also verified that the packets prepared for the Legislative Assembly were accurate and instructed the team to ensure all materials were ready within the stipulated time frame. Recognizing the critical nature of the final 72 hours before voting, Mittal emphasized the importance of close monitoring and efficient coordination. He inspected the District Control Room to confirm the presence and readiness of personnel. He issued directives for the control room to supervise the work of the Flying Squad Teams (FST) and Static Surveillance Teams (SST). Mittal stressed the importance of vehicle checks at permanent checkpoints, urging personnel to maintain vigilance and promptly share any significant information with the flying squad team. He outlined the control room's responsibilities on the day of voting, ensuring that all protocols are followed to facilitate a smooth and orderly election process. Instructions regarding the departure of the polling parties were also discussed. The District Election Officer provided guidelines to ensure that the polling teams are dispatched efficiently and that the control room supports their activities throughout the voting day.

## NTPC SLC provides Water Tankers, Education materials to underprivileged children

**PNS : RANCHI**

NTPC Swayamsiddha Ladies Club (SSLC) under its welfare initiative provided two water tanks and food packets were distributed to Adim Jatiya Seva Mandal (Orphanage Home for Tribal & Underprivileged Children). The objective of this initiative was to ensure availability of drinking water during peak summer and essential food items to the residents of the children home.



In addition, Swayamsiddha Ladies Club (SSLC), members visited Robinhood Army's cluster, an organisation catering support for education of the slum area underprivileged children in Bariatu, Ranchi. Education for underprivileged children lacked basic resources such as textbooks and school supplies. This makes it difficult for children to learn effectively. Keeping in view of this, SLC aimed to bridge between

underprivileged children and education by distribution of stationery items, textbooks to children with willingness to learn. The distribution was done under the leadership of Rekha Jain, President, SSLC. Speaking on this occasion, Jain said "The aim of our organization is to serve the backward sections of the society, and we are extremely happy to take this initiative to serve the society"

Beneficiaries expressed happiness over this initiative and appreciated the efforts of the Ladies Club. On the occasion, Vice President Shikha Rastogi, Purnima Shrikhande, Mansa Verma, General Secretary Deepa, Joint Secretary, Parmeshwari, Cultural Secretary Snigdha Majhi, Treasurer and other members were present on the occasion.

## Two Day HR Conclave at SAIL-MTI on May 23 & 24

**PNS : RANCHI**

Steel authority of India Limited is organising its 1st HR conclave at Ranchi on 23rd and 24th May 2024 wherein over 100 delegates from all SAIL Plants and Units shall be participating. The annual conclave will be chaired by KK Singh, Director (Personnel), SAIL and attended by Executives Directors and Senior Executives from Plants and Units. Amarendu Prakash, Chairman, SAIL, would be addressing the gathering from New Delhi in virtual mode.

A number of events have been planned during the two day programme which includes panel discussions by Director (Personnel & IR), Coal India Ltd.; Director (Personnel), SAIL; Director (HR), HPCL; ED & Head of HR, Power Finance Corporation etc. A special event shall be a fireside chat by one of India's most iconic HR leaders Prabir Jha and Professor Charu Malhotra, IIPA, and presentation by industry experts.

Representatives from TATA STEEL, Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and senior partners from Business Consulting firms viz. Boston Consultant Group (BCG) and Deloitte would also be contributing in the event and share latest HR trends and best HR practices.

The 8 finalist teams from the five Integrated Steel Plants and SAIL's Marketing wing CMO will also be competing in the grand finale to be held on the 2nd day of the Conclave. The results of the competition will be announced on the same day.

1st and the 2nd ranked HR teams will be awarded the Best HR Team Trophy and 1st Runner up Trophy respectively for the year 2024.

## Campaign for BJP candidate intensifies

**PNS : JAMSHEDPUR**

Former BJP Jharkhand state spokesperson Amarpreet Singh Kale has launched an intensive public relations campaign to support BJP candidate Bidyut Baran Mahato for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. The campaign commenced on Tuesday in several areas of Jamshedpur, including Bagunhatu's A Block, B Block, Kalindi Basti, Namta Basti, Christian Basti, Gajra Chowk, Neembhatta, Sukha Talab, and Bengali Basti.

Kale's outreach aimed to mobilize voters to support the BJP on May 25th, emphasizing the importance of forming a strong and stable government. He highlighted the achievements of the Narendra Modi administration over the past decade, particularly noting the significant infrastructure developments such as the Ranchi Jamshedpur Highway.



"Voting for Bidyut Baran Mahato will strengthen Prime Minister Modi's hands, ensuring continued development and prosperity for India," stated Kale. He urged the residents of Jamshedpur to cast their votes for the BJP candidate to further the nation's progress. The campaign saw active participation from several community leaders and supporters, including Pramanik, Vivek Kamant, Lakhkhikant Ghosh, Sahil Pariyar, Banarasi, Rahul Namta, Shashikant Kumar, Rohit Namta, Ajay Singh, Raju Kalindi, Rajkumar Kalindi, Sanjay Rana, and Sonu Dev. This concerted effort underscores the BJP's commitment to engaging with the electorate at the grassroots level, ensuring that the message of development and prosperity resonates with every voter in the Jamshedpur Lok Sabha constituency.

## 'ED should investigate assets of all politicians and bureaucrats of state'

**PNS : RANCHI**

Sampoorna Bharat Kranti Party's national general secretary cum Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh in-charge Vijay Shankar Nayak today said that ED should investigate the personal movable and immovable assets of all the ministers/former ministers/secretaries/deputy secretaries/special secretaries/undersecretary level officers of the state. He was reacting to the summons sent by ED to IAS officer Manish Ranjan.



He further said that today all the departments related to Public Works are full of corruption. Today there is a free hand for loot in all these departments. Unabated scam continues, in the name of tender, the contractor is doing huge networking work of commission fraud in alliance

with engineer and minister, which should be investigated by ED.

Nayak further said that today in all the departments related to Public Works Department, the coalition of bureaucrats, engineers, contractors and ministers have

looted the development funds of Jharkhand with both hands, due to which today 40% commission is lost in Jharkhand. This is continuing and today government money is being looted in the name of development and there is no one to see it.

While congratulating the ED officials, he said that today the ED officials are doing excellent and wonderful work towards ending the loot and commission fraud in Jharkhand. Whenever the ED is conducting raids, it is doing the work of recovering crores of rupees. They are exposing the loot, which is a welcome step which cannot be praised enough. Today there is a fear of ED on the corrupt politicians and bureaucrats due to this and this is for a poor state like Jharkhand which is a den of corruption. This is a good sign for that poor state.

## DPS Bokaro student Ayan secures AIR 3 in CDS exam

**PNS : BOKARO**

DPS Bokaro alumnus Ayan Kumar Dey has made his school and state proud by securing All India Rank (AIR) 3 in the prestigious Combined Defence Services (CDS) Examination (II), conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). In addition to his remarkable achievement in the Indian Naval Academy (INA) merit list, Ayan also secured AIR 17 for the Indian Military Academy (IMA).

Opting for the IMA, Ayan's training to join as a Lieutenant will commence in July 2024 in Dehradun. Previously, he earned a special entry through the NCC at the Officers Training Academy (OTA) in Chennai, securing the 13th rank nationwide and being the sole candidate selected

from Jharkhand. The success of Ayan has created a jubilant atmosphere within the DPS Bokaro community. Principal Dr. A.S. Gangwar expressed his congratulations, highlighting Ayan's achievement as an inspiration for future generations of students. Dr. Gangwar emphasized the school's commitment to providing opportunities that enable students to pursue their dreams.

Ayan's educational journey includes completing his 12th standard at DPS Bokaro with an impressive 85.6% and securing a 10 CGPA in his 10th standard from Army Public School, Ramgarh. After obtaining his B.Tech in Bangalore, he worked as a software developer while simultaneously preparing for the CDS examination.

## DAV Hazaribag creates record by achieving national level in VVM



**AVINASH ANJAN : HAZARIBAG**

Vidyarthi Vigyan Manthan (VVM) is India's largest Science Talent Search Examination for school students of standard VI to XI. It has been conceptualised to identify bright minds with a scientific aptitude from the student community. VVM is a national program for popularizing science among school students. In the recently organised national camp organized at IISER, Bhopal from 18 May to 19 May, the children of DAV Hazaribag have brought pride to their school and city by securing three top positions at the national level. DAV's Ayush Raj, Class VI stood first in East Zone in his group, Saumya Palak, Class XI stood third in East Zone in her category and Dikshita Singh, currently a student of Class XII broke all the previous records. She set a new record by securing

third place at National Level and became the National Himalayan 3rd rank scorer. For this achievement, Dikshita Singh will be given a cash prize of Rs 10,000 as well as a Bhaskar Scholarship Award of Rs 2,000 per month for one year. Not only this, Dikshita Singh is also being given an internship opportunity in Chandigarh for a week by the Government of India. Ayush has also been awarded a cash prize of Rs 5000 for securing first position and Soumya has been awarded a cash prize of Rs 2000 for securing third position. It is noteworthy that four students of DAV Hazaribag had qualified for the national level, out of which three students registered their brilliant presence in the national level competition by securing top three positions. It may be noted that at the national level, there are four winners from Jharkhand in the Eastern region, out of

which only three are children of DAV Hazaribag. Certainly it is a matter of pride and happiness for the school. Last year, only one student had won the national level competition of VVM, but this year three children displayed their talent.

Principal in-charge of the school, Kavita Pandey congratulated the children and their parents on the excellent success of these students in this prestigious competition. Expressing happiness, Pandey said that this achievement is the result of hard work of the students, continuous support of their parents and proper guidance of dedicated teachers. She especially congratulated the science teachers, especially Physics teachers Tohid Akhtar and Rajendra Roy for continuously preparing the students with new strategies, due to which DAV Hazaribag is touching new heights every day.



## Special Lok Adalat in Garhwa on June 8

**NITYANAND DUBEY : GARHWA**

As per the instructions of Jhalsa, Ranchi, a special Lok Adalat will be organised on June 08, 2024, at Civil Court, Garhwa and Sub-Divisional Civil Court, Nagar Untari. In this Lok Adalat matter related to motor vehicle accident claims will be settled.

In this regard, Rajesh Sharan Singh, Principal District and Sessions Judge and Chairman of District Legal Services Authority said that a Special Lok Adalat is going to be organized in Civil Court Garhwa and Sub-Divisional Civil Court Nagar Untari, on the coming 08, June for settlement of Motor Vehicle Accident cases. Lok Adalat will be held from 7.30 am. Motor vehicle accident claims will be executed in this special Lok Adalat.

In order to settle as many cases as possible in this Lok Adalat, the Principal District and Sessions Judge cum Chairman District Legal Services Authority has appealed to the people that more and more parties should attend this special Lok Adalat and get quick, cheap and accessible justice. For this, Lok Adalat has been organized from 03 June to 07 June 2024 in Civil Court Garhwa and Court, Nagar Untari from 07:30 am to 12:30 pm so that the matter can be disposed of by making a maximum number of parties sit and make a settlement agreement.

Secretary of District Legal Services Authority, Garhwa, Ravi Choudhary said that notices have been issued to the parties for execution of maximum number of cases in Lok Adalat. The notice is being done through Najarat, Task force and PLV, in which notices have been issued in about 146 cases so far, while about 172 cases related to vehicle accident claims are pending in Garhwa district. He further informed that after execution of cases in Lok Adalat, no party loses nor an appeal can be made against it in the upper court.

## Young doctor doing internship in MMCH dies in road accident

**PNS : DALTONGANJ**

A 28 year old doctor doing one year internship at the Medinirai medical college in Daltonganj. Abhishek Chanchal died in a road accident last night near the Redma Chowk.

Dr Chanchal hailed from Garhwa town. He had completed his MBBS courses / studies in China.

He was here in the Medinirai medical college completing his 1 year mandatory internship.

Dr Nikhil Nishant, a senior faculty of the department of community medicines here in this medical college said we held a condolence meeting cum two minute silence today in memoriam of him and as a mark of respect to the departed soul.

Dr Nikhil Nishant said the young doctor Chanchal had two weeks left to complete his 1 year internship but before that this deadly accident took away his life.

A medical student of the Medinirai medical college

had last year a near brush with death in a road collision who remained in bed for long.

Dr Nikhil Nishant said "We always keep telling our students not to do triple riding on a bike but they love not to pay any attention to our sane advice so given to them in the larger interest of their own lives."

The sad and tragic demise of a good doctor Chanchal in the road accident has sent shock waves here in Daltonganj and Garhwa.

# Outside political workers to leave district 48 hours in advance

**PNS : JAMSHEDPUR**

With polling day inching closer, strict guidelines have been issued by District Election Officer Ananya Mittal to ensure a peaceful and orderly voting process. During a meeting with representatives of political parties and candidates held at the Collectorate Auditorium, Mittal emphasized several key measures.

One of the primary directives is that all political persons and workers from outside the district must vacate the 09-Jamshedpur constituency 48 hours before the end of polling. Specifically, they are required to leave the area after 5:00 PM on May 23, 2024. This measure aims to prevent any undue influence or disruptions during the final stages of the election. Violators found canvassing or



present in the constituency beyond this period will face legal action under relevant sections. Additionally, a ban on public gatherings and election campaigning will be enforced 48 hours prior to the end of voting. However, any election campaigns conducted through TV, cable channels,

radio, and print media on May 24 and 25 must receive pre-certification from the Media Certification and Monitoring Committee (MCMC).

Mittal urged all political parties, candidates, and their election agents to fully cooperate with election officials and employees to ensure the

## Dry Day for upcoming elections

**JAMSHEDPUR :** Stringent measures have been implemented to ensure a fair and disturbance-free voting process in East Singhbhum district. District Election Officer Ananya Mittal has declared dry days from 5:00 PM on May 23, 2024, to 5:00 PM on May 25, 2024, and on June 4, 2024, the day of vote counting. These directives have been issued under Section 26 of the Excise Act. The dry day declaration prohibits the sale, distribution, and consumption of spirituous, fermented, or intoxicating liquor in the district during the specified period. This measure aims to maintain order and prevent any alcohol-related disturbances during the critical election period. Voting in East Singhbhum district is scheduled for May 25, 2024. Mittal emphasized the importance of adhering to these guidelines to ensure a smooth electoral process. He urged all stakeholders, including political parties, candidates, and citizens, to cooperate fully with the election officials.

elections proceed smoothly. He reiterated that the use of personal vehicles by voters is permitted only up to a 100-meter radius of the polling

station. No vehicles are to be provided to voters by political representatives.

To maintain the sanctity of the polling area, election cam-

aigning is prohibited within a 100-meter radius of polling stations, and solicitation of votes in this area is strictly forbidden.

In terms of voter identification, the Election Officer clarified that voter identity slips must not contain any candidate symbols or names. Every voter is required to bring one of the Commission-prescribed identification options to the polling station to cast their vote. Only those whose names appear on the voter list will be allowed to vote.

Mittal concluded the meeting by highlighting the importance of adherence to these guidelines for a fair and transparent election process. All political entities and their representatives are expected to comply strictly with these rules.

## Teach a lesson to dishonest people, who ruined Jharkhand: Shivraj Singh Chauhan

Former MP CM addresses rally in support of NDA candidate Dhulu Mahato

PNS : RANCHI/DHANBAD

Former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh Shivraj Singh Chauhan today addressed a public meeting organized at Manas Mandir ground in Digwadih, Jharia of Dhanbad Lok Sabha. On this occasion, he said that after a long struggle, Atal Bihari Vajpayee worked to create Jharkhand. "Atal ji created Jharkhand, Prime Minister Modi beautified Jharkhand. INDI Alliance came in between and ruined everything," he said.

"There has been news in the media about who gave how much commission to Minister Alamgir Alam. Rs 350 crore was found in a Congress MP's house. The MLA is looting. The MP is looting. The minister is looting. The Chief Minister went to jail itself. They looted the entire Jharkhand and made the people of the rich state poor. Congress, JMM and RJD looted coal, sand, stone, and made mountains disappear. The people of INDI Alliance are looting it and making a mountain of notes," he said. Chauhan said that the INDI Alliance members are openly looting. With the looted money, water could reach the farmers' fields. Schools could have been built for the children. Colleges could have been built. Hospitals could have been built. These dishonest people looted and ruined this lovely Jharkhand. Do not leave them at any cost.

Prime Minister Modi passed the Nari Shakti Vandan Act and gave 33 per cent reservation in the Lok Sabha and Assembly. Prime Minister Modi



Senior BJP leader and former MP Chief Minister Chivraj Singh Chouhan addresses an election rally in support of Dhanbad BJP candidate Dhulu Mahto in Dhanbad on Wednesday. PNS

ran programs like Beti Padhao, Beti Bachao, Bharatiya Janata Party is now running the Lakhpati Didi programme. BJP has said that 3 crore Lakhpati Didis will be created in the entire country.

Congress and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha have no strength left. One is in jail and the remaining ones are also about to leave. Those who have looted public money, money will be taken out of them.

He said that Congress was crying due to the arrival of Lord Shri Ram. They were invited, but they did not come. Until 2014, there were only scams. India's honour was destroyed. Congress also committed a great sin by dividing India. Pakistan occupied Kashmir also survived because of the sin of Congress. Congress had imposed Section 370. Prime Minister Narendra

Modi removed him in one stroke. People of INDI Alliance used to say that if Article 370 is removed, rivers of blood will flow. Nothing happened by removing Section 370. POK is ours, we will take it. Indi alliance people say that Pakistan has a nuclear bomb. They got scared by this. We have a Prime Minister with a 56 inch chest. He said that we should have only one goal - to save Jharkhand and take the country forward. Corruption has to be ended from Jharkhand. Whoever has looted Jharkhand, he has to be taught a lesson, so that the coming generation remembers that the public will not forgive those who looted. Press the lotus button on 25th May.

On this occasion, MLA Dr. Neera Yadav, Biranchi Narayan and Amit Yadav were also present.

## BJP targets INDIA bloc leaders for 'code word' corruption



BJP State Spokesperson Arun Oraon along with other leaders during a press conference in Ranchi on Wednesday. Pix by Ratan Lal

PNS : RANCHI

BJP state spokesperson Dr. Arun Oraon on Wednesday attacked Indi Alliance on corruption alleging that Indi Alliance leaders have given a new code word regarding corruption. Money was taken according to the code word. File, folder and boss names were given according to the rate. It was used to extort money.

Dr. Oraon said that the INDI Alliance sold Jharkhand through code words. Rs 37 crore were recovered from the house of someone close to the minister. Doing corruption through code words is not new for Congress and JMM as they have always been using it for corruption.

He said that the code word was also mentioned in the file found from the house of former Chief Minister Hemant Soren's former Principal Secretary Rajiv Arun Ekka. The minister's PA has also mentioned how much commission was given to whom for which work. How much commission has been given to the minister?

ED has given the court detailed information about taking commission in the tender. After arresting Chief Engineer Virendra Ram, ED interrogated him. During interrogation, Virendra Ram admitted to giving commission of Rs 3 crore to the minister. Only after this the ED took action. A mountain of currency notes was recovered from the house of the minister's PA servant. The organization has been fed the means to commit corruption. Even after the corruption

case was exposed and the currency notes were recovered, there is no shame and morality left in Alamgir Alam. Not resigning from the post. Chief Minister Champai Soren should take cognizance of this and immediately dismiss him from the cabinet.

