

**6 WORLD**

- Putin begins his fifth term as president, more in control of Russia than ever
- Israeli forces seize Rafah border crossing in Gaza

**7 NATION**

- Uddhav does 'doglirajneeti', he is totally opposite to Balasaheb: Shinde
- Kejriwal fails to get immediate relief from SC in money laundering case

**HT BRIEFS**

**Atul casts vote**

**GUWAHATI:** Atul Bora from Dispur constituency, who had initially decided not to vote due to astrological advice, cast his vote at Bagharbari LP School at 3 pm. His decision to abstain from voting was due to the significance of Tuesday, a day he has lost family members on. However, after his supporters' insistence and on his marriage anniversary, Bora decided to vote. He talked to the media about his reasons for considering not to vote, including remembering his deceased family members and observing his marriage anniversary. He also mentioned seeking blessings from Lord Hanuman and his departed parents before voting.

**Road accident**

**CHAPAR:** In a harrowing turn of events, a tragic road accident unfolded in Salkocha, Chapar on Tuesday, claiming the life of one man and leaving another critically injured. The incident unfolded as both individuals were homeward bound after exercising their civic duty of casting votes in the ongoing election. Unfortunately, fate took a cruel turn as they traversed the road, with an overspeeding four-wheeler colliding with them with devastating force. The victim, identified as Venu Nath, tragically succumbed to his injuries at the scene, while the other individual sustained severe wounds, necessitating urgent medical attention. Swift action was taken, and the injured party was promptly transferred to Kokrajhar for medical treatment.

**Voter collapses**

**CHIRANG:** In a tragic incident in Assam's Chirang on Tuesday, a voter named Hussain Ali, aged 38, died at Polling Booth No. 35 Dangaigaon LP School within the Kokrajhar Lok Sabha constituency while casting his vote. Eyewitnesses reported a sudden onset of illness that led him to collapse and die on the spot. The exact cause of death remains undetermined, with locals suspecting a cardiac arrest.

**Over 74% polling in state; percentage to go up**

**Nearly 1,000 components of EVM sets replaced in Assam during 3<sup>rd</sup> phase polling**

**GUWAHATI, May 7:** Over 74 per cent of the 81.49 lakh voters exercised their franchise till 5 pm on Tuesday in four Lok Sabha constituencies in the third and final phase of elections in Assam, an official said.

Dhubri recorded the highest polling percentage at 79.70, followed by Barpeta at 76.20, Kokrajhar at 74.24 and Guwahati at 67.68 per cent, the lowest.

Overall voter turnout recorded till 5 pm in the four Lok Sabha seats was 74.86 per cent, the official said.



The turnout was expected to rise as people, who entered the polling stations before 5 pm, the closing time for voting, will be allowed to exercise their franchise.

There are 47 candidates in the fray in the final phase of Lok Sabha elections in the state.

Altogether 81,49,091 voters, including 40,48,436 women and 111 belonging to the third gender, are eligible to exercise their franchise in 9,516 polling stations.

Voting, which began at 7 pm, was slow in the initial hours due to

heavy rain in several parts of the constituencies but picked up as the day progressed.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma along with his wife Rinki Bhuyan Sarma and daughter Sukanya Sarma cast their votes at the Amingaon High School under the Barpeta constituency.

The prominent candidates in the fray are AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal, seeking a fourth successive term from Dhubri, and his rival Congress MLA Rakibul Hussain. Eight-time Asom Gana Parishad

MLA and former minister Phanibhushan Choudhury and his rivals CPI(M) legislator Manoranjan Talukdar and Congress candidate Deep Bayan from Barpeta are also contesting.

Former BTC Deputy leader Kampa Borgoyari of the Bodo Peoples' Front and his rivals - United People's Party, Liberal (UPPL) Joyanta Basumatary and Congress candidate Garjen Mushahry are fighting in Kokrajhar. Dhubri has the highest number of (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

**Voters will decide whether one who makes Pakistan happy should win in LS polls: BJP**

**NEW DELHI, May 7:** Voters will decide whether a leader who makes Pakistan happy should emerge victorious in the ongoing Lok Sabha election or the one who makes India strong, the ruling BJP said on Tuesday.