He said that the public is watching the hard work of these people. The public will give him a befitting reply in the coming assembly elections also. Will uproot corrupt leaders, ministers and government. He said that considering the achievements of INDI Alliance, it would be appropriate to give them a new name His Master Corrupt Alliance.

He welcomed the decision of the Supreme Court. Said that Hemant Soren is not getting bail even from the court. This makes it clear how serious the allegations of corruption are against him. Other people should also take a lesson from this. People of INDI Alliance should desist from blaming BJP.

The state spokesperson said that Prime Minister Modi has already made it clear that neither will I eat nor will I let anyone eat. I will take strict action against those who fill the coffers by looting public money. Till now, ED and CBI have recovered lakhs of crores of rupees. He said that every penny will be recovered from those who looted public money. Such corrupt people will be put in jail.

State media co-in-charge Yogendra Pratap Singh and state spokesperson Rafia Naz were present on this occasion.

## Ranchi Police hold inspection of highly sensitive booths

PNS : RANCHI

Under the leadership of City SP Rajkumar Mehta, on Wednesday, highly sensitive booths in urban areas were also inspected to ensure peaceful conduct of voting.

In the sixth phase of Lok Sabha elections, elections are to be held on four Lok Sabha seats of Jharkhand. In the third phase of the state, voting will be held on May 25 in Ranchi, Giridih, Dhanbad and Jharkhand. Ranchi district administration has completed all preparations for voting. At the same time, strong security arrangements have also been made by the district police. Special security arrangements have also been made in the militancy affected areas of Ranchi district. Special forces have also been deployed in these areas. So that no obstruction of any kind arises during voting. Police patrolling is also being done in these areas. Apart from the district police, other forces including paramilitary forces, CRPF, JAP, IRB have also been called for voting. So that there is no disturbance of any kind during voting.

For our unemployed youth  
For the backbreaking inflation  
For our suffering farmers  
For our molested women  
For the attacks on reservation

# THE ANSWER IS IN YOUR VOTE

Vote for Congress!

## HAATH BADLEGA HALAAT

## Total 63.21% vote in 5th phase: Additional CEO

PNS : RANCHI

Additional Chief Electoral Officer Dr. Neha Arora, on Wednesday, said that 63.21 per cent people have voted in the fifth phase of elections whereas in the by-election of Gandey assembly constituency, 68.92 per cent voting took place.

Arora further said that in the fifth phase, voting was held in three parliamentary constituencies - Chatra, Hazaribagh and Koderma on May 20. Voting was 63.69 per cent in Chatra, 61.81 per cent in Koderma and 64.39 per cent in Hazaribagh. She was holding a press conference at Nirvachan Sadan, Dhurva on Wednesday, she added.

The Additional Chief Electoral Officer said that the specialty of voting in these three parliamentary constituencies was that more women voted than

men. "In all the 16 assembly constituencies of these three Lok Sabha constituencies, women have prevailed over men in voting. He told that in Bagodar assembly constituency of Koderma parliamentary constituency, the voting percentage of women has been highest as compared to men. Here men voted 53.23 per cent and women 74.49 per cent. That means women have voted 21.26 per cent more than men. The lowest difference in voting percentage between men and women was in Barkagaon of Hazaribagh parliamentary constituency. Here women have voted 1.46 per cent more than men," he added.

Arora said that since the implementation of the Model Code of Conduct, illegal materials and cash worth more than Rs 1 billion, 28 crore, 49 lakh have been seized in Jharkhand.



Additional Chief Electoral Officer Neha Arora during a press conference in Ranchi on Wednesday. PNS

## SC refuses to entertain Hemant's interim bail plea

The Supreme Court on May 22 refused to hear former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren's plea challenging his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate in a money-laundering case, as it pulled him up for hiding facts of the case.

The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) executive president, who was arrested in January, has been trying for an interim bail, like Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal.

A bench of justices Dipankar Datta and Satish Chandra Sharma pulled up Soren's counsel Kapil Sibal for not disclosing the fact that a special court had taken cognizance of the complaint against him, which left little room for him to challenge the validity of his arrest.

The court was also miffed over the fact that Soren pursued his bail petition, while also challenging the validity of his arrest.

After a vacation bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Satish Chandra Sharma expressed disinclination to entertain the petition, the petitioner chose to withdraw the petition. The bench orally observed during the hearing that the petitioner had not disclosed facts relating to the Special Court taking cognizance of the complaint filed by the ED.

It may be recalled on Tuesday's hearing, the bench



had asked Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal (appearing for Soren) to satisfy it on the proposition that the validity of arrest can be examined by the court, despite the Trial Court taking cognizance of ED complaint and rejecting a regular bail application filed on behalf of Soren.

A bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Satish Chandra Sharma was upset that Soren had not disclosed to it that the trial court had taken cognizance of the complaint filed by the Enforcement Directorate.

"We expected some candour from your client. He should have said that he had already applied for bail. That was not told to us in the course of arguments...You were pursuing parallel remedies...Why is it that in none of the petitions, despite being aware, you are not spelling it out that cognizance was taken on April 4, 2024...Your conduct leaves a lot to be desired...This is not the way you come before the court without disclosing material facts," Justice Datta told Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal appearing for Soren.

The court finally said it intended to dismiss the petition and would say in the order that Soren had not approached it with clean hands. But Sibal said he would rather withdraw the plea which the bench agreed. The petition was finally dismissed as withdrawn.

## Will not let BJP snatch your rights over water, jungle and land: Priyanka Gandhi

PNS : RANCHI

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi today addressed two rallies in support of Congress candidates Pradeep Yadav (Godda) and Yashashwini Sahay (Ranchi). In her address to the people of Jharkhand, Priyanka said, "We will not reduce your rights on water, forests and land. Today BJP leaders and their billionaires have their eyes on your water, forests and land. There is a desire to tamper with the SPT and CNT Act. Your land and water were given to Adani. You neither get a job nor electricity. All the electricity goes abroad and you don't get it." "Today they have attacked the opposition. The media is captured, so that you do not know the truth. What is their truth? Their truth is that all their policies in the entire country are being made for their big billionaire friends. You were not compensated for the way your land was taken. Here the big billionaires got a lot of benefit but you did not. They are doing it like this all



All India Congress Committee General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadhra along with JMM leader Kalpana Soren, during a public meeting in favour of INDIA alliance candidate Pradeep Yadav for Lok Sabha elections, at Mela Maidan in Godda on Wednesday. PNS

over the country. The country's coal mines, country's electricity, airports and ports have all been given to their billionaire friends. These people forgive the loans of billionaires. Rs 16 lakh crore has been waived off for 22.23 trillionaires. And not a single rupee was forgiven to the farmers of the country," she said.

Priyanka said that today

the poor farmers of the country are struggling with poverty. When a farmer goes to farming his equipment becomes expensive. GST is applicable. They don't get the right price for the produce. If a disaster occurs, even compensation is not available. Priyanka also attacked the BJP on Covid vaccine. She said that the PM has removed his photo from

the identity card of the vaccine. Donations of Rs 52 crore have also been taken from them. All his policies are for billionaires. Think deeply about what kind of government you want. Congress has an ideology. It is above caste and religion. It considers the poor and farmers as supreme. Do you want such candidates or those from Taj Hotel? You want a candidate who is from here or an outsider. When elections are held here and you press the EVM button, remember that you will open the way for Hemant ji's release, she added. Priyanka said that BJP leaders are going from place to place saying that if they are elected with full majority then they will change the Constitution. This Constitution has given you rights. This Constitution has given you rights on water, forest and land. You have been given the right to vote. You have been given a reservation. If they come to power they will change the Constitution. They will weaken your reservation. They



All India Congress Committee General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadhra along with JMM leader Kalpana Soren waves to people in a public meeting in favour of INDIA alliance candidate Yashashwini Sahay for Lok Sabha elections in Ranchi on Wednesday. PNS

will reduce your rights. We are sure of this. Because in the last 10 years they have

weakened democracy in every way. They have weakened the Parliament.

# 2024 LS elections have 8,360 candidates, highest since 1996

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A total of 8,360 candidates are contesting the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, the highest since 1996, according to an analysis of official data. In the 2019 polls, there were 8,039 candidates, and in 1996, a record 13,952 candidates were in the fray for 543 seats of the Lower House of Parliament. The 2024 general elections are being held in seven phases, with five rounds of polling completed. The sixth and last rounds will be held on May 25 and June 1, respectively. Counting of votes will be taken up on June 4. The fourth phase of the elections held on May 13 had the highest number of candidates in the fray, 1,717 in 96 parliamentary constituencies in 10 states and Union Territories (UTs). The first phase held on April 19 had 1,625 candidates in 102 constituencies in 21 states and UTs, according to Election Commission (EC) data. There were 1,198 candidates in the second phase on April 26 in 89 constituencies across 13 states and UTs, 1,352 candidates in the third phase on May 7 in 94 constituencies in 12 states and UTs and 695 candi-



dates in the fifth phase on May 20 in 49 constituencies across eight states and UTs. In the upcoming sixth and seven phases on May 25 and June 1, there are 869 and 904 candidates, according to the EC data. Fifty-seven constituencies are going to polls in seven and eight states and UTs on May 25 and June 1, respectively. The number of candidates contesting the Lok Sabha polls has seen a rise of over four times from 1,874 in 1952 -- the first time elections were held -- to 8,360 in 2024, and the average number of candidates

per constituency has increased from 4.67 to 15.39 on an average, according to official data. There used to be only around three to five contestants per Lok Sabha seats on an average till as late as the sixth Lok Sabha elections in 1977 but in the previous elections 14.8 candidates contested per constituency across the country. There has been a marked increase in the total number of candidates contesting the elections over the years. While in 1952 there were 1,874 candidates for 489 seats with an average of 3.83 contestants per constituency, the number

steadily increased to 2,784 candidates in 1971 with an average of 5.37 per constituency, according to official data. In 1977, 2,439 candidates contested and average candidates per constituency stood at 4.5. The 1980 elections saw an increase in the number of candidates to 4,629 with an average of 8.54 per seat, the data showed. In 1984-85, the eighth general elections, had 5,492 candidates with an average of 10.13 contestants per constituency. The ninth general elections in 1989 had 6,160 candidates in the fray with an average of

11.34 per Lok Sabha seat while in the tenth general elections in 1991-92, 8,668 candidates contested for 543 seats with an average of 15.96 per constituency, according to official data. There were a record 13,952 candidates in the fray for 543 Lok Sabha seats in 1996 with the average contestants per seat increasing to 25.69 from 16.38 in the previous elections in 1991, the data showed. The increasing of security deposit from Rs 500 to Rs 10,000 by the EC apparently helped in bringing down the number of contestants per seat to 8.75 candidates in the 1998 Lok Sabha elections. It was after a long gap that the total number of contestants was less than 5,000 (4,750) that only increased marginally in the 1999 general elections to 4,648 candidates, averaging 8.56 candidates per seat. In 2004, the number of contestants again crossed the 5,000-mark with 5,435 contestants in the fray for 543 Lok Sabha seats, averaging just over 10 contestants per seat. The 2009 general elections saw a 8,070 candidates with the average of contestants per seat sharply increasing to 14.86. A total of 8,251 candidates are in the fray in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls.

# Women less than 10 per cent of LS picks: ADR

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Less than 10 per cent of the candidates contesting in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections are women, according to an analysis of data shared by the poll rights body Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR). Of the 8,337 candidates analysed, only 797 are women, representing a mere 9.5 per cent of the total candidates contesting across the seven phases of the elections. This is the first election since the passage of the women's reservation bill to reserve one-third of seats in Lok Sabha and state assemblies for women, reviving a bill pending for 27 years for want of consensus among parties. The bill is yet to come into effect. During the first phase of the elections, out of 1,618 candidates, only 135 were women. This pattern continued in the subsequent phases, with women candidates remaining a small fraction of the total. Phase 2 saw 1,192 candidates of which affidavits of 1,198 candidates were analysed and as many as 100 were women. Phase 3 had 1,352 candidates, including 123 women and 244 with criminal cases. In phase 4, affidavits of 1,710 out of 1,717 candidates were analysed and 170 were women. Phase 5 had the fewest candi-



dates at 695, with 82 women, while in phase 6, affidavits of 866 out of 869 candidates were analysed, and there were 92 women. In phase 7, there will be 904 candidates candidates, with only 95 women. This significant gender imbalance has sparked criticism from political analysts and activists, who question why political parties are waiting for the women's reservation bill to be implemented instead of proactively issuing tickets to women. Dr. Sushila Ramaswamy, Professor at Delhi University's Jesus and Mary College, has emphasised that political parties should take concrete steps to promote women's candidacy. "Political parties should have been more proactive and fielded more women candidates," she said, highlighting the effectiveness of seat reservations for women within party structures, as seen in Britain's Labour Party. With women constituting near-

ly half of India's electorate, their under-representation in the candidate pool raises broader questions about the barriers hindering women's full participation in the political sphere, Dr. Iftekhar Ahmad Ansari, Associate Professor at Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), said. Beyond symbolic gestures and promises, he stressed the importance of structural reforms to ensure equal opportunities for women in politics, underscoring the critical role of party leadership in promoting gender diversity. "Political parties must prioritise gender inclusion in candidate selection and provide adequate support to women aspirants," he emphasised. The issue of women's political representation extends beyond numerical quotas to encompass systemic changes in party dynamics and electoral processes, noted Farhat Jahan, a retired faculty member at Abdullah Women's College at AMU.

# SC cancels bail given by HC to eight PFI members

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday set aside a verdict of the Madras High Court which had granted bail to eight accused in a case registered under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act against alleged PFI operatives, holding that national security is of paramount importance. A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mithal directed the accused, who were granted bail by the high court on October 19 last year, to surrender forthwith and go back to jail. "The impugned order passed by the high court is set aside," the bench said while pronouncing its judgement. The court observed it can't be denied that national security is always of paramount importance and any act linked to terrorism is liable to be restricted. The bench delivered its verdict on a plea filed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) challenging the high court judgement granting bail to these accused. The eight accused —

Barakathullah, Idris, Mohamed Abuthahir, Khalid Mohammed, Syed Ishaq, Khaja Mohaideen, Yasar Arafath and Fayaz Ahmed — were arrested in September 2022. On October 20 last year, the apex court had posted the NIA's plea challenging the high court order for hearing after advocate Rajat Nair, appearing for the anti-terror agency, mentioned it for urgent listing. In its plea, the NIA had claimed that the PFI is a fundamentalist Islamic organisation and it was formed only to achieve the "dangerous goal" of establishing Muslim rule in India governed by Sharia law. It had said an FIR was registered against the alleged office bearers, members and cadres of the PFI, which had been spreading the extremist ideology across Tamil Nadu after establishing its state headquarters at Purasaiwakkam in Chennai and offices in various districts of the state through their front organisations. The petition said the accused had "conspired to commit acts of terror, recruited members for

furthering their extremist ideology and imparted training to commit terrorist activities, organised mass drills for displaying their might by gathering their members in combat uniforms, intending that participants shall be trained to use criminal force for violence against other religious communities to spread fear or alarm or insecurity. "It is respectfully submitted that the leaders/cadres of PFI had formed the organisation only to achieve a dangerous goal of 'Vision India 2047', that is to make this country ruled by Muslims as per sharia law," it had said. The plea claimed tactical weapons training was being imparted and there was evidence on record which showed that PFI cadres where influenced, brainwashed and indoctrinated by the accused. "All the acts were done by the accused in an effort to raise an armed militia to take up the fight for usurping and violating the sovereignty and integrity of the country," it had alleged. Rahul Datta.

# Congress questions EC over difference in voter turnout data

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday raised questions over the difference between the real time voter turnout data and the final figures released by the Election Commission, and said voters are worried over the "strange goings-on" in the poll body. Congress leader and head of media and publicity department of the party Pawan Khera said the difference is around 1.7 crore votes, and termed it as unprecedented. "Voters are worried about the strange goings on in the Election Commission through the four phases of voting. First, the Election Commission takes 10-11 days to bring out the final figure of voting and then the difference between real time data and final figure turns out to be 1.7 crore votes. This is truly unprecedented," Khera said on X. "Unanswered questions about the missing EVMs are also very worrying," he added.



AICC general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "This difference of 1.07 crore overall translates into an increase of 28,000 in each LS seat. This is HUGE." "The discrepancy is maximum in states where BJP is expected to lose seats heavily. What is happening?" Ramesh asked. Other opposition parties have also raised questions over the delay in release of final voter turnout. Lok Sabha polls are being held in seven phases and the results will be declared on June 4.

# IAF chief inaugurates emergency medical helpline for Air Force staff

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In order to provide expert guidance and definitive care during medical emergencies of serving personnel and their families of the Indian Air Force (IAF) across the nation, an Emergency Medical Response System (EMRS), was inaugurated by IAF chief V R Chaudhari at Command Hospital Air Force, Bengaluru on Tuesday. IAF officials said here on Wednesday. The EMRS is a first of its kind 24/7 telephonic medical helpline for serving IAF personnel and their families across India. The system aims to provide prompt response by a team of medical and paramedical professionals to the caller experiencing the emergency anywhere across the country. The responding medical professional shall provide immediate advice to the caller, while simultaneously getting in touch with the IAF medical facility nearest to the caller. This facility symbolises IAF's commit-



ment towards incorporating technology to deliver high quality healthcare in the event of an emergency. The sole aim of EMRS is to save valuable lives. The event featured a demonstration of the system's capability and outreach, highlighting the ease with which expert guidance would be provided to the distressed caller, as well as expeditious launch of a medical support team from

the nearest medical echelon. IAF chief, who originally envisioned this concept, highlighted the importance of the EMRS and further added "this initiative is not just a milestone for the Indian Air Force but a significant advancement in medical readiness, representing a critical step forward in the ongoing efforts to provide immediate and expert medical care during emergencies".

# CBI terminates service of inspector held taking bribe

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has terminated the services of its inspector Rahul Raj who was arrested by the agency while allegedly taking a bribe of Rs 10 lakh from the chairman of a Madhya Pradesh-based nursing college, officials said on Wednesday. Following its policy of "zero tolerance towards corruption", the agency sacked Raj under Article 311 of the Constitution that allows termination of services of government employees, they said. Raj was caught "red-handed" on Sunday while allegedly accepting an illegal gratification of Rs 10 lakh from Malay College of Nursing chairman Anil Bhaskaran and his wife Suma Anil, an official alleged. The couple has also been arrested. The CBI has also attached its Deputy Superintendent of Police Ashish Prasad to the headquarters. He was named in the FIR in the case. Sushil Kumar Majoka and Rishi Kant Asathe, both on attachment with the CBI from the Madhya Pradesh Police, will be repatriated to the state police soon as their alleged role in the bribery racket has surfaced. The CBI swung into action

after inputs and surveillance by its internal vigilance unit indicated that one of the support teams constituted on the orders of the Madhya Pradesh High Court to examine infrastructure in nursing colleges in the state was indulging in corruption. "CBI, ACB, Bhopal, had constituted seven core teams and three-to-four support teams, comprising officials from CBI, those nominated by nursing colleges in Madhya Pradesh and patwaris, in compliance of the directions of the high court for conducting statewide inspections to ascertain whether nursing colleges satisfied the laid down norms and standards for nursing colleges in respect of infrastructural facilities and faculty," CBI spokesperson said. The agency said during monitoring of inspections being carried out by the various teams, officials of one of the support teams, including Raj, were found to be indulging in corruption. It said it was observed that they were giving favourable inspection reports in lieu of bribes collected through conduits. The CBI has arrested 13 people, including Raj, for giving favourable inspection reports to nursing colleges in Madhya Pradesh in exchange for bribes collected through conduits, officials said.

# Alert citizens helping DoT prevent cybercrimes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Vigilant and alert citizens are playing an indispensable role in preventing cybercrimes. Through their proactive reporting of suspected fraud communications via the Chakshu-Report Suspected Fraud Communications facility on the Sanchar Saathi portal, these alert citizens are contributing significantly to a safer digital environment. Their watchful eyes and swift actions protect not only themselves but also countless others from falling victim to scams, phishing attempts, and fraudulent activities. By reporting suspicious messages, calls, and impersonation attempts, these citizens act as the first line of defence against cyber criminals, ministry of communications said here on Wednesday. This prompt approach of citizens helps the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) combat and prevent cybercrimes. The DoT expresses gratitude to the vigilant citizens who enable the Department in ensuring a safer and secure digital ecosystem. With these inputs, the DoT has been taking prompt and strict action on cyber/financial frauds. In the latest cases, people were being duped by fraudulent communication in the name of fake LIC officials and Insurance company represen-



tatives and SMSs for redemption of SBI Rewards. The DoT received inputs from citizens on 19.05.2024 regarding such frauds from 14 mobile numbers. Within 24 hours, the DoT analysed these cases and generated all linkages for these mobile numbers. Therefore, 372 mobile handsets linked to these mobile numbers were blocked on pan-India basis on 21.05.2024. Also, 906 mobile connections were suspended and flagged for re-verification. The Department has urged citizens to stay vigilant and report such fraud communications at 'Chakshu - Report Suspected Fraud Communications' facility of Sanchar Saathi portal (www.sancharsaathi.gov.in/sfc). Such proactive reporting helps DoT in prevention of misuse of telecom resources for cybercrime, financial frauds, etc. Advisories have been issued on a regular basis for the public to create awareness on fake

notices impersonating DoT/TRAI, suspected fraud communications and malicious calls via press, SMS, and social media. This collaborative approach is safeguarding citizens against fraudsters and DoT expresses gratitude to them for coming forward and reporting, keep vigilant, keep reporting and Let's fight it together Chakshu is the latest addition to the citizen centric facilities already available on the Sanchar Saathi portal of the DoT. 'Chakshu' facilitates citizens to report suspected fraud communication received over call, SMS, or WhatsApp with the intention of defrauding like KYC expiry or update of bank account/payment wallet/SIM/gas connection/electricity connection, sextortion, impersonation as government official/relative for sending money, disconnection of all mobile numbers by the DoT, etc.

# 10th International Day of Yoga held



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As the 10th International Day of Yoga was commemorated by the All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) on Tuesday with a distinct focus on 'Yoga for Women Empowerment', Sister BK Shivani, a motivational speaker underscored the significance of yoga in nurturing resilience and informed decision-making, especially among the younger generation. Likewise, in her inaugural speech, AIIA Director Prof. (Dr.) Tanuja Nesari, appealed to everyone to celebrate this Yoga Day for women's empowerment, for guidance and to strengthen minds, spirits, and souls, to unite within ourselves, and to unite with the outside world by following Ayurveda's way of living. "Ayurveda and yoga are two sides of the same coin. Ayurveda is the physical aspect of yoga, and yoga is the spiritual aspect of Ayurveda," she said and urged everyone not only to teach but also to practice both yoga and Ayurveda. "Youth of today should understand the importance of perseverance and the significance of Yoga for bringing a change for the betterment of humanity," she said.

# Indian Navy must remain combat ready: Navy chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Navy must remain combat ready at all times to safeguard national maritime interests, Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi has said. This assertion came amid China's increasing forays into the Indian Ocean and volatile situation in the Red Sea. In an address to officers posted at the naval headquarters here, the Navy chief helved into the current security environment in the strategic waters and consequent actions required by the Navy. He emphasised that as the primary manifestation of India's maritime power, the "raison d'etre of Indian Navy is to remain combat ready at all times to safeguard national maritime interests anytime, anywhere, anyhow". In his remarks to the officers on Tuesday, the Navy chief reiterated the unwavering commitment of the Indian Navy towards the government's Aatma Nirbharta (self-reliance) initiative. Admiral Tripathi laid emphasis on finding in-house solutions, innovation and embracing niche technologies to address the existing and emerging challenges in the maritime domain to remain a responsive



force. He conveyed to the mid and senior level leaders posted at the naval headquarters that they must remain focused on being "the solution providers" and "prioritising outcomes" towards a combat ready, credible, cohesive, and future ready Navy. The admiral praised the dedication and professionalism demonstrated by the personnel in meeting all mandated tasks by the service, according to a Navy spokesperson. In the last few months, the Indian Navy provided assistance to a number of cargo vessels after they came under attacks in strategic waters around the Red Sea. The Houthi militants have been targeting the merchant ships in the Red Sea apparently to build pressure on Israel to stop its military offensive in Gaza.

# Shah: INDIA Bloc does not have any leader who can become PM

**PTI ■ GHATAL (WB)**  
 Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday launched a blistering attack on the "corrupt INDI alliance" and said the opposition bloc doesn't have any leader who can become Prime Minister. While addressing a rally at Ghatal, Shah said the INDIA bloc leaders just want their dynasty to move ahead and "neither have any leaders to lead the country nor have any intention for the development of the nation."  
 Shah, while referring to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir said "PoK is part of India and we will take it."  
 "The INDI alliance doesn't have any leaders. The INDI alliance wants five PMs in five years. The INDI alliances neither have leaders nor have any intention for the development of the nation," he said.  
 The BJP leader said the ongoing parliamentary elections are about choosing between "leaders of dynastic politics or honest leader Narendra Modi" who



considers the country as his family. "Sharad Pawar wants his daughter to be the chief minister. Mamata Banerjee wants her nephew to succeed her as chief minister. Stalin (Tamil Nadu CM) wants to see his son succeed him. Sonia Gandhi wants Rahul Baba to become the Prime Minister of the country. On the other side, there is

# Congress, SP Pakistan sympathisers: Modi

**PTI ■ BASTI (UP)**  
 Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday here called Congress and Samajwadi Party "sympathisers of Pakistan" and alleged that these parties are "scaring the country" with its nuclear power status. Addressing a rally here, Modi alluded to the partnership in UP between Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party's Akhilesh Yadav in 2017, when the two campaigned together for the Assembly elections — and failed. "I am surprised by the repeated release of flop film of two 'shehzadas' of SP and Congress," Modi said.  
 The Congress this time is contesting from 17 of the 80 Lok Sabha in a seat-sharing agreement with the SP. On Pakistan, Modi said, "This patron of terrorism which once used to dare us in such a condition that its people are hard up even for food grain... Pakistan is finished but its sympathisers, SP and Congress, are busy scaring the country."



"They say one needs to be scared of Pakistan because it has an atom bomb. Don't they know what is 56-inch (chest)? It's not the weak Congress government... But the strong government of Modi," he said at a rally campaigning for BJP's Basti Lok Sabha candidate Harish Dwivedi. "India does not spare those who try to bully it. India today hits them in their own homes," he said. Referring to Akhilesh Yadav's claim that the

Dharma... The shehzada of Congress wants to change the Supreme Court's judgement of Ram Temple. They dream of putting a Babri lock on the Ram temple and want to send Ram Lalla back to the tent," he said. Modi referred to the nearly two-year-long Emergency and said that Congress talks of Constitution but it did not even follow the party's constitution. He claimed that former Congress president Sitaram Kesri, who belonged to a backward community, was locked in a bathroom the day Sonia Gandhi was made the party's president. The PM also accused Congress of trying to change the Constitution and end reservation for the Dalits and backwards. "These people want to snatch the reservation of Dalit and Backwards and give it to those who do Vote Jihad. Congress wants to change the Constitution to give reservation to Muslims. Samajwadi Party is standing with Congress in its anti-Dalit and anti-backward conspiracy," he said. On the SP, Modi said it used to accord goons and rioters special protocol during its government. "Yogi Adityanath and his government had to make efforts to bring UP from the ditch it was thrown in long back," Modi said. Seeking the public's support, the PM said their votes will bury the "politics of appeasement in kabristan" and ensure the future of the country. "We have become the fifth largest economy. When India speaks, the world listens and tries to accompany India in the decisions made by it," he said. Modi was accompanied by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on the stage. Adityanath in his address expressed confidence of thumping victory for the BJP. "When we talk of crossing 400, SP and Congress start fainting because they are not even contesting on 400 seats together." BJP's Harish Dwivedi is pitted against Ram Prasad Chaudhary of Samajwadi Party. Polling in Basti will be held in the sixth phase on May 25.

# AP police teams on hunt for YSRCP MLA who damaged EVM

**PTI ■ AMARAVATI**  
 Andhra Pradesh Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Mukesh Kumar Meena on Wednesday said police teams have been formed to look for 'absconding' YSRCP MLA P Ramakrishna Reddy who vandalised an electronic voting machine (EVM) at a polling centre in Macharla constituency of Palnadu district. The CEO said police raided Reddy's residence this morning, but he was not found there. "His (Reddy) house was raided in the morning. He was not found, so several teams are now moving around to arrest him," Meena told media.

# Mamata compromising national security for sake of vote bank politics, says Shah

**PTI ■ KANTHI/GHATAL/PURULIA**  
 Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday accused West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of compromising national security for the sake of vote bank politics and "committing a sin" by allowing infiltrators to change the demography of the state. Addressing back-to-back rallies in Kanthi, Ghatal, and Purulia Lok Sabha constituencies, Shah said the TMC will "disintegrate" and there will be a "farewell of Mamata Banerjee's government" after the BJP wins 30 Lok Sabha seats in the state. "Bengal has become a safe haven for infiltrators. Due to infiltration, the state's demography is changing, impacting not only this state,



but the entire country. Banerjee is committing a sin by helping to change the demography of Bengal. She is compromising national security for sake of vote bank politics," he said. Alleging that "infiltrators are the vote bank of the TMC," Shah said Banerjee is opposing the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) to appease her vote bank. "TMC ko ghuspetiyo se pyar

aur CAA pe vaar' (TMC has a love for infiltrators and attacks the CAA). The infiltrators are the vote bank of the TMC," he said. Shah criticised Banerjee's recent comments against certain monks of Ramakrishna Mission and Bharat Sevashram Sangha, asserting that these socio-religious organisations are being threatened to appease the TMC's vote bank. "Banerjee is attacking the Sangha, but she is not aware that had it not been there, Bengal would have been a part of Bangladesh," he said. Addressing an election rally in Goghat under Arambagh LS constituency on Saturday, Banerjee had claimed, "Some monks of Ramakrishna Mission and Bharat Sevashram Sangha are working under the influence of BJP leaders in Delhi.

# JD(S) complains to police against Rahul for claiming MP Prajwal raped 400 women

**PTI ■ BENGALURU**  
 The JD(S) on Wednesday complained to Karnataka DGP Alok Mohan against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for allegedly claiming that Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna, who is facing charges of sexual abuse, has "raped 400 women". In a complaint, H M Ramesh Gowda, a former MLC and party's Bengaluru City president has sought registration of a criminal case against Gandhi under section 202 (Intentional omission to give information of an offence by a person legally bound to inform) of the Indian Penal Code for his alleged statement while addressing election rallies in the district headquarters of Shivamogga and Raichur on



May 2. The JD(S) leader also cited the alleged statement by Gandhi in his complaint, "Prajwal Revanna has raped 400 women and made videos. This is not a sex scandal but mass rape. And the Prime Minister, in front of the people of Karnataka, was

supporting and seeking vote for this mass rapist. He is saying that if you vote for this mass rapist, it would help him." The complainant said in the interest of justice for the alleged victims, Gandhi being a public servant is duty bound to give information of offence. "In view of the fact that Gandhi has made a specific statement that Prajwal has raped 400 women, he is aware of the information and details of the 400 women raped and has intentionally failed to disclose the details," he stated in the complaint. The 33-year-old Prajwal, who is the grandson of JD(S) patriarch and former PM 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. The cases came to light after a number of explicit videos of sexual assault allegedly by Prajwal became public. A Special Investigation Team (SIT) is currently probing these cases. "Till date, the SIT has also not issued any notice to Rahul Gandhi calling for such information for the statement made by Rahul Gandhi," the complaint stated. However, no FIR has been registered yet in this regard, police said. Prajwal reportedly left for Germany on April 27, a day after Hassan went to polls, and is still at large. Interpol has also issued a Blue Corner Notice seeking information on his whereabouts.

# BJP gains ground as TMC battles to retain foothold in Suvendu Adhikari's backyard

**PTI ■ KANTHI (WB)**  
 The future of the Kanthi Lok Sabha constituency in West Bengal appears to be volatile on account of the dual and opposing factors of the BJP sharply gaining political ground and the TMC desperate to retain its sway over voters. While the BJP looks emboldened by its recent rural poll successes and the Adhikari family's defection to the saffron camp, the TMC seems to be counting on its grassroots connections and the state's welfare schemes which the party believes have attained last-mile connectivity with the electorate. Located in Purba Medinipur district, the Kanthi seat exemplifies dynasty politics through the influence of the state's Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari, whose family members have held



other constituencies of the state, featuring a distinctly bipolar electoral landscape where voters face a clear choice between supporting the BJP and its national agenda or favouring the TMC government in Bengal and its welfare schemes. "In Kanthi, the binary nature of the contest underscores the significance of the political stakes involved, as voters will weigh their preferences between national and regional priorities. It will be a vote of 'Yes-BJP or No BJP and Yes-TMC or No-TMC'," political analyst Biswanath Chakraborty said. Known for its fluctuating political affiliations, Kanthi has moved on from being an erstwhile CPI(M) stronghold to a TMC bastion and, more recently, to a key political arena of the BJP. The initial transformation from the Left to the TMC was spurred by the 2007

Nandigram anti-land acquisition movement. The significant shift was driven by a grassroots uprising that followed strong disillusionment with CPI(M)'s land acquisition policies. Since then the Adhikaris, led by the family patriarch Sisir Adhikari and his sons Suvendu, Dibyendu, and Soumendu, have held key political positions within the TMC in the region. A dramatic shift occurred in December 2020, barely months ahead of the state assembly polls, when Suvendu defected from the TMC to the BJP. This move significantly altered the political balance of Kanthi and Purba Medinipur. Suvendu's departure from the TMC meant not just the loss of a key leader of Mamata Banerjee's party but also the transfer of a considerable support base to the BJP.

# Latur admin urges LS poll candidates to adhere to EC guidelines during vote counting on June 4

**PTI ■ LATUR**  
 The Latur district administration has sought cooperation from all candidates who contested the Lok Sabha polls from here and representatives of various political parties during the counting of votes on June 4. Latur Collector Varsha Thakur-Ghughe held a meeting at her office on Tuesday and appealed to all the candidates and representatives of the political parties to adhere to guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India regarding the counting process. Guideline handbooks for the election representatives were distributed on the occasion. The collector said the district administration here in Maharashtra has completed preparations for the counting of votes. All candidates are requested to inform the collector's office



about names of their representatives for counting. The representatives should be imparted training on the counting process and mobile phone is not allowed at the counting venue, the collector said. The Election Commission of India has appointed two observers for the counting process, she said.

**PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
 Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to visit Odisha on May 29, aiming to provide a final boost to BJP's electioneering efforts in the state, party sources said. Modi's upcoming visit will include addresses at two election rallies in Balasore and Kendrapada Parliamentary constituencies, BJP's election in-charge for Odisha, Vijay Pal Singh Tomar said. This will mark Modi's fourth visit to Odisha within a month, highlighting BJP's concerted efforts to strengthen its electoral prospects in the state. Previously, the PM visited Odisha on May 6, 10, and 19, during which he addressed seven election rallies and held two road shows in Bhubaneswar and Puri.

# Vikramaditya, Kangana trade charges over black flag protest against her

**PTI ■ MANDI/SIMILMA**  
 Trading barbs over black flags shown to the BJP's Lok Sabha candidate from Mandi Kangana Ranaut in Lahaul and Spiti's Kaza two days back, the Congress' Vikramaditya Singh targeted the actor Wednesday over her remark against the Dalai Lama from April last year. "People of the tribal area worship Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama as their God and if someone passes any remarks against their God, they will surely not like it and protest," Singh, who contesting the election against Ranaut, said in Mandi in response to a question. Hitting back at Singh, Ranaut alleged that the Congress was behind the protest against her. The Congress has stooped to

hooliganism and the Kaza incident would prove to be the last nail in its coffin and contribute to her winning margin, the BJP candidate added. "I feel sad to see such hooliganism which reflects the Congress' character... People have seen the true face of the Congress, which is indulging in violence and hooliganism," she told media persons in Lahaul and Spiti's Udaipur. Singh, however, said his party had nothing to do with the incident and accused the BJP of blaming the Congress as it was losing the elections. They were referring to



black flags being shown to Ranaut by local people and Congress workers in Kaza on Monday. The Congress workers raised anti-Kangana slogans — "Kangana, go back, Kangana Vangana nahi chalegi", apparently enraged over her remarks on the Tibetan spiritual leader. Ranaut had in April last year tweeted a meme featuring the Dalai Lama that said, "The Dalai Lama receives a warm welcome at the White House". The photoshopped picture in the tweet showed the Dalai Lama sticking his tongue out with US President Joe Biden with a comment — Both of them have the same illness. Definitely, they could be friends. Following this, a group of

Buddhists staged a dharna outside her office in Mumbai. Ranaut later apologised, saying she did not mean to hurt anyone and that it was a harmless joke about Biden being friends with the Dalai Lama. After Ranaut faced the protest in Kaza on Monday, the Himachal Pradesh BJP filed a complaint with the state chief electoral officer. The party alleged that stones were pelted at Ranaut's carcade and party worker was injured. It also demanded the transfer of election officials and an investigation into the incident as both the BJP and the Congress were given permission to hold rallies adjacent to each other. However, Lahaul and Spiti SP Mayank Chowdhary told PTI that workers of both the BJP and the

Listing his priorities for the Mandi parliamentary constituency, Vikramaditya Singh, the son of former chief minister Virbhadra Singh and Himachal Congress chief Pratibha Singh, said his focus would be on bringing the municipal corporation of Mandi under the Smart City project and the construction of the Bhubhu Jot and Jalori Jot tunnels and the Kullu Medical College.



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

## Warcraft for all

Project Udbhav celebrates India's rich heritage in military statecraft and makes it citizen-inclusive

The adage, "If you want peace, be prepared for war," reflects a longstanding philosophy in India. Historically, India has maintained peace while staying strong, refraining from warmongering unless provoked. This approach stems from ancient Indian wisdom, emphasising the importance of advancement in warfare to deter any potential threats. India's rich and ancient heritage in military statecraft, rooted in the Vedas, Puranas and the Mahabharata, forms a significant yet often overlooked aspect of its cultural legacy. The Army's Project Udbhav aims to bring this historical wealth into the public eye, engaging citizens in the defence domain and fostering a deeper understanding of India's strategic and military traditions. The Vedas, among the oldest sacred texts, provide early references to warfare, strategy and the ethical dimensions of combat. The Puranas, a genre of ancient Indian literature, elaborated on the principles of statecraft and warfare. Texts like the Vishnu Purana and Agni Purana offer insights into military organisation, the roles and responsibilities of warriors and the strategic use of resources. The Mahabharata, one of the greatest epics in world literature, is a treasure trove of military wisdom. The epic not only narrates the Kurukshetra war but also delves into detailed discussions on strategy, the art of war and the moral dilemmas faced by warriors.



Other ancient Indian texts offer timeless wisdom adaptable to modern defence strategies, such as intelligence, psychological warfare and ethical conduct. Launched last year, Project Udbhav delves deep into these ancient texts and aims to promote indigenous discourse in the Army by integrating India's ancient strategic acumen

into contemporary military domain, ensuring that the force remains future-ready. It is also an endeavour to involve our citizens and educate them about warfare for any eventuality. Involving citizens in understanding warfare and being prepared is crucial for several reasons. It fosters national pride and identity by highlighting India's intellectual and strategic achievements, countering one-dimensional portrayals of its history. Under Project Udbhav, workshops, seminars and online courses will educate citizens about ancient Indian military texts and their modern relevance. Collaborations with universities and research institutions will ensure academic rigour and accessibility. Additionally, a series of books, documentaries and articles will highlight various aspects of Indian military statecraft, including translations and commentaries on key texts for a broader audience. Project Udbhav is laudable as it represents an endeavour to weave a strategic vocabulary and conceptual framework deeply embedded in India's philosophical and cultural heritage. This initiative underscores the importance of understanding and valuing the rich military heritage that has shaped India's strategic culture, offering invaluable lessons for contemporary and future defence strategies. It is indeed a praiseworthy effort to revive ancient wisdom lest it is lost.

### PICTALK



Weaver birds build a nest on a tree, in Nadia

PTI

## Fighting age fraud for Indian football's integrity

From local matches to the big leagues, age falsification distorts fair play and erodes the essence of sportsmanship

The issue of age fraud has plagued Indian football for decades. This persistent dishonesty has not only undermined the integrity of the sport but has also stunted the growth of genuine talent, ultimately leading to India's poor performance at the senior team level.

For the last 50 years, age fraud has been an open secret within the football community. Players, coaches and officials are all aware of it, yet the problem persists unchecked. From local tournaments to State, district and national leagues, age fraud is rampant. Shockingly, it even extends to the national team, where overage players take the field under pretences. This systemic dishonesty is a national disgrace. The lack of genuineness and honesty in our footballing ecosystem is a national embarrassment.

My personal experience highlights this issue vividly. When I was 14, I shared accommodation with much older players—some even 24—yet they possessed fake birth certificates claiming



they were my age. These older players competed alongside me in national leagues, creating an uneven playing field and undermining the credibility of the competitions. This personal encounter opened my eyes to the widespread nature of this fraud.

The impact of age fraud is profound. Young, talented players who play by the rules find their careers destroyed by those who cheat the system. Genuine athletes are overshadowed by older players who dominate youth categories through sheer physical C cognitive advantage. This not only robs honest play-

ers of opportunities but also skews the development pathway, leaving India with a senior team that lacks the authentic experience and growth needed to compete internationally.

Cases of age fraud emerge regularly from all corners of the country, yet there is little action from authorities. Until the Government takes decisive measures to eradicate this issue, Indian football will remain stagnant. The current State of affairs ensures that we will never achieve success on the international stage. It is a profound shame and it undermines the spirit of the sport. The rigged system favours deceit over talent

and honesty, leaving the sport in shambles. It is time for a rigorous overhaul, strict enforcement of age verification processes and a zero-tolerance policy towards fraud. Only through a genuine commitment to integrity can Indian football hope to reclaim its lost potential and earn respect on the global stage.

Until then, we must acknowledge this harsh reality: as long as we continue to cheat, we will never truly win. The future of Indian football depends on our ability to foster a culture of honesty and fairness, giving every player a fair chance to shine based on merit, not deception. The future of Indian football hinges on our commitment to integrity. We must give every player a fair chance to succeed based on their true abilities. Until we do, our dreams of footballing glory will remain just that—dreams. The time for change is now, for the sake of our sport and the generations of players to come. (The writer is a football coach; views are personal)



ARYAN RAJVANSH

and honesty, leaving the sport in shambles. It is time for a rigorous overhaul, strict enforcement of age verification processes and a zero-tolerance policy towards fraud. Only through a genuine commitment to integrity can Indian football hope to reclaim its lost potential and earn respect on the global stage.

and honesty, leaving the sport in shambles. It is time for a rigorous overhaul, strict enforcement of age verification processes and a zero-tolerance policy towards fraud. Only through a genuine commitment to integrity can Indian football hope to reclaim its lost potential and earn respect on the global stage.

Until then, we must acknowledge this harsh reality: as long as we continue to cheat, we will never truly win. The future of Indian football depends on our ability to foster a culture of honesty and fairness, giving every player a fair chance to shine based on merit, not deception. The future of Indian football hinges on our commitment to integrity. We must give every player a fair chance to succeed based on their true abilities. Until we do, our dreams of footballing glory will remain just that—dreams. The time for change is now, for the sake of our sport and the generations of players to come. (The writer is a football coach; views are personal)

(The writer is a football coach; views are personal)

## Epic election battle enters decisive phase

The ultimate battleground is UP, where Yogi Adityanath's unwavering leadership is crucial in the BJP's fight to maintain its stronghold



SIDHARTH MISHRA

Another 10 days to go and the two-month-long election process would be over. These elections would be remembered for the spearhead of the ruling party, Narendra Modi and of the opposition, Rahul Gandhi battling the heat and dust of the famed Indian summer to spur their cadres to give the best performance.

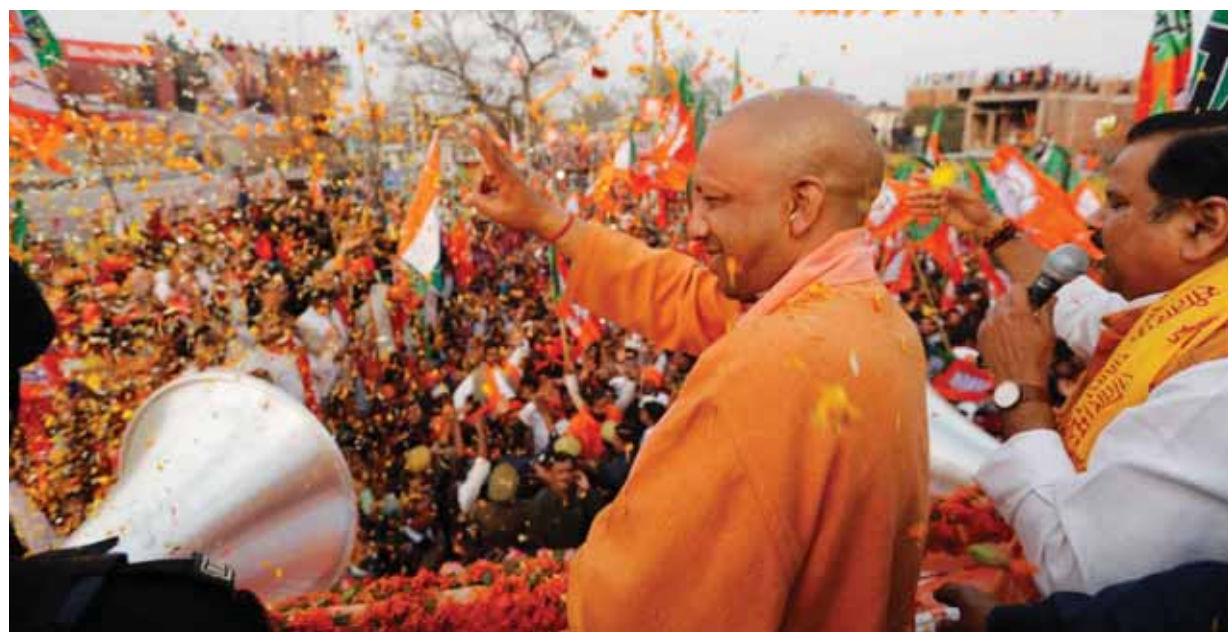
In the national media, what's being discussed is the punishing schedule of the Prime Minister and the Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP president JP Nadda trying to match him with almost equal vigour. From the opposition side, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has ensured to create the perspective that the campaign just did not rest on the shoulders of the Gandhi family.

In any war, there always is a clinching battle that decides who won and who lost. In World War II, the Battle for Berlin proved to be the most crucial. It's the image of the Soviet soldiers putting the flag of the USSR on the Reichstag in Berlin in May 1945 which marked the defeat of Germany under Adolf Hitler.

Similarly, the general elections of 2024 will always be remembered and will be decided on who wins the battle of Uttar Pradesh. With 80 seats, Uttar Pradesh is the citadel of the BJP monolith, which has a dominant presence in the Hindi heartland States of Bihar, UP, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Haryana.

Unlike MP, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Haryana, in Uttar Pradesh the BJP is not in a direct contest with the Congress but a strong regional outfit — Samajwadi Party. UP also cannot be compared to Bihar, where it's fighting another strong regional party — the Rashtriya Janata Dal but in the companionship of another strong regional outfit — the Janata Dal (United).

Thus in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP is completely on its own with nowhere else to look forward to but its cadres and leaders. Here the role of Uttar Pradesh chief



minister Yogi Adityanath becomes crucial. The Mahanth of the Goraknath Math has been in campaign mode ever since he retained power with a thumping majority in 2022.

He first delivered the Ram temple at Ayodhya. The consecration of the idol at Ramlalla temple in January this year has been the biggest-ever achievement of the right-wing schema in the country. This would not have been possible but for the determined, firm and passionate execution of the construction plan by the Uttar Pradesh Government of not just the temple complex but the whole of the city of Ayodhya.

The second has been to galvanise the cadres and keep them functioning for a full two months to ensure that the rivals are stopped and checked in their determined assault. He started the polls campaign with the Prabudh Jan Sammelan on March 27 and would continue it till May-end the last phase of polling.

Prime Minister Modi's campaign has been faulted several times and has also caused concern among his supporters for allowing the achieve-



YOGI ADITYANATH, WHO IN THE PAST SEVEN YEARS HAS COMBINED HIS VISION WITH A STRONG EMPHASIS ON LAW AND ORDER AND CULTURAL NATIONALISM (HINDUTVA), HAS CONTINUED TO KEEP HIS CAMPAIGN ON THE SAME TRACK

ments of the past ten years to be pushed to the background in pursuing a very polarising agenda. The campaign has not aligned with Modi's espousal of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas" (Collective Efforts, Inclusive Growth, Everyone's Trust) slogan, which encapsulates an inclusive approach aimed at fostering economic growth and social cohesion.

Prime Minister's initiatives, such as Make in India, Digital India and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Mission), which underscore his commitment to modernising India's economy and infrastructure, have seldom found space in his speeches. This has somewhere allowed the opposition to attack the Government. On the other hand, Yogi Adityanath, who in the past seven years has combined his vision with a strong emphasis on law and order and cultural nationalism (Hindutva), has continued to keep his campaign on the same track. His leadership in Uttar Pradesh is characterised by a drive to restore cultural heritage and end minority appeasement, as seen in initiatives like the grand celebration of Diwali in Ayodhya and the renam-

ing of places to reflect their historical Hindu significance.

The lynchpin of his governance has been the emphasis on strict law enforcement, aiming to improve safety and reduce crime, which resonates even with many of his non-Hindu constituents. His determined perusal of anti-crime drives has found a fan following that goes beyond the traditional Hindutva admirers. Coming back to the battle of Uttar Pradesh, it would take the collective strength of the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Uttar Pradesh chief minister to make the BJP bandwagon have a safe journey to the national Capital. Modi and Yogi are both distinct personalities and both have significantly impacted Indian politics and governance, albeit in different ways. On June 4, in the event of the BJP unfurling its flag, the contributions of the Uttar Pradesh chief minister would as much be accounted for as that of the Prime Minister.

(The writer is the author and president of The Centre for Reforms, Development & Justice; views expressed are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### AMOEBIA KILLS

Madam — Strange are the ways of meeting death for a young soul. A five-year-old girl has died of brain-eating amoeba after taking a bath in a pond in Malappuram district of Kerala. She was undergoing treatment at the Kozhikode Medical College of Institute of Maternal and Child Health. She had taken a dip in the pond on May 1 and started showing symptoms of fever, headache and vomiting on May 10. The girl, afflicted by amoebic meningoencephalitis, a rare brain infection caused by a free-living amoeba found in contaminated waters. Still waters are dangerous. Don't let go.

This is not the first case reported. Amebiasis is an intestinal (bowel) illness caused by a microscopic (tiny) parasite called Entamoeba histolytica, which is spread through human feces (poop). Often there are no symptoms, but sometimes it causes diarrhoea (loose stool/poop), nausea (a feeling of sickness in the stomach) and weight loss. The main symptoms of the disease are fever, headache, vomiting and seizures. All infected patients have lost their lives due to the disease so far, as the mortality rate for this rare brain infection is 100 percent.

Jayanthi Subramaniam | Mumbai

#### DRONES IN AGRICULTURE

Madam — Apropos the article, "Promise and challenges of drones in agriculture", published on May 20, this is my response. Drones, or Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) are becoming increasingly popular in India's agricultural sector. Drones offer a range of benefits to farmers, like improved efficiency and enhanced crop yields. However, some challenges may hinder the adoption of drone technology such as fear of job loss, lack of knowledge and training and regulatory barriers. Drones can capture high-resolution images and provide information on crop health, growth and yield.

#### Leadership vacuum in Iran



Apropos to the front page article, "Iran Presidies in chopper crash after stinging Israel," published on May 21. The shocking death of the President in a helicopter crash had left Iran in the lurch and uncertainty from

all sides. For the last three years; after he took the Presidential position in 2021, Mr Raisi has managed to frame Iran as a Shia Muslim leader block of the world with his conservative cleric ideology.

His sudden death had created a leadership vacuum in Iran in the devil's time. The US and Israel are among the direct culprits of Tehran's current situation, despite their denial on personal grounds respectively. Iran needs time to cope with all the big losses it has suffered recently, according to the according to the President, Foreign Minister and other key authorities. The recent death incident had scratched the old scars of Iran when it lost its Revolutionary Guard General Qasem Soleimani. Iran has been a victim of targeted killings especially for VVIPs, ever since its bitter relationship with the US over the last two decades. Time will heal everything itself, the domestic and international uncertainty will shed away for Iran with time and normalcy will be restored.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

This can help farmers to identify issues early and take corrective measures to optimise their inputs and outputs. But, drones are expensive and many farmers may not have the financial resources to invest in this technology. Hence, there is a need for more subsidies incentives and economical financing options to make drones more affordable and attractive to farmers. It requires a coordinated effort from the Government, the industry, farmers and the civil society to create a conducive and supportive environment for the use of drones in agriculture. There is little doubt that drones can be a powerful tool for transforming Indian agriculture and ensuring the country's food security and prosperity.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

#### MUSEUMS PRESERVE HISTORY

Madam — Apropos of the article "Museums are pillars of culture and education," published on May 21. Museums

are an inevitable part of our lives as they depict culture, history and artefacts. They tell us about the evolution of man and let us get familiar with the historical and scientific facts as well. But these days, people, especially children, hardly show interest in visiting museums as they find it boring. The educational institutions must include visits to museums in the curriculum to enable students to broaden their horizons and get valuable knowledge. Museums are a great source of understanding our civilisation, culture and heritage and help explore various branches of research work. The Government should take the initiative to help the masses visit museums as they are the storehouses for preserving our ancient history and heritage.

Abhilasha Gupta | Mohali

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



## FIRST COLUMN

## DELETERIOUS EFFECTS OF WORKPLACE GASLIGHTING

It is a menace that undermines individuals' perceptions, beliefs and reality



SAKSHI SETHI

In the network of modern workplaces, emerges a shadowy spectre, threatening the very fabric of organisational culture and well-being - Gaslighting, a form of psychological manipulation in which one person seeks to undermine another person's perceptions, beliefs or reality often done regularly or subtly making the victim doubt their perception, memories or sanity by shifting blame or responsibility onto the victim.

Gaslighting can create a hostile work environment where employees feel anxious and confused and at times even question their competence causing a detrimental effect on themselves, their teams and organisational culture. It is a form of psychological manipulation that can have serious consequences for the well-being and productivity of those involved. When talked about the workplace, the term Gaslight can manifest in myriad forms, often subtle and insidious. It may begin with seemingly innocuous comments undermining an individual's contributions or abilities and may gradually lead to dealing with small instances of manipulation that escalate over time. Gaslighting tactics often target an individual's sense of self-worth, competence and confidence resulting in significant emotional distress, including feelings of anxiety, depression and confusion. It even isolates victims from their support networks by undermining their relationships with coworkers, friends and even family members.



It is often believed that toxic workplace gaslighting can stem from various causes that are often rooted in systemic issues, interpersonal dynamics or individual motivations such as power imbalances, insecure leadership, lack of accountability, interpersonal conflicts and many more. When communication breaks down, tensions escalate, egos clash and employees/individuals start resorting to gaslighting as a means of gaining leverage or inflicting harm.

Addressing the toxic workplace gaslighting requires a comprehensive approach that involves raising awareness, fostering a culture of respect and accountability and providing support for those impacted. Promoting transparency, accountability and psychological safety in organisations is crucial to recognise toxic gaslighting behaviour effectively.

Undoubtedly, workplace gaslighting thrives on power imbalances and psychological manipulation. Victims of gaslighting suffer immense stress, anxiety and identity erosion. Prolonged exposure leads to physical health issues like headaches, GI problems and sleep disturbances, weakening immunity and increasing illness risks.

It becomes crucial for the victims to first recognise and validate their experiences, refusing to internalise the gaslighter's manipulations. The use of assertive communication techniques, such as "I" Statements and boundary-setting, can help individuals confront gaslighting behaviour while preserving their self-esteem and dignity. Additionally, fostering a culture of accountability and transparency within organisations empowers employees to speak out against gaslighting tactics without fear of reprisal. Remember, when personal gain takes precedence over ethical conduct, gaslighting may become a tempting strategy. The only way that may benefit the victims of gaslighting is by seeking support from trusted colleagues, mentors or mental health professionals. By creating a workplace culture that promotes open communication, respect and accountability can the organisation help prevent gaslighting and other forms of manipulation from taking hold as left unchecked, it can inflict lasting psychological harm, exacerbating issues of mental health and well-being in the workplace.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

## Do not withdraw capital support for oil PSUs



UTTAM GUPTA

The Government slashes equity infusions for three major oil sector CPSUs by 50 per cent, contradicting its 2023-24 budget commitments



In the Budget for the financial year 2023-24 (April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024) presented on February 1 last year, the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced an equity infusion of Rs 30,000 crore in three Central public sector undertakings (CPSUs) viz. Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL), are majority-owned by the Government of India (GOI). She had also proposed Rs 5,000 crore for buying crude oil to bolster its strategic reserves (SRs) in underground storages at Mangalore in Karnataka and Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh. The equity infusions in IOCL/BPCL/HPCL were meant to support their capital investment plans for the transition to 'Green Energy' and achieve 'Net Zero' objectives. Net zero refers to a situation where the emissions of polluting gases such as carbon dioxide due to human activities and their removals are in balance over a given period. On the other hand, the allocation for SRs was meant to guard against the possibility of any disruption in its supply.

Under the above, IOCL and BPCL had done necessary spade work including approval by their respective boards for coming up with 'rights issues' of requisite amounts to enable the Union Government to give effect to its capital contribution (albeit by way of equity) promised in the budget. In the case of HPCL, the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) having acquired majority equity shares from the GOI in FY 2017-18 was to come up with the issue of the preferential issue to give effect to the latter's budgetary intention. However, in a big climb down, in November 2023, the Government reduced the amount of equity infusion to the trio by 50 per cent to Rs 15,000 crore even while deferring implementation of the budgetary announcement on the SRs. Meanwhile, the Interim Budget for FY 2024-25 presented by Sitharaman on February 1, 2024, didn't show any allocation for equity infusion for FY 2023-24. The said amount has been earmarked for the FY 2024-25. This was confirmed by Finance Secretary T V

Somanathan at a post-budget press conference. As for SRs, the budget documents do not provide any funds either in the revised estimate for FY 2023-24 or during FY 2024-25.

Why did the Government climb down?

Even as the Ministry of Finance (MoF) hasn't given any reason, it seems the decision was prompted by a significant boost to their profitability during 2023-24. The IOCL posted a standalone net profit of close to Rs 40,000 crore as against a profit of a little over Rs 8000 crore during 2022-23. The BPCL posted a net profit of around Rs 26,500 crore in 2023-24, compared to about Rs 1,850 crore profit during 2022-23. The HPCL posted a profit of around Rs 14,500 crore during 2023-24 against a loss of about Rs 9,000 crore in 2022-23.

When the companies can generate good profits hence, a good investible surplus for meeting their investment commitments, why do they need the Government's budgetary support? But, there is much more than what meets the eye on a plain reading of the profit numbers. First, out of the net profit, a substantial amount is paid as dividends to the shareholders. For instance, in case IOCL @Rs 7 on a share of Rs 10 each, the payout during 2023-24 on a total of 1,412 crore outstanding shares would be around Rs 10,000 crore.

Second, these undertakings are engaged in the business of refining crude oil to produce a range of finished products such as petrol, diesel, LPG etc besides importing them to meet their demand. That makes their operations highly capital-intensive. Consequently, their investment requirements for expansion and growth are heavy. This is exacerbated by their commitments regarding the transition to 'Green Energy'. While IOCL has decided to

achieve 'Net Zero' by 2040, BPCL and HPCL intend to reach this goal by 2045.

Third, the most potent reason as to why the Government shouldn't backtrack on the capital support once promised to oil PSUs has to do with the loss the latter had suffered during FY 2022-23, courtesy of directions given by the former regarding setting retail prices of petrol and diesel. To understand the full ramifications of such orders, let us look at some basics.

Petrol and diesel were deregulated long back in June 2010 and November 2014 respectively. As a result, oil PSUs got the freedom to fix their retail prices. The price is fixed as refinery-gate price or RGP (import parity price or IPP and export parity price or EPP of the fuel in the ratio of 80:20) plus freight, marketing costs, marketing margin, dealers' commission taxes and duties. Considering that over 85 per cent of India's crude oil needed for making refined products is imported (the balance 15 per cent is sourced from domestic companies such as ONGC, Oil India Limited or OIL) etc, an increase/decrease in its international price should lead to corresponding increase/decrease in the retail price of petrol and diesel but only if the marketing PSUs are allowed to fix the price strictly as per the formula. But, this is rarely done. The Government issues tacit instructions to IOCL/BPCL/HPCL (together, they account for around 90 per cent of the domestic fuel retail network in the country) to fix the retail price. This is driven by extraneous considerations. Ever since the start of the Ukraine war in February 2022, the international price of oil has been on the boil. The average of the basket of crude oil that India imports during April-September 2022 was \$ 103.7 per barrel against the \$90 per barrel that prevailed before the war started. But,

these PSUs were told to keep the price of petrol and diesel unchanged for six months. This led to substantial under-recovery from the sale of these products.

For instance, in June 2022, the price of petrol in Delhi remained at Rs 97 per litre corresponding to the pre-war crude price of US\$ 90 per barrel. This was despite the price of crude jumping to US\$ 116 per barrel which would have required the price to be set at Rs 112 per litre. Consequently, on the sale of petrol during June 2022, the PSUs suffered under-recovery of Rs 15 per litre (112-97).

Cumulatively, the three PSUs incurred a loss of around Rs 40,000 crore during the first half of FY 2022-23. As the crude price started to decrease from October 2022 onward, their finances became a shade better during the second half. For the whole year, they posted a meagre profit of Rs 850 crore. The capital infusion of Rs 30,000 crore proposed in the budget for 2023-24 was meant to help them offset the losses incurred in the previous year.

Just because during FY 2023-24, they have improved their profits due to continuing moderation in the price of crude oil, it won't be logical to trim the promised budgetary support. Moreover, they need some cushion to guard against crude prices moving north yet again; that possibility is not ruled out considering the continuing tense geo-political situation. For the same reason, the Government shouldn't defer bolstering the strategic buffer of crude oil.

In sync with its emphasis on 'predictability' and 'stability' of the policy, having deregulated petrol and diesel, the Government shouldn't interfere in the process of setting prices by the oil PSUs.

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



JUST BECAUSE DURING FY 2023-24, THEY HAVE IMPROVED THEIR PROFITS DUE TO CONTINUING MODERATION IN THE PRICE OF CRUDE OIL, IT WON'T BE LOGICAL TO TRIM THE PROMISED BUDGETARY SUPPORT

## Is AI a game changer or a disruptor in the communication landscape?

Artificial Intelligence has introduced complex dilemmas, balancing data-driven insights with human ingenuity and profoundly impacting various sectors

The growing tentacles of AI have become a push factor for change, innovation and disruption in the borderless world that we live in today. AI tools, processes and its vast architecture have been billed as game changers, influencing a vast range of stakeholders including policymakers, Governments, multi-lateral bodies, agencies and institutions, which are responsible for carving out the road ahead. The debate today hovers around whether AI has become a disruptor or a transformative catalyst leading to a new normal, which is unpredictable, tech-driven and bereft of the necessary human connection. It has disrupted the communication engagement matrix to a terrain that at



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

times is daunting, unpredictable, spontaneous and instant. In the given context, it is important to understand that AI has truly created layers of dilemma, a tug-of-war related to ideas, content, data analysis and the conflict between human minds and data-driven mindsets. We are in a situation perhaps where we over-depend on machines, their learning tools & predictability leading to an

ecosystem that is technology savvy, the behaviour of stakeholders being driven by data metrics and accompanying models and influenced by the power of prediction. The impact of AI has been profound in several areas, as the search for the unknown has grown bigger. A report on India's media and entertainment sector published by EY #Reinventin 2024 mentions that AI can provide an Rs 450 billion boost to the Indian M&E sector by 2027. The report also mentions AI and especially Gen AI - gives it the tools the sector has always dreamed of and can result in a 10 per cent revenue growth and 15 per cent cost efficiency. AI is now used for measuring the effectiveness of campaigns, the growth of cus-

tomised solutions for addressing issues, analysing data for data-driven narratives and stakeholder engagement and changing equations in the context of the client-agency relationship. There is a need to balance human competence with tech tools and the fear of the unknown in the future. For AI to succeed its performance indicators must be based on open, transparent and inclusive. Its tools are re-engineered to reflect the spirit of "Oneness", and "The World is One Family" and the social and economic impact is studied and analysed. As far as outreach is concerned, the need is to balance the technology push that characterises AI outlining its operational efficiency and the creative quotient of human

beings. As a tool for outreach AI supplements outreach with data-focused audience insights which provide practitioners with a feel of audience preferences and behaviours leading to focused and targeted communication strategies. The data processing of the medium also leads to a better and more comprehensive understanding of stakeholder demographics, dynamics, strategy protocols and audience behaviour. There is an urgent need to integrate the communication matrix with the broad themes to ensure a seamless operation of both verticals. AI being futuristic commands the means to create a positive perception of the AI architecture. Some of the themes to be discussed are AI and Machine

Learning in communication networks, AI-powered communication networks: Shaping a greener digital future and including other sectors such as health, environment and education. In all such discussions, the process of communicating the theme will be critical for both policymakers and practitioners. It is also critical that in the era of change, the continuity of technology is weaved with access that is open and democratic. The benefits of positive change must be beneficial to all through the principle of open sourcing; tools, processes, opportunities and community participation. There must be standard operating procedures and processes that ensure the standardisation of algorithms, address

the frailties of human behaviour and integrate the machine and human mind. Technological advancement is only possible if the gap is bridged between the haves and have-nots. AI as a tool for policy formulation and information dissemination should be based on the strong foundations of adaptability, cohesiveness, inclusivity, access and a proper understanding of the complex and diverse social ecosystem of which we are its key constituents. As the impact of AI grows across different terrains, the evolution has to be in sync with human abilities and the irreplaceable human trait that characterises outreach. To ensure a sustainable process, AI needs to follow the five mantras of outreach commu-

nication: Being Receptive, Responsive, Responsible and Reciprocal and Reconcile to the needs and requirements of an ecosystem that believes in equity, equal participation, mutual recognition and collaboration. The success of communication depends on the balance between perception, tools and trust i.e. positioned across different platforms and sectors. A model of this nature will certainly ensure a perfect symphony between AI and the communication landscape bringing forth an effective and lasting communication process.

(The writer is a former civil servant. Views are Personal. Inputs by Vaishnavie Srinivasan and Zoya Ahmad)

# Norway, Ireland and Spain give recognition to Palestinian state

AP ■ TEL AVIV

Norway, Ireland and Spain said on Wednesday they are recognizing a Palestinian state, in a historic but largely symbolic move that deepens Israel's isolation more than seven months into its grinding war against Hamas in Gaza. The announcements came as the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) is seeking arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his defense minister and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is considering allegations of genocide that Israel has strenuously denied.

Palestinians welcomed the announcements as an affirmation of their decades-long quest for statehood in east Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip — territories Israel seized in the 1967 Mideast war and still controls. Israel recalled its ambassadors to the three countries and summoned their envoys, accusing the Europeans of rewarding the militant Hamas group for its October 7 attack that triggered the war. Netanyahu's government, which is opposed to Palestinian statehood, says the conflict can only be resolved through direct negotiations, which last collapsed over 15 years ago.

As if to underline the point, Israel's far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir paid a provocative visit Wednesday to a flashpoint holy site in Jerusalem sacred to Jews and Muslims in a move that could escalate tensions across the region. Ben-Gvir said the visit was a response to the move by the three European countries. "We will not even allow a statement about a Palestinian state," he said.

The Al-Aqsa mosque compound is the third holiest site in Islam, and the hilltop on which it stands is the holiest site for Jews, who refer to it as the Temple Mount. With their formal recognition, planned for May 28, the three countries will join some 140 — more than two-thirds of the United Nations — that



Demonstrators display Palestinian flags and chant slogans while marching Tuesday in Boston. AP/PTI

have recognized the state of Palestine over the years. The United States and Britain, among others, have backed the idea of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel but say it should come as part of a negotiated settlement. The announcements from Europe came in a swift cascade. Norway, which helped broker the Oslo accords that kicked off the peace process in the 1990s, was the first to announce its decision, with Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store saying "there cannot be peace in the Middle East if there is no recognition."

Irish Prime Minister Simon Harris called it an "historic and important day for Ireland and for Palestine," saying the announcements had been coordinated and that other countries might join "in the weeks ahead."

The international community has long viewed the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel as the only realistic way to resolve the conflict, and in past weeks several European Union countries have indicated they plan to recognize a Palestinian state to further those efforts. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, who announced his country's decision before parliament, has spent months touring European and Middle Eastern countries to garner support for recognition, as well as for a possible cease-fire in Gaza.

## 'Israel addresses Biden's concerns over Rafah op'

Cairo (AP): Israel has addressed many of President Joe Biden's concerns over its long-simmering plan to carry out a wide-scale military operation in the southern Gaza city of Rafah aimed at rooting out Hamas, a senior Biden administration official said Tuesday.

The official, who was not authorized to comment publicly and requested anonymity, said that in talks over the weekend with White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan, Israeli officials incorporated many changes into their planning that seem to meet concerns about deepening an operation in an area that has been flooded with Palestinian refugees during the seven-month war. Biden had previously said he opposed a wide-scale operation in Rafah that did not prioritize the safety of innocent Palestinian civilians.

The official said the administration stopped short of green-lighting the Israeli plan but said Israeli officials' altered planning suggested they were taking the American administration's concerns seriously. About 900,000 Palestinians have fled Rafah in recent weeks after the population swelled to about 1.5 million.

occupation of our land." Hamas, which Western countries and Israel view as a terrorist group, does not recognize Israel's existence but has indicated it might agree to a state on the 1967 lines, at least on an interim basis.

The announcements are unlikely to have any impact on the ground. Israel annexed east Jerusalem and considers it part of its capital, and in the occupied West Bank it has built scores of Jewish settlements that are now home to over 5,000,000 Israelis. The settlers have Israeli citizenship, while the 3 million Palestinians in the West Bank live under seemingly open-ended Israeli military rule.

# Singapore Airlines cooperating in severe turbulence probe

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Singapore Airlines on Wednesday said it is fully cooperating with relevant authorities in the investigation into the London to Singapore flight which encountered severe turbulence, leading to the death of one passenger and injuring nearly 60 others. Geoffrey Kitchen, a 73-year-old British passenger, died likely due to a heart attack on the Singapore Airlines (SIA) flight SQ321, operating from London (Heathrow) to Singapore on Tuesday, said Kittipong Kittikachorn, General Manager of Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok, to where the flight was diverted under emergency. Nearly 60 passengers were injured after the flight on May 21 encountered "sudden extreme turbulence over the Irrawaddy Basin at 37,000 feet about 10 hours after departure". The carrier said the remaining

passengers aboard the Boeing 777-300ER aircraft carrying 229 people were examined and treated at the airport.

The SIA is fully cooperating with the relevant authorities in probing this incident, the flag carrier's Chief Executive Officer, Goh Choon Phong, said.

As many as 58 people are still receiving medical treatment in three hospitals in Bangkok, Channel News Asia reported, citing officials at the Samitivej Srinakarin Hospital.

At least 20 injured passengers are being treated in intensive care units, while 38 passengers are receiving in-patient care, the report said.

The Samitivej Srinakarin Hospital has 41 patients, while 15 patients are in the Samitivej Sukhumvit Hospital, and two are in Bangkok Hospital, it said. Of the patients in Samitivej Srinakarin Hospital, nine successfully underwent surgery on Tuesday and five more are

expected to undergo surgery on Wednesday, it added.

As many as 131 passengers and 12 crew members, who earlier arrived in Singapore via a relief flight on May 22, were received at Changi Airport by Goh. The SIA, in its latest update, confirmed an additional five passengers and one crew member will return to Singapore on Wednesday.

Another 74 passengers and six crew members, including those receiving medical care and their family members and loved ones who were on the flight, were still in Bangkok. "For passengers with onward connections, we have rebooked them on alternative flights. We have also arranged hotel accommodation or lounge access for them to rest until their next flight," Singapore's flag carrier said. "On behalf of the Singapore Airlines Board, I extend my deepest condolences to the family and loved

ones of our passenger who passed away on May 21, 2024, in the SQ321 incident. I assure all passengers and crew members who were on board the aircraft that we are committed to supporting them during this difficult time," said Peter Seah, Chairman of Singapore Airlines.

"I also wish to express my gratitude to everyone in Singapore, Thailand, and around the world who are assisting those affected by this incident," Seah said. The nationalities of the passengers are as follows: 56 from Australia, three Indians, two from Canada, one from Germany, two Indonesians, one from Iceland, four from Ireland, one from Israel, 16 from Malaysia, two from Myanmar, 23 from New Zealand, five from the Philippines, 41 Singaporeans, one South Korean, two from Spain, 47 from the United Kingdom, and four from the US.

# UK hails drop in visas as stranded Indian workers appeal for help

PTI ■ LONDON

The UK government on Wednesday hailed a significant drop in healthcare visa applications following its restrictions on family dependants, even as hundreds of Indian care workers who find themselves unfairly stranded in the country appeal for help.

Latest Home Office statistics reveal a 76 per cent drop in overseas workers applying for jobs in the UK's care sector and a 58 per cent fall in family dependents in the Health and Care visa category in the first full month since restrictions were in place, compared with April 2023. Indian nationals topped the Health and Care visa grants last year. The number of dependants, or spouses and children, in the student visa category, also registered a significant drop of 79 per cent over the same period since those new rules came into force earlier this year. "This monthly data is the most

up-to-date picture of visa levels, showing that on current trajectories legal migration continues to fall across key routes," said UK Home Secretary James Cleverly.

"The British people deserve an immigration system that puts their interests first. Our approach is about control and fairness; to the highly skilled coming here who deserve a decent wage, to taxpayers who shouldn't be relied on to support them, and to British workers who shouldn't be undercut," he said.

The monthly data was released to reflect the impact of changes by the Prime Minister Rishi Sunak-led government, which is keen to show falling immigration numbers ahead of a general election later this year. Since March, previously unmonitored care providers in England acting as sponsors for migrants are required to register with industry regulator Care Quality Commission (CQC) — a move the govern-

ment said will address worker exploitation and abuse within the sector.

Indian nationals have topped the Health and Care visa grants, with 38,866 given out last year, and are now facing the brunt of these previously lax rules governing dubious recruitment agencies. "Some of these victims had borrowed thousands of pounds to get the visas and now face deportation for no fault of theirs," said the National Council of Gujarati Organisations (NCGO) UK, which is lobbying on behalf of these workers, many of whom are from Gujarat.

"Some of these agencies are bogus and operate from a hired desk at serviced offices. The majority of them were not checked for their genuineness by the Home Office and were issued with quotas like confetti," said Kanti Nagda of the NCGO UK, which is now seeking a meeting with the Home Secretary to appeal on behalf of these workers.

# Four accused of killing Nijjar appear before Canada court

Ottawa (PTI): Four Indian nationals accused of killing Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar last year in Surrey were ordered by a Canadian court to have no contact with several people in the community, as they made their first joint appearance before it in the case that has severely strained ties between India and Canada.

Three of the four suspects — Karan Brar (22), Kamalpreet Singh (22) and 28-year-old Karanpreet Singh — appeared in person for the first time in B.C. Provincial Court in Surrey. The fourth suspect — Amandeep Singh, 22, — appeared by video link. Amandeep Singh remains in custody in Ontario where he was facing unrelated weapons offences before being arrested on May 10 for Nijjar's killing. Judge Mark Jette spoke to the men through an interpreter as he placed them under a no-contact order, before adjourning until the suspects' next appearance on June 25, CBC News reported.

Prosecutor Marcel Daigle said the time until the next hearing will allow the Crown to fulfill its evidentiary disclosure obligations to the suspects' lawyers. Those appearing in person wore red prison sweatsuits as they entered the courtroom.

Richard Fowler, the lawyer representing Karan Brar, told the Vancouver Sun, "it's completely understandable given the context why there is an enormous amount of community interest in this case. That level of community interest makes me...to ensure that those charged with these offences have a fair trial." Attendees at the latest hearing for the men were searched before entering the courthouse, while the supporters of Nijjar held a protest outside.

Sheriffs at the hearing placed peoples' phones in plastic zipper bags and kept them outside the courtroom in plastic bins, with the judge warning observers that recording audio and taking pictures was prohibited, the report added. Nijjar, 45, was killed outside Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara in Surrey, British Columbia on June 18, 2023.

# Iran's supreme leader prays for late president, others

AP ■ DUBAI

Iran's supreme leader prayed Wednesday over the coffins of the country's late president, foreign minister and other officials who were killed in a helicopter crash earlier this week. Later, hundreds of thousands of people followed a procession honouring the dead down Tehran's main boulevard.

Iran's Shiite theocracy views mass demonstrations as crucial evidence of its legitimacy and the people's support. Still, Wednesday's funeral service for President Ebrahim Raisi and others saw a turnout that onlookers described as noticeably lower than the 2020 procession honouring Revolutionary Guard general Qassem Soleimani, who was killed in a US drone strike in Baghdad. Many of the participants said they came to Tehran for the ceremony from other cities and towns across the Islamic Republic, an indication of how those in Iran's capital viewed Raisi, who won the presidency in a record low turnout and later oversaw repeated crackdowns on all dissent — including in the



Iranians follow a truck carrying coffins of the late President Ebrahim Raisi and his companions who were killed in a helicopter crash on Sunday in a mountainous region of the country's northwest, during a funeral ceremony for them in Tehran, Iran, Wednesday. AP/PTI

wake of the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini that sparked street protests over Iran's mandatory hijab, or headscarf. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who openly wept for Soleimani, also remained composed while reciting the stan-

dard prayer for the dead. "Oh Allah, we didn't see anything but good from him," Khamenei said in Arabic, the language of Islam's holy book, the Quran. He soon left and the crowd inside rushed to the front, reaching out to touch the

coffins. Iran's acting president, Mohammad Mokhber, stood nearby and openly cried.

The death of Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian and six others in the crash on Sunday comes at a politically sensitive moment for Iran, both at home and abroad.

Raisi, who was 63, had been discussed as a possible successor to the position among Iran's political elite — particularly no one who is a Shiite cleric, like Raisi. During Raisi's term in office, Iran launched an unprecedented attack on Israel last month as its war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip rages on. Iran has supported Hamas through-

out the war and provided weaponry to the militants.

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh attended the prayers Wednesday morning, just two days after the International Criminal Court's prosecutor said he'd seek an arrest warrant for him and others over the October 7 attack that sparked the latest Israel-Hamas war. In the unprecedented assault on southern Israel, Hamas-led militants killed 1,200 people and seized 250 hostages. The ICC prosecutor is also seeking arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for their conduct in the war, which has seen more than 35,000 Palestinians killed in the Gaza Strip and also hundreds in the West Bank.

Haniyeh recounted meeting Raisi earlier this year in Tehran during Ramadan, the holy Muslim fasting month, and heard the president say the Palestinian issue remains the key one for the Muslim world. He also described Raisi calling the October 7 attack an "earthquake in the heart of the Zionist entity."

# Nepalese climber Kami Rita climbs Everest for 30th time

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal's veteran summiteer Kami Rita Sherpa made history on Wednesday by scaling Mt Everest for the 30th time, breaking his own record that he made 10 days ago for the highest number of ascents on the world's highest peak.

The 54-year-old legendary mountaineer reached the 8,849-metre peak at 7:49 am local time, according to Tashi Lakpa Sherpa, Chief Executive Officer at the 14 Peaks Expedition high-altitude sports company. Kami submitted the peak for the 29th time only 10 days ago. "He has scaled Everest on May 12 for the 29th time," The Himalayan Times newspaper quoted Tashi Lakpa as saying.



Kami, a senior mountain guide at the 14 Peaks Expedition and Seven Summit Treks, climbed Mt Everest for the first time in May 1994, the report said. He was born on January 17, 1970, and his mountaineering journey began in 1992 when he joined an expedition to the highest peak as a supporting staff. Kami developed a deep passion for climbing from a young age and has been scal-

ing mountains for over two decades, Tashi Lakpa said.

Besides Mt Everest, he has also conquered Mt K2, Cho Oyu, Lhotse, and Manaslu.

Last year, he successfully scaled Mt Everest for the 27th and 28th times in the same season.

His closest rival, 46-year-old Pasand Dawa Sherpa of Solukhumbu, also completed his 27th summit of Everest last year. Altogether, 414 climbers from 41 expeditions have acquired permission to scale Everest this season. Official data from 2023 showed that since 1953's Hillary-Norgay summit, around 7,000 mountaineers have successfully scaled Mt Everest while over 300 have lost their lives.

# Trump hush money trial concludes without his testimony

AP ■ NEW YORK

Donald Trump's hush money trial moved into a new phase Tuesday, drawing closer to the moment when the jury will begin deciding his fate after testimony concluded without the former president taking the stand in his own defense.

"Your honor, the defense rests," Trump lawyer Todd Blanche told the judge. Trump's team ended with a former federal prosecutor who was called to attack the credibility of the prosecution's key witness, one of two people summoned to the stand by the defense. The Manhattan district attorney's office called 20 witnesses over 15 days of testimony before resting its case Monday.

The jury was sent home for a week, until May 28, when closing arguments are expected, but the attorneys returned to the courtroom to debate how the judge will instruct jurors on deliberations, a sort of road map meant to help them apply the law to the evidence and testimony. The two sides haggled over word choices, legal phrases and how to describe various campaign-related issues.

Trump, the first former American president to be tried criminally, did not answer questions about why he did not testify.

Trump had previously said he wanted to take the witness stand in his own defense, but there was no requirement or even expectation that he do so. Defendants routinely decline to testify. His attorneys, instead of mounting an effort to demonstrate Trump's innocence to jurors, focused on attacking the

credibility of the prosecution witnesses. That's a routine defense strategy; the burden of proof in a criminal case lies with the prosecution. The defense doesn't have to prove a thing.

Yet even as Trump denounces the trial as a politically motivated travesty of justice, he has been working to turn the proceedings into an offshoot of his presidential campaign. He's capitalized on the trial as a fundraising pitch, used his time in front of the cameras to criticize President Joe Biden and showcased a parade of his own political supporters.

Prosecutors have accused the presumptive Republican presidential nominee of a scheme to scoop up and bury negative stories in an illegal effort to influence the 2016 presidential election. Trump has pleaded

not guilty to falsifying business records to conceal the alleged scheme and denied any wrongdoing. It's the first of Trump's four criminal cases to go to trial, and quite possibly the only one before the 2024 presidential election.

"They have no case," Trump said outside court. "There's no crime."

He also again attacked the prosecutor, despite repeated warnings from Judge Juan M. Merchan not to violate a gag order that bars him from publicly commenting on witnesses, prosecutors, court staff or the judge's family.

Jurors have been given a lesson on the underbelly of the tabloid business world, where Trump allies at the National Enquirer launched a plan to keep seamy, sometimes outrageous stories about Trump out of the public

eye by paying tens of thousands of dollars to "catch and kill" them. They watched as a porn actress, Stormy Daniels, recounted in discomfiting detail an alleged sexual encounter with Trump in a hotel room. Trump says nothing sexual happened between them.

And they sat intently in the jury box as Trump's former-lawyer-turned-foe Michel Cohen placed Trump in the middle of the scheme to buy Daniels' story to keep it from going public in the waning weeks before the 2016 presidential election. During that time, Republicans were wringing their hands in distress over the potential political fallout from the infamous "Access Hollywood" tape, where Trump bragged about grabbing women sexually without asking permission.



# Russian attacks on Ukraine power grid hit Kyiv with blackouts

**AP ■ KYIV**  
Sustained Russian attacks on Ukraine's power grid in recent weeks have forced leaders of the war-ravaged country to institute nationwide rolling blackouts. Without adequate air defences to counter assaults and allow for repairs, though, the shortages could still worsen as need spikes in late summer and the bitter-cold winter. The Russian airstrikes targeting the grid since March have meant blackouts have even returned to the capital, Kyiv, which hadn't experienced them since the first year of the war. Among the strikes were an April barrage that damaged Kyiv's largest thermal power plant and a massive attack on May 8 that targeted power generation and transmission facilities in several regions. In all, half of Ukraine's energy system was damaged, Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said. Entire apartment blocks in the capital went dark. The city's

military administration said at least 10 per cent of consumers were disconnected. For many, it is a taste of what might be in store if Ukraine doesn't find other electricity sources before winter. With no end in sight to the attacks on the power grid and without a way to adequately defend against them, there are no quick fixes to the electricity shortages, Energy Minister Herman Halushchenko explained. Ukraine is appealing to Western allies for more air defence systems and spare parts to fix its Soviet-era plants. "With each attack we lose additional power generation, so it just goes minus, minus, minus," Halushchenko said on Tuesday while standing outside a coal-fired plant in central Ukraine that was destroyed in an April 11 attack. Any efforts to repair the plant would be futile until the military can defend it from another attack. "Should we repair (power stations) just for them

(Russians) to renew strikes while we are unable to defend ourselves?" the minister asked. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock's joined him on the plant visit, underscoring Ukraine's desperation to close the power gap as quickly as possible. The first major test of the grid will come in July and August, when consumption can mirror levels in the sub-freezing winter months, the minister said. By mid-May, Kyiv's residents began to feel the consequences of Russia's attacks. A cold snap drove up consumption, forcing Ukrrenerg, the main transmission system operator, to introduce controlled blackouts throughout the country. Ukraine can't generate enough power to cover evening peaks, and the shortage is greater than the country's ability to import electricity from Poland, Slovakia and Romania. The April 11 attack on the plant destroyed generators, transformers and turbines — every

necessary part to generate electricity, said Yevhen Harkavyi, the technical director of Centerenergo, which operates the plant. Five missiles hit the facility that day, and workers were still clearing away rubble on Tuesday as snow-like tufts of poplar cotton fell through a hole in the roof. The plan for winter is to restore power generation as much as possible, said Harkavyi. How that will happen isn't clear, he conceded. "The situation is already too difficult." Ukraine is hoping to acquire parts from long-decommissioned German plants. Harkavyi said Ukrainian teams recently went to Germany to evaluate the equipment, which was taken offline because it doesn't meet European Union environmental standards. It remains to be seen how willing European allies will be to invest in Ukraine's coal-fuelled energy sector given their own green goals.

# Pak court rejects plea to disqualify Imran for concealing alleged daughter's name in 2018 nomination papers

**PTI ■ ISLAMABAD**  
A Pakistani court has rejected a petition seeking the disqualification of former prime minister Imran Khan for concealing his alleged daughter Tyrian White while submitting his nomination papers for the 2018 general elections. The Islamabad High Court (IHC) took up the petition on Tuesday after a gap of almost a year, the Dawn newspaper reported. The petition alleged that the 71-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party founder had not disclosed his alleged daughter — Tyrian White — in his nomination papers for contesting the 2018 general elections. 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. The IHC rejected the petition after noting that a three-judge bench had previously dismissed it, the



report said. Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri read the opinion of the two judges given last year and ruled that the case has already been dismissed. On May 10, 2023, a three-member bench of the court

deleted from the website minutes after it was uploaded, and the IHC chief justice dissolved the bench. Khan's party welcomed the judgement, saying that the two judges had already decided the case, but the IHC chief justice "tried to keep it alive on technicalities". Senior lawyers questioned the constitution of a fresh bench when the case had been decided earlier, according to the report. The petition said that even though Khan had three children, he had mentioned only two in the papers and concealed the existence of his third child. It also alleged that Khan did not marry his alleged girlfriend Sita White, mother of Tyrian, because her father told Khan that he would not get a "penny" from his wealth if he married Sita. The PTI founder initially joined the proceedings but later backtracked after he was asked to undergo a blood test, it added.

# Vietnam's top security official confirmed as president

**AP ■ BANGKOK**  
Vietnam's top security official To Lam was confirmed on Wednesday as the nation's new president. He oversaw police and intelligence operations over a period when rights groups say basic liberties have been systematically suppressed, and its secret service was accused of violating international law. Lam was confirmed by Vietnam's National Assembly after his predecessor resigned amid an ongoing anti-corruption campaign that has shaken the country's political establishment and business elites and has resulted in multiple top-level changes in government. Vietnam's presidency is largely ceremonial, but his new role as head of state puts the 66-year-old in a "very strong position" to become the next Communist Party general secretary, the most important political position in the country, said Nguyen Khac Giang, an analyst at Singapore's ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute. Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong



was elected to a third term in 2021, but at age 80, he may not seek another term after 2026. Trong is an ideologue who views corruption as the gravest threat facing the party. As Vietnam's top security official, Lam has led Trong's sweeping anti-graft campaign. Lam spent more than four decades in the Ministry of Public Security before becoming the minister in 2016. His rise took place while Vietnam's politburo lost

of six of its 18 members amid the expanding anti-graft campaign, including two former presidents and Vietnam's parliamentary head. Lam was behind many of the investigations into high-profile politicians, said Giang. Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh is seen as the other major contender to possibly succeed Trong, Giang said. The current vice-speaker of Vietnam's parliament was con-

firmed on Monday as the National Assembly speaker after his predecessor, Vuong Dinh Hue, resigned amid the anti-graft campaign. Until his resignation, Hue was also widely seen as a potential successor to Trong. This unprecedented instability in Vietnam's political system has spooked investors as the country tries to position itself as an alternative for companies looking to shift their supply chains away from China. A flood of foreign investment, especially in manufacturing of high-tech products like smartphones and computers, raised expectations it could join the "Four Asian Tigers" — Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan, whose economies underwent rapid industrialization and posted high growth rates. But the scandals and uncertainty — including the death sentence for a real estate tycoon accused of embezzling nearly 3 per cent of the country's 2022 GDP — have brought with them uncertainty and bureaucratic reticence to make decisions. Economic growth slipped to 5.1 per cent last year

from 8 per cent in 2022 as exports slowed. During Lam's years heading the Public Security Ministry, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and other watchdog organisations have strongly criticised Vietnam for its harassment and intimidation of critics. In 2021, courts convicted at least 32 people for posting critical opinions about the government and sentenced them to multiple years in prison, while police arrested at least 26 others on fabricated charges, according to Human Rights Watch. Under Tam's watch as Vietnam's top security boss, civil society faced further curbs, foreign aid restrictions introduced in 2021 were tightened in 2023, the country jailed climate activists, and laws were introduced to censor social media, said Ben Swanton of The 88 Project, a group that advocates for freedom of expression in Vietnam. "With To Lam's ascent to the presidency, Vietnam is now a literal police state," said Swanton, adding that the Vietnamese ruling Politburo was now domi-

# India, China agree to cooperate in paying in local currency for imports: Maldives

**PTI ■ MALE**  
The Maldives on Wednesday said both India and China have agreed to cooperate in efforts to pay for imports in their respective countries' currency instead of the US dollar, which is likely to help Male save almost 50 per cent of the annual USD 1.5 million imports bill from the two countries. Maldives' Economic Development Minister Mohamed Saeed said he met with the Indian High Commissioner Munu Mahawar two weeks ago, who in turn, said that New Delhi would support and cooperate in arranging for the settlement of import payments in Indian Rupee. Similarly, Saeed said, he received a letter from China's Commerce Ministry, two days ago, in which Beijing provided assurance it will cooperate in allowing the option to settle import payments in Yuan, the Chinese currency, as requested by President Mohamed Muizzu. Annually, Maldives imports goods worth USD 780 million and USD 720 million from India and China respectively, the minister had said in April when he had first announced that the Maldives was discussing with India and China if the island nation can make payments for its imports from the country in Maldivian Rufiyaa. International trade between two countries in local currency is a mutually beneficial mechanism as it helps in saving each other's foreign exchange reserves. Moreover, the move will mark a significant shift away from the dominant use of the US dollar in international transactions. In July 2023, the Government of India declared that Maldives was among the 22 countries that were permitted by the Reserve Bank of India to open Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVAs) as part of efforts to promote bilateral trade in local currencies. News portal Sun.mv on

Wednesday quoted Saeed as speaking with state-run PSM Media: "Maldives imports between USD 600-700 million in commodities from both India and China, each year. Therefore, we import around USD 1.4 billion to USD 1.5 billion in commodities annually, from both markets combined." "We are negotiating with both sides to make arrangements for us so that, for example, for imports from China, the shipping company can bring the invoice and the payment can be settled by converting Maldivian Rufiyaa to their local currency through the banks, instead of US dollar," Saeed said, adding, it will save up to 50 per cent from the annual USD 1.5 million in imports from the two countries. "If we can arrange up to USD 300 million from each country, that means USD 700 million. This means we can eliminate the reliance on US dollars by that amount in the future. That will reduce the demand for dollars. And the future demand for dollars will continue to fall," Saeed was quoted as saying by Sun.mv. Saeed blamed the poor state of finances on the former administration and agreed that challenges persist as foreign countries are still skeptical about the Maldives but "it is slowly improving." The new Maldivian administration has said that the country's economic situation was "alarming", but that the government was implementing strong fiscal reforms to rectify the issue, including stopping printing money. Earlier in April, during campaigning ahead of the parliamentary polls, Saeed had said that if the ruling party was able to secure a majority in Parliament, they would be able to bring "the dollar rate back down to official market values within approximately two years." President Muizzu-led People's National Congress (PNC) secured a clear majority in the 87-member People's Majlis.

# 'Lanka's presidential election first, parliamentary polls later'

**PTI ■ COLOMBO**  
President Ranil Wickremesinghe on Wednesday reiterated his intention to hold the next presidential election this year ahead of the parliamentary election. Sources confirmed that he told the Cabinet meeting earlier in the day that financial allocations have only been reserved so far for the conduct of the presidential poll. Despite speculation that a General Election will precede a Presidential election, Wickremesinghe informed the Cabinet that the Presidential election will be held first this year. According to the Election Act, the presidential election should happen first. The next parliamentary election is not due before August 2025. The Elections Commission earlier this month said the presidential election would be conducted at a date between September 17 and October 16. The ruling Sri Lanka People's Front, commonly known by its Sinhalese name Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP),



which has the current parliamentary majority, had pressed Wickremesinghe to hold the parliamentary election ahead of the presidential poll. Wickremesinghe, 75, is yet to announce his candidacy despite declarations by two other main opposition leaders: Sajith Premadasa the main opposition leader, and the Marxist JVP leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake. Wickremesinghe, from the arch-rival party United National Party (UNP), succeeded SLPP-elected president Gotabaya Rajapaksa to become president for the rest of Rajapaksa's term when the lat-

# Pak govt forms committee to probe attack on PTI leader

**Islamabad (PTI):** Pakistan's Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar on Wednesday said an inquiry committee has been formed to investigate an attack on a senior leader of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party a day earlier. Terming the attack as "regrettable and sad", the law minister while speaking in a Senate session today said such attacks should not happen. "The government is seriously investigating the attack on Raouf Hasan," Tarar said, according to Geo News. An FIR on charges of murder and attempted murder concerning the attack on Imran Khan's party's Information Secretary Raouf Hasan has been registered at Islamabad's Abpara police station, the Express Tribune newspaper reported. Hasan was allegedly attacked by a group of around four apparently transgender persons in the capital. It drew strong condemnation from his party, however, it remains unclear why the politician was attacked.

# UK lawmaker returns to work as 'bionic MP' after losing his hands and feet to sepsis

**London (AP):** Britain's fractious politicians shared a rare moment of unity on Wednesday, when a Conservative lawmaker returned to work six months after sepsis put him in a coma and forced the amputation of his hands and feet. As Conservative legislator Craig Mackinlay walked unaided into the House of Commons before the weekly Prime Minister's Questions session, government and opposition lawmakers alike rose in a standing ovation. "As you know, we don't allow clapping," Speaker Lindsay Hoyle said as Mackinlay's wife and 4-year-old daughter watching from the public gallery. "But this is an exception." Mackinlay, 57, said he wants to be known as "the bionic MP." He plans to campaign for greater awareness of the signs of sepsis, and for Britain's state-funded National

Health Service, which treated him and saved his life, to offer better treatment and prosthetics to people who have lost more than one limb. Addressing his fellow lawmakers in the Commons chamber, Mackinlay thanked Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Hoyle for visiting him while he was in hospital. Referring to the speaker's formal black tailcoat, he joked that "the rest of the hospital thought I must be dreadfully ill, because they said that guy's got the funeral director in already." He asked Sunak to ensure the health service would "embed recognition of early signs of sepsis." "If we can stop somebody ending up like this, I would say that is a job well done," Mackinlay said. He also called on health ministers to ensure the "provision of appropriate prosthetics."

# Chinese journalist released from prison after 4 years

**AP ■ BANGKOK**  
Zhang Zhan was released from prison after serving four years for charges related to reporting on the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan, according to a video statement she released Tuesday, eight days after her sentence ended. Zhang was sentenced to four years in prison on charges of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble," a vaguely defined charge often used in political cases, and served her full term. Yet, on the day of her release, her former lawyers could not reach her or her family. Shanghai police had paid visits to activists and her former lawyers in the



days leading up to her release. In a short video, Zhang said she was taken by police to her brother Zhang Ju's home on May 13, the day she finished her sentence. "I want to thank everyone for their help and concern," she said in a soft voice, standing in what

appeared to be a hallway of an apartment building. The video was posted by Jane Wang, an overseas activist who launched the Free Zhang Zhan campaign in the United Kingdom and is in contact with one of Zhang's former lawyers. However, Wang said in a state-

ment that Zhang still has limited freedom. They became concerned that Zhang would be kept under further control by police even if she was no longer in prison. The United States Department of State also issued a statement of concern over Zhang's status in the days after she was due to be released. Ren Quanniu represented Zhang before being stripped of his license in February 2021. He said he confirmed the video was true by speaking with Zhang's family. During her detention at Shanghai's Women Prison, Zhang staged a hunger strike and was hospitalised at one point in 2021. Zhang's family,

who could often only speak to her by phone, faced police pressure during her incarceration, and her parents refused to speak to news outlets. Zhang was among a handful of citizen journalists who travelled to the central Chinese city of Wuhan after the government put it under total lockdown in February 2020, in the early days of the pandemic. She walked around the city to document public life as fears grew about the novel coronavirus. Others spent time in jail for documenting the early days of the pandemic, including Fang Bin, who published videos of overcrowded hospitals and bodies

TATA POWER DELHI DISTRIBUTION LIMITED			
A Tata Power and Delhi Government Joint Venture			
Regd. Office : NDPL House, Hudson Lines, Kingsway Camp, Delhi 110 009			
Tel : 66112222, Fax : 27468042, Email : TPDDL@tatapower-dtl.com			
CIN No. : U40109DL2001PLC111526, Website : www.tatapower-dtl.com			
NOTICE INVITING TENDERS			
TATA Power-DDL invites tenders as per following details:			
Tender Enquiry No.	Estimated Cost/EMD (Rs.)	Availability of Bid Document	Last Date & Time of Bid Submission/ Date and time of Opening of bids
TPDDL/ENGG/ENQ/200001677/24-25	44.17 Crs/ 24,00,000	23.05.2024	13.06.2024; 1500 Hrs/ 13.06.2024; 1530 Hrs
Rate Contract for Supply of 4G based 1-Ph Smart Meter			
CORRIGENDUM / TENDER DATE EXTENTION			
Tender Enquiry No.	Previously Published Date	Revised Due Date & Time of Bid Submission/ Date & time of opening of bids	
TPDDL/ENGG/ENQ/200001669/24-25	30.04.2024	27.05.2024 at 1500 Hrs/ 27.05.2024 at 1530 Hrs	
Rate Contract for Supply of DT Meter Kit Without Wiring Harness			
Complete tender and corrigendum document is available on our website <a href="http://www.tatapower-dtl.com">www.tatapower-dtl.com</a> → Vendor Zone → Tender / Corrigendum Documents			
Contracts - 011-66112222			

# Markets climb on buying in Reliance, Infosys



**PTI ■ MUMBAI**  
Equity benchmark indices ended with gains on Wednesday amid buying in blue-chips Reliance Industries and Infosys amid mixed cues from global markets. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 267.75 points or 0.36 per cent to settle at 74,221.06. During the day, it jumped 354.48 points or 0.47 per cent to 74,307.79. Similarly, the NSE Nifty advanced 68.75 points or 0.31 per cent to finish at 22,597.80. "Despite mixed global market sentiments ahead of the US Fed minutes, Indian markets exhibited a subtle positive trend. Investors are optimistic about stable Q4 earnings and easing election jitters that had previously increased volatility. "Interest in the FMCG sector has risen due to the potential for an early onset of monsoon. Nevertheless, markets may underperform in the short term as they wait for the election outcome, with FIIs staying on the sidelines,"

Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said. Among the Sensex firms, Hindustan Unilever, Reliance Industries, Infosys, Asian Paints, ITC and UltraTech Cement were the major gainers. State Bank of India, JSW Steel, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, Tata Steel and Tata Motors were among the laggards. In Asian markets, Shanghai settled in the positive territory while Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong ended lower. European markets were trading lower. Wall Street ended in the green on Tuesday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.84 per cent to USD 82.18 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,874.54 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. The BSE benchmark declined 52.63 points or 0.07 per cent to settle at 73,953.31 on Tuesday. The Nifty, however, ended higher by 27.05 points or 0.12 per cent to 22,529.05.

# Rupee rises 3 paise to close at 83.28 against US dollar

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**

The rupee appreciated by 3 paise to settle at 83.28 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday amid softening crude oil prices. Forex traders said the local unit consolidated in a narrow range weighed down by foreign fund outflows. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 83.29 and moved in the range of 83.22 and 83.29 against the greenback during the session. The local unit finally settled at 83.28 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a rise of 3

paise from its previous close. The Indian rupee gained on positive domestic markets and a decline in crude oil prices. However, mixed to positive US Dollar and FII outflows capped sharp gains, said Anuj Choudhary — Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. "We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias as the US Dollar may recover from lower levels if the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting minutes are hawkish," Choudhary said. FII outflows may also weigh on the rupee. However, a



positive tone in the domestic markets and weakness in crude oil prices may support the rupee at lower levels, Choudhary added. Investors may remain cautious ahead of PMI data from the US this week. USDINR spot price is

expected to trade in a range of Rs 83 to Rs 83.55, Choudhary added. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, advanced 0.09 per cent to 104.75, as most Fed officials warned of cutting interest rates too early and need more data to cut rates. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, slipped 0.69 per cent to USD 82.31 per barrel. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex advanced 267.75 points, or 0.36 per cent, to settle at 74,221.06 points, and Nifty

rose 68.75 points, or 0.31 per cent, to close at 22,597.80 points. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Tuesday, as they offloaded shares worth Rs 1,874.54 crore, according to exchange data. On the macroeconomic front, according to an article in the RBI's May Bulletin released on Tuesday, India is likely to grow by 7.5 per cent in the first quarter of the current financial year, driven by rising aggregate demand and non-food spending in the rural economy.

# Mahindra Finance gets IRDAI nod to sell insurance products as corporate agent

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Mahindra & Mahindra Financial Services on Wednesday said it has received corporate agency licence from insurance regulator IRDAI, which will enable it to sell life and general insurance policies offered by various insurers. The registration shall be valid from May 21, 2024 to May 20, 2027, Mahindra Finance said in a regulatory filing. The registration as 'Corporate Agent (Composite)' will enable the company to undertake supplemental business activity of soliciting and procuring insurance business in the areas of life, health and general insurance — both group and individual, it said. The process would augment the company's existing sources of revenue and profits as it would deploy its common infrastructure of branch network and feet on street. Mahindra Finance Managing Director & CEO Raul Rebello said, "This diversification will open new revenue models for us while delivering personalized services to customers across Mahindra Finance's 1360+ branches, thereby enhancing their experience." The corporate agency licence will enable Mahindra Finance to solicit, procure and carry on the business of selling, distribution, advertising, marketing of all kinds of insurance products/ services, including life insurance, health insurance, and general insurance, on behalf of various insurance companies as a corporate agent as permitted by IRDAI, it said.

# Suzlon bags new orders of 402 MW wind energy from Juniper Green Energy

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Renewable energy solutions provider Suzlon Group on Wednesday said it has bagged new orders for the development of 402 MW wind energy projects from Juniper Green Energy. Suzlon will install a total of 134 wind turbine generators (WTGs) with a Hybrid Lattice Tubular (HLT) tower and a rated capacity of 3 MW for both projects at the Suzlon proposed site at Fatehgarh in Rajasthan, a company statement said. As part of the agreement, Suzlon will supply the wind turbines and execute the project including foundation, erection, and commissioning. Suzlon will also undertake comprehensive operations and maintenance services post-commissioning. "Juniper Green Energy has been a long-term, repeat



customer for us, and we are delighted to partner with them again. This order helps us expand our footprint in Rajasthan," Girish Tanti, Vice Chairman, Suzlon Group, said in the statement. The electricity generated from these projects will help realise the vision of the Rajasthan government to serve the people of the state with green energy, he added. The generated power will be provided under FDRE (Firm and Dispatchable Renewable Energy) Hybrid and Merchant projects. Projects of this size can provide electricity to 3.31 lakh households and curb 13.07 lakh tonnes of CO2 emissions per year.

# Paper, paperboard imports up 34 per cent in FY24: IPMA

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Imports of paper and paperboard in the country rose by 34 per cent to 19.3 lakh tonnes in 2023-24, driven by higher shipments from ASEAN countries, an industry association said on Wednesday. The Indian Paper Manufacturers Association (IPMA) in a statement said that the increasing imports of these products are hurting the domestic industry. Paper and paperboard imports, as per the commerce ministry data, were 14.3 lakh tonnes in the financial year ended on March 31, 2023, the IPMA said. "ASEAN has come to account for the largest chunk in the paper import pie in the country accounting for 27 per cent share. Paper imports from ASEAN, which enter the country at zero import duty under the ASEAN-India free



trade agreement, doubled to 5.1 lakh tonnes during the year from 2.7 lakh tonnes in FY23," the association said citing commerce ministry data. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a 10-member bloc. The members include Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. In value terms, paper imports

doubled to Rs 13,248 crore in FY24 from Rs 6,140 crore in FY21, the body said. "The unprecedented imports of paper and paperboard pose a significant threat to India's Make-in-India initiative Aatmanirbhar Bharat," IPMA said. The major paper grades which are coming from these nations include printing paper, coated paper, and paperboard. IPMA said that this surge comes despite substantial investments by the domestic industry in recent years to upgrade technology, improve product quality, and enhance agro / farm forestry practices. "These investments are now at risk due to the influx of duty-free imports," it claimed. IPMA has urged the government to increase the basic customs duty (BCD) on the import of paper and paperboard from 10 per cent to 25 per cent.

# Housing prices near peak level, nominal growth seen in coming years, says C&W India head

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Growth in housing prices is expected to be nominal in short to medium term after rising sharply over the last two years due to surge in demand post the COVID pandemic, according to Cushman & Wakefield India head Anshul Jain. In a video interview with PTI, Jain, the Chief Executive India & South East Asia and APAC Tenant Representation, Cushman & Wakefield, said the housing demand would continue to be strong in view of high economic growth and a growing desire to own homes among consumers especially, young population. "Housing demand in India



was quite muted from 2013-2014, all the way to 2019. The prices were stagnant. There was a wave at that point in time, where people, particularly youngsters did not want to own anything. We were talking about Uberisation of the residential sector where people wanted to rent and did not want to sort of

make a commitment," Jain said. However, he noted that the COVID pandemic changed that mindset. "People realised the stability of having their own house. Plus people wanted larger houses, and combining that with one of the lowest interest rate regimes India had seen for a

while really spurred the demand for housing," he said. Jain noted that housing sales and prices went up driven by end-user demand. "Seeing the prices going up, the investors came into the market. So, a combination of that became a perfect cocktail, for a very strong demand post COVID from a housing perspective," Jain observed. Going forward, he said there would be nominal growth in prices. "... Clearly there has been a very significant price rise in the last two years. But if you normalize that, over about 10 odd years, 2013-2014 to now, I think the price rise has still been strong, but not abnormal.

# India exports over 45,000 tonnes onion after lifting ban



**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

India has exported more than 45,000 tonnes of onion since the ban on outbound shipments was lifted early this month, a top government official said on Wednesday. These exports provided relief to farmers after curbs were imposed to keep domestic supplies steady ahead of general elections. The world's biggest vegetable exporter banned exports of the bulb last December and then extended it in March, after a rise in prices triggered by sluggish production. "Since the ban was lifted, more than 45,000 tonnes of onions have been exported, mostly to the Middle East and Bangladesh," Nidhi Khare, Secretary of the Consumer Affairs Ministry, told PTI. To keep onion prices affordable during the election

period, the government on May 4 lifted the ban but imposed a minimum export price (MEP) of USD 550 per tonne. Khare said the forecast of a good monsoon this year will ensure better sowing of kharif (summer) crops, including onion from June onwards. State-owned agencies have started procuring onions from the recent rabi (winter) harvest to build a targeted 5,00,000-tonne buffer stock for the current year, she added. The country's onion production is expected to fall 16 per cent from a year earlier to 25.47 million tonnes in the 2023-24 crop year due to lower output in key growing regions like Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, according to the Agriculture Ministry's first estimates.

# Paytm net loss widens to ₹550 crore in Q4

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Fintech firm One97 Communications, which owns the Paytm brand, on Wednesday said its loss in the fourth quarter of the financial year 2023-24 has widened to Rs 550 crore following the ban imposed by the RBI on transactions related to its payments bank. The company had posted a loss of Rs 167.5 crore in the same period a year ago, the company said in a regulatory filing. "Our fourth quarter FY24 results were impacted by temporary disruption on account of UPI transition etc. And permanent disruption because of the PPBL embargo. Paytm reported a revenue of Rs 2,267 crore, a modest decline of 3 per cent Y-o-Y (year-on-year). Our contribution margin was 57 per cent including UPI incentives, and 51 per cent excluding UPI incentives," Paytm said in a statement. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) barred Paytm Payments Bank Limited (PPBL) from accepting deposits, credit transactions or top-ups in any customer accounts, wallets, and FASTags, keeping in view the interest of customers, including merchants from March 15 onwards. "PPBL products like the Paytm wallet and FASTag were distributed by Paytm. Due to the current embargo on these products, we anticipate the steady state annualised direct impact on EBITDA to be around Rs 500 crore, as previously disclosed. Most of this impact will be in the first quarter as these products were operational during most part of the fourth quarter of FY24," the statement said. The company during the reported quarter wrote off Rs 227 crore investment for a 39 per cent stake in PPBL following future uncertainties associated with the bank's business operations including the uncertainty of any other regulatory development etc. "PPBL, the management, on a prudent basis, has determined that the value of the company's investment in PPBL is impaired and, accordingly, has recorded an



impairment provision of Rs 2,271 crore, representing the carrying value of its investment in PPBL and disclosed the same as impairment of investment in associate," the company said in an audit note. Paytm Founder and CEO Vijay Shekhar Sharma holds 51 per cent in PPBL. The company for the first time posted operational profit before Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) cost for the full year. "FY24 has been a landmark year for the company as we achieved our first full year of EBITDA before ESOP profitability (since IPO) of Rs 559 crore. We demonstrated strong revenue momentum (up 25 per cent) and continued our disciplined focus on profitability (EBITDA before ESOP margin up by 8 per cent), in spite of regulatory action on our associate entity, Paytm Payment Bank Ltd," Sharma said in a letter to shareholders. The revenue from operations of Paytm declined by 2.8 per cent to Rs 2,267.1 crore during the reported quarter from Rs 2,464.6 crore in the corresponding quarter of the financial year (FY) 2023. Paytm said that there were temporary disruptions in operating metrics like Monthly Transacting Users (MTU), merchant base, and Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) during February and March. "This is expected to have an incremental EBITDA impact of Rs 100-150 crore, in the first quarter of FY25 and should start recovering from the second quarter as we are seeing stabilisation or growth in consumer and merchant base metrics from April/May," the statement said.

# NHPC organises Shramdaan programme under Swachhata Pakhwada 2024

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

NHPC organised a Shramdaan programme for cleanliness campaign under 'Swachhata Pakhwada 2024' on 21st May 2024. RP Goyal, CMD, NHPC, Shri Uttam Lal, Director (Personnel), NHPC and RK Chaudhary, Director (Technical & Projects), NHPC, senior NHPC officers and employees performed Shramdaan by running a cleanliness drive in Mughal Bridge over Budhia Wala Nala (a monument), in Faridabad. During the Shramdaan programme local people also took part



enthusiastically along with the NHPC employees. NHPC is observing 'Swachhata Pakhwada 2024' at its Corporate Office and all its Regional Offices, Projects and Power Stations across the country from 16th May to 31st May 2024 as per guidelines issued by the Government of India. During this Pakhwada, NHPC is organising various activities as cleanliness awareness programmes, tree/ sapling plantation, skit presentation, cleaning kit/ sanitary pad distribution, awareness programmes on hygiene, drawing and painting competitions etc. across all its locations.

# NTPC secures third rank at ATD BEST Award 2024

New Delhi: NTPC has achieved an impressive milestone by securing the 3rd rank globally at the ATD BEST Award 2024, the highest ranking among all Indian companies. Notably, NTPC is the only PSU to have received this prestigious award seven times in the past eight years. The accolade was accepted by Rachana Singh Bhal, CGM (Strategic HR & Talent Management), at a distinguished ceremony held in New Orleans, USA, on May 21. **PNS**

# Government needs to further expand scheme to make India global drone hub, says report

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**



(compounded annual growth rate) during the 2024-30 period. With innovation and expansion of its application portfolio, India has the potential of becoming the global drone hub by 2030, it stated. The study highlighted that the key to realising India's vision lies in boosting the domestic drone ecosystem. Other major factors are the expansion of the PLI scheme, government procurement, and pushing the Make in India initiative, it stated. The application of drones is already proven in the fields of

Border Surveillance, Rescue Disaster Management, and COVID management etc. The drone services industry's operations in logistics, data processing, and traffic management etc are far bigger in scale and will outshine the other related sectors very soon, the report highlighted on Tuesday. Around 250 drones and unmanned systems manufacturers, anti-drone radar, guns and jammers innovators, component, wires, motors, sensors, CCTV suppliers, software developers for drones and unmanned systems, drones as service providing companies, GPS and Geospatial solutions providers participated in the survey. Institutes developing drones, defence research labs manufacturing drones, and aerospace companies like flight

control, and simulator developers were also part of the survey. The survey was conducted across 10 states - Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The survey also reached out to foreign companies from the Middle East, Europe, the UK, the US and Australia. Drone International Expo 2024, which will be held on July 4-5, is a premium expo for drones unmanned systems (land and water), counter drones, LiDAR geospatial, artificial intelligence and air taxi. It is one of Asia's biggest drone sector platforms for buyers, industry representatives and stakeholders from across the board to connect.

# POWERGRID wins prestigious award for third time



Gurugram: Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a Maharatna CPSE under Ministry of Power, Government of India, has been conferred the prestigious ATD BEST Award 2024 for strategic approach to talent development driving business results. The award was conferred by the world's leading Learning and Development (L&D) body, Association of Talent Development (ATD), USA. **PNS**



# Sindhu sails to Malaysia Masters second round

**PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR** Returning from a break, two-time Olympic medallist P V Sindhu progressed to the women's singles second round with a straight-game win over Scotland's Kirsty Gilmour at the Malaysia Masters Super 500 badminton tournament here on Wednesday. World No. 15 Sindhu, who had skipped the Uber Cup and Thailand Open, notched up a 21-17 21-16 win over Gilmour, who is ranked 22nd, in the opening-round match that lasted 46 minutes. The fifth-seeded Indian, who last won a title in 2022 Singapore Open, will next face Korea's Sim Yu Jin. In mixed doubles, B Sumeeth Reddy and N Sikki Reddy, world No. 53, also advanced to the second round after outlasting Hong Kong qualifiers Lui Chun Wai and Fu Chi Yan 21-15 12-21 21-17 in 47 minutes. The husband-wife duo will have the task of taming the top seeds Chen Tang Jie and Toh Ee Wei of Malaysia next. For Sindhu, it was her third win over Gilmour, a two-time medallist in the Commonwealth Games. The 28-year-old Sindhu was quick to open up a 7-1 lead but Gilmour managed to claw back at 14-14 and 15-15. The Indian, however, dashed her hopes of a challenge as she grabbed six of the next eight points to take the first game. After the change of sides, Sindhu was more ruthless as she didn't allow her opponent to make any comeback after once again gaining an early 3-0 lead. Sindhu was 11-6 at the break and kept moving ahead to grab eight match points. To her credit, Gilmour saved four match points before Sindhu sealed the match comfortably. Sindhu, a former world champion, has endured a series of narrow losses ever since returning from a knee injury early this year. She is eyeing a good show here to boost her confidence ahead of the Paris Olympics.

**Format C-2**

(for candidate to publish in Newspapers, TV)

**Declaration about criminal cases**  
 (As per the judgment dated 25th September 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No.536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs Union of India & Anr.)  
 Name of Political Party : **BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY**  
 \*Name of Election : **LOKSABHA- 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	<b>DUMKA</b>	<b>SITA SOREN</b>	Add. Dist. & Sess. Judge-XVIII, Ranchi Regular CBI-02/2012 Pending	U/S 120(B), 171E of the IPC and U/S 13(2), 13(1)(D) of the Prevention of Corruption Act.			
2			SDJM, CBI, Ranchi Regular CBI-02/2014 Pending	U/S 195 (A), 323, 342, 365, 506, of the IPC.			
3			ACJM, Ghatshila PS Case No. 02/2019 Pending	U/S 403, 406, 420, 451, 452, 465, 467, 468, 477-A of the IPC.			
4			National Company Law Tribunal, Kolkata-Bench C.P/219(KB)-2019 Pending	U/S 241 and 242 of the Companies Act 2013			

\*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.

Format C-2						
(For political party to publish in website, newspapers, TV)						
Declaration about criminal antecedents of candidates set up by the party						
(As per the judgment dated 25th September, 2018 of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.)						
Name of Political Party : <b>BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY</b>						
*Name of Election : <b>Lok Sabha General Election 2024</b>						
Name of State/UT : <b>JHARKHAND</b>						
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	
			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 off(s) & punishment imposed
1	3-Godda Parliamentary Constituency	Nishikant Dubey	Ld. Court of Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate cum MPs/ MLAs Special Court Dumka  Jasidih PS Case No. 96/2024 filed on 28.03.2024  Pending for filing of the Final Form	Section 406, 409, 420, 467, 468, 471, 120(B), 34 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860.  The case has been filed by private individuals due to a civil dispute.		
2	3-Godda Parliamentary Constituency	Nishikant Dubey	Ld. Court of Special Judicial Magistrate cum MPs/ MLAs Special Court Ranchi  Dhurwa PS Case No. 107/2023 filed on 11.04.2023  Pending for filing of the Final Form  The same has been assailed before the Hon'ble High Court of Jharkhand in WP(Cr)224 of 2024. The Hon'ble Court has ordered that no coercive action should be taken against the accused vide order dated 12.05.2023	Section 147, 148, 188, 109, 335, 332, 427, & 323 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860  The case has been filed against the Protest organized by the BJP.		
3	3-Godda Parliamentary Constituency	Nishikant Dubey	Ld. Court of Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate cum MPs/ MLAs Special Court Dumka  Mohanpur PS Case No. 281/2023 filed on 27.12.2023 Budhai PS Case No. 30/2021 corresponding to GR Case No. 819 of 2023 filed on 10.04.2021  Pending for filing of the Final Form  The same has been assailed before the Hon'ble High Court of Jharkhand in CrMP 145 of 2024. The Hon'ble court has ordered that no coercive action should be taken against the accused vide order dated 18.03.2024	Section 153 B(1)(C), 166, 290, 336, 341, 342, 427, 504 & 506 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860  Private complaint due to action by the accused to protect bovine animals		
4	3-Godda Parliamentary Constituency	Nishikant Dubey	Ld. Court of Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate Dumka cum MPs/ MLAs Special Court Dumka  Budhai PS Case No. 30/2021 corresponding to GR Case No. 819 of 2023 filed on 10.04.2021  The charge framed in 03.04.2024 under sections 147, 149, 447, 188, 34 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860	Section 147, 149, 447, 188, 34 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860  Violation of order issued by public servant		
5	3-Godda Parliamentary Constituency	Nishikant Dubey	Ld. Court of Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate cum MPs/ MLAs Special Court Dumka  Devipur PS Case No. 178/2021 currently filed on 24.10.2021  Quashed vide order date 10.05.2024 passed in CrMP 3102 of 2024, however, the detailed order has not been uploaded	Section 188, 116, 171F, 506 & 34 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860.  Violation of Model Code of Conduct in Election		
6	3-Godda Parliamentary Constituency	Nishikant Dubey	Ld. Court of Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate cum MPs/ MLAs Special Court Dumka  Godda Town P.S. Non F.I.R. CC No. 04/2021 on 11.04.2021  Pending for Framing of Charges	Section 323 & 504 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860  Allegation of Intimidation		
7	3-Godda Parliamentary Constituency	Nishikant Dubey	Ld. Court of Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate Dumka cum MPs/ MLAs Special Court Dumka  Godda PS Case No. 96/2019 corresponding to GR Case No. 112 of 2022 filed on 01.04.2019  Charged framed on 16.08.2022 under section 171(G) & 188 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860  Listed for final arguments on 24.05.2024	Section 171(G) & 188 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860  Violation of order issued by public servant during election		
8	3-Godda Parliamentary Constituency	Nishikant Dubey	Ld. Court of Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate cum MPs/ MLAs Special Court Dumka Dumka  Kunda P.S. Case No 89/2019 corresponding to G.R.No-01/2024 filed on 17.05.2019  Pending for Framing of Charges	Section 171F, 504 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 and 123(3A) R.P. Act  Violation of order issued by public servant during election		

\*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.



# It's hard to leave ailing mother in hospital but KKR is family too, says Gurbaz

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Afghanistan wicketkeeper-batter Rahmanullah Gurbaz has revealed that he made the difficult choice of leaving his ailing mother in hospital when his IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders sought his services ahead of the playoff clash against Sunrisers Hyderabad here as the team is also his "family". Gurbaz, in his maiden game of the season, played a vital role in KKR's win over SRH by taking two vital catches and giving his side a blazing start with a 14-ball 23 on Tuesday. He replaced Englishman Phil Salt at the top and hit the ground running to help the two-time champions enter the IPL final with their comfortable eight-wicket victory here on Tuesday. "As a cricketer, you (should) know, what to do. (In) League cricket, only a few players can play. If there is opportunity for you, you should do best. If there's no opportunity for you, you

should be prepared, well prepared for the opportunity," Gurbaz told the media here after the match. "My mom is still sick. I went (back) there and the call from here was (that) Phil Salt was leaving. They called and they messaged me that 'Gurbaz, we need you, and what is your feedback for us?'" he revealed. "I said, 'yes, I will come'. My mom is still in hospital, and I'm always talking to her, but this is also my family. I should manage both of that, my mom and my KKR family. It's hard, it's tough, but still, I need to manage it," he added. SRH skipper Pat Cummins' decision to bat first backfired. Gurbaz said KKR had planned to bowl first had they won the toss. "We all (had) decided that we should go and we should bowl first, because in this kind of moment, and team likes Sunrisers that have a strong batting side and you should know what (is) the total and then you



go for it," he said. "We bowled really well, actually. (To get a) team likes Sunrisers all out on 160, that was bowling effort. And then once we come to the batting end, we also not just try to, we should win the circle (powerplay). (In) my mind was (the) only (thought) that I should win the circle, because sometime in low total like this, you need to have a good circle, otherwise, match can be difficult in the end." Gurbaz said it was the best he had seen KKR pacer Mitchell Starc bowl after the left-arm pacer took three wickets in the powerplay to set up the game for his side. "He was just unbelievable. The way he bowled today, he's one of the best, he has a lot of experience, he knows how to manage the big games. I saw him today totally different than other games," he said. Gurbaz said Afghanistan players are preparing well for the T20 World Cup next month. He said

franchise cricket is something that comes second and doing well for their country is always their priority. "It's all about hard work. It doesn't mean that you come from Afghanistan, you come from India, you come from Australia, whatever. It's all about hard work, I think. If you work hard, if you know what to do, and it's help you in every situation. "Afghanistan is not the same Afghanistan. We know what to do and how can we represent our country. Everything is good for cricket there, and we played really well, the last World Cup, and from the last six-seven years, Afghanistan is doing great," he said. "Our mindset (is) not (just) to play for league cricket, our mindset is always to do something better for our country, and then come the leagues. If you do good for your country, all leagues will pick you, and that's the point that we play all the leagues," he added.

# I could not have made better choices: Former RCB owner Mallya on Kohli

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former Royal Challengers Bengaluru owner Vijay Mallya on Wednesday said he couldn't have made a better choice when he bid for Virat Kohli in the inaugural IPL auction as he lauded the superstar batter for his brilliant run in the ongoing season. RCB have made a tremendous comeback after losing seven out of their first eight games to qualify for the playoffs with six straight victories, riding on Kohli's sublime form which

has so far fetched him 708 runs from 14 innings. RCB will face Rajasthan Royals in the Eliminator on Wednesday night. "When I bid for the RCB franchise and I bid for Virat, my inner instinct told me that I could not have made better choices," Mallya, who currently lives in the United Kingdom and is trying to avoid extradition to India, wrote on 'X'. "My inner instinct tells me that RCB have the best chance to go for the IPL Trophy. Onward and Upward. Best of luck." Kohli was bought by RCB for USD



30,000 ahead of the 2008 IPL following his title-winning run with India's U19 World Cup. RCB, however, hasn't been able to lift the trophy despite reaching the final thrice — in 2009, 2011 and 2016. Mallya is accused in a bank loan default matter of over Rs 9,000 crore involving his defunct Kingfisher Airlines. He has been living in the United Kingdom since March 2016. The same year he had to forego his ownership of RCB due to the legal proceedings against him.

<b>AFFIDAVIT</b> I, Chinta Oraon, S/o-Sukra Oraon. R/o-Garadih, P.s- Kairo, Lohardaga. My husband Sukra Oraon is in Army service and in his service record My son's name is written as Harsh Utam oraon. Vide affidavit-5109 Dated-22.5.2024 My son's correct name is Harsh uttam oraon as written in his Aadhar No. -217223574347.	<b>AFFIDAVIT</b> I, Chinta Oraon, W/o-Sukra Oraon. R/o-Garadih, P.s- Kairo, Lohardaga. My husband Sukra Oraon is in Army service and in his service record My D.O.B written as 15.1.1988 which is wrong. Vide affidavit-5128 Dated-22.5.2024 My correct D.O.B is 15.01.1992 as written in my Aadhar No. -621218682761
--	--



# Till I play Tests, I will limit franchise appearances to only two events a year: Travis Head

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Travis Head might have taken this year's IPL by storm but Test cricket remains his top priority and till the time he is playing the format, the Australian big-hitter would like to limit his participation in T20 leagues to just two events per year. Head, who has enjoyed an incredible last 10 months, has been a nemesis for India with centuries in both the World Test Championship and the ODI World Cup finals. Currently, He has blazed to 533 runs for Sunrisers Hyderabad, forging a fabulous opening partnership with uncapped Indian Abhishek Sharma. Needless to say he is sought after and asked how he plans to manage the lucrative T20 offers with his commitment for the 'Baggy Green', Head said it's a no brainer. "This has been the first year in IPL for me in quite a while (since 2017). I would put all my eggs in Test basket for the moment, I will continue to do that," Head told PTI during an exclusive interview organised by Prime Video ahead of their upcoming docu-series, 'The Test Season 3', featuring the Australian team's tour of England last year. "After Tests, I will pick formats, and see in which different ways I am available for selection." T20 events have mushroomed across the world with some like West Indies' Andre Russell and Sunil Narine appearing in multiple events, adding up to more than five a year. Having had a great run for the

'Orange Army' this season, Head is keen on coming back to IPL next year too. "At this stage, I would like to be back here in IPL next year. Like I will play Major League Cricket (MLC in USA) this year right after the World T20 but next year might just look a lot different. "Each year, you prioritise what you can and can't do. Next year, Test cricket is around, we tour the West Indies and probably I will not feature in many other franchises," the 30-year-old was categorical. "Look, in few years when I am finished with Test cricket, then probably there will be few more opportunities to play a bit more franchise cricket. But at this time, I would try to limit it to a couple of franchise may be, and (focus on) Test cricket." The last 10 months have been very hectic for Head starting with the WTC final, followed by the Ashes and then the World Cup where he came in during the second half after recovering from a hand injury. Right now, more than two months of IPL will be followed by World T20 in the Americas. But the southpaw doesn't want to make a big deal about workload management. "I will be home in a couple of days' time once we are done with IPL. Be home for two-three days and make the trip to the West Indies with family and start all over again. "Look, we are very fortunate to do what we do and I am not going to do it forever. So try and make the most of it as we can, we are lucky that we are well looked after."




# Sunrisers Hyderabad batting approach was puzzling: Gavaskar



PTI ■ AHMEDABAD


Legendary Sunil Gavaskar has questioned the "puzzling" batting approach of Sunrisers Hyderabad during the powerplay in the first IPL Qualifier, suggesting their reckless strategy may have cost them the match against Kolkata Knight Riders. Having cleaned up his fellow Australian Travis Head with a peach of a delivery with his second ball, Mitchell Starc blew away the SRH top-order in his opening spell of 3-0-22-3. SRH lost four wickets inside the powerplay to be dismissed for a paltry 159, a target KKR shot down in 13.4 overs to storm into the Sunday's summit clash in Chennai. "It was a terrific performance, no question. Such an impressive display with both the bat and the ball. They took four wickets in the power play, and that's where the Sunrisers were pushed onto the back foot, really on the ropes. They couldn't recover from that," the former India captain told Star Sports Cricket Live. "There was a partnership of sorts, but to me, the approach of the SRH batters in those first six overs was puzzling." With Vaibhav Arora dismissing the in-form Abhishek Sharma in the next over, SRH's explosive opening pair were out for 13 runs. Gavaskar said after losing two key wickets, SRH's batters should have played more cautiously. Instead, they continued to play aggressively, which led to further losses and ultimately cost them the match. "When you've lost two wickets

and the two who have been scoring runs for you, a certain amount of caution is required. Sure, don't miss out on scoring opportunities, but don't look to throw your bat at everything. That's what we saw. "They lost those four wickets, and losing four top batters means you can't really expect numbers five, six, seven, eight, and nine to get you to 200. So, that is where they may have lost it. But full credit to Kolkata for the way they attacked and took advantage of that pitch as well," Gavaskar said. The former India opener was all praise for Venkatesh Iyer and emphasised his value as a versatile player, a top left-handed batter and a capable medium-pace bowler, even if he hasn't bowled much recently. Venkatesh struck a 28-ball 51 not out in an unbroken partnership with his skipper Shreyas Iyer (58 not out; 24b) to seal their eight-wicket win with 38 balls to spare. "He's been a very good player for such a long time. His first season, a couple of seasons ago, was outstanding. Then, as it happens to everybody, the second season is harder because opponents have a better idea of how to bowl to you," Gavaskar said. "But Venkatesh is the kind of cricketer you want in your team. He's a top batter, a left-handed batter, and he can bowl medium pace. We haven't seen him bowl much recently, but he's a very good medium-paced bowler. He might not always pick up wickets, but he can bowl those few overs that can make a significant difference," he added.






## My friends ensured I never slept hungry. That's why, I could nurture my acting dreams.

Acting requires rehearsing for long hours which can be tough, especially on an empty stomach. During my days of struggle, my friends ensured I didn't have to worry about food, else I wouldn't have made it as an actor. Nand Ghar too is committed to providing our children a chance at realizing their potential by looking after their health and nutritional needs.



Log on to [www.nandghar.org](http://www.nandghar.org) or scan the QR code to donate, volunteer or partner with us in this mission.



**अगर बचपन से पूछा क्याना क्याया? तो देश का कल बनाया**

नंद घर की पहल