The remarks of Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) national general secretary Vinod Tawde came on a day when polling was underway in 93 Lok Sabha constituencies spread over 11 states and Union territories in the third phase of the parliamentary election.

"In view of the statements that are coming from Farooq Abdullah, Lalu Prasad and others, the people of the country would naturally think while casting their votes that whether a leader who makes Pakistan happy should win or the one who makes India strong," Tawde told a press conference at the party headquarters here.

"The BJP is against the provision of reservation in the Constitution. Hence, it wants to do away with both," Prasad told reporters in Patna. On the BJP's charge that if voted to power, the Congress, RJD and their allies would "steal" the quota in jobs and education for the Other Backward Classes (OBC) and give it to Muslims, Prasad quipped, "But should Muslims not get the benefit of (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Earlier in the day, Prasad, the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) president, said he is in favour of extending reservation benefits to Muslims and alleged that the BJP wants to do away with reservation by scrapping the Constitution.

**Modi govt neglected MP's Adivasi communities: Cong**

**NEW DELHI, May 7:** The Congress accused the BJP-led Centre on Tuesday of "neglecting" the Adivasi communities of Madhya Pradesh and alleged that the saffron party's allocation for Adivasis in the central budget has consistently fallen short of the 8.2-per cent target set by the NITI Aayog.

**Vote to protect democracy and Constitution: Rahul, Priyanka**

**NEW DELHI, May 7:** Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra urged people on Tuesday to vote in large numbers in the third phase of the ongoing Lok Sabha polls, asserting that this is an election to protect democracy and the Constitution.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh posed questions to Prime Minister Narendra Modi ahead of the latter's rallies in Madhya Pradesh. "Why has the BJP failed to improve rail connectivity in MP's tribal districts? Why are Adivasis unwelcome in 'Modi ka Parivar'? Why does the Modi sarkar continue to neglect migrant workers?" Ramesh asked on X. Elaborating on what he said were "jumla (rhetoric) details", the Congress leader said even after being in power for 10 years, the Modi government has "failed" to complete the Dahod-Indore and Chhota Udaipur-Dhar railway lines.

Voting is being held in 93 constituencies spread over 11 states and Union territories in the third phase of the parliamentary polls.

"These railway lines were sanctioned by the UPA government but ten years later, construction has not even begun. Better rail connectivity would bring prosperity to the relatively isolated tribal-dominated districts of Dhar and Jabhua in Madhya Pradesh but successive BJP governments in the state and at the Centre have neglected this project," he alleged.

In a post in Hindi on X, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said, "Today is the third phase of voting! I request all of you to come out in large numbers and vote to protect your rights."

Can the prime minister provide an explanation for the delay of more than 10 years in these crucial railway projects, he asked.

"Remember, this is not an ordinary election, it is an election to protect democracy and the Constitution of the country," the former Congress chief said.

"Is it attributable to his general callousness towards the Adivasi community?" Ramesh asked.

In a post in Hindi on X, Priyanka Gandhi said, "Dear people of the country, this election is an election to protect democracy and the Constitution (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

He also alleged that the Modi government has not just "neglected MP's Adivasi communities, they have actively terrorised them".

"The BJP's allocation for Adivasis in the central budget has consistently fallen short of the 8.2 per cent target set by the NITI Aayog in 2017. Their poll promise to allocate ₹ 3 lakh crore for tribal welfare in Madhya Pradesh remains unfulfilled," the former Union minister said. "After the PM's rally in Jabhua, BJP workers were seen (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

**BPF will win 2 LS seats in Assam, claims Hagrama Mohilary**

**KOKRAJHAR, May 7:** Bodoland People's Front chief Hagrama Mohilary on Tuesday claimed that his party will win at least two of the four Lok Sabha seats it is contesting.

after casting his vote.

BPF has fielded its MLA Durgadas Boro in Darrang-Udalguri seat and Kampa Borgoyari in the Kokrajhar constituency.

He also said that the party will maintain a "neutral stand" without joining the NDA or INDIA bloc after the results are declared.

Asked about the Kokrajhar seat, where voting was underway in the third phase, Mohilary said, "The BPF will win the election with a margin of over 2 lakh votes. I have heard that BPF is receiving huge support at all polling booths." He appealed to all people to come out and vote fearlessly in a free and fair and peaceful manner. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

"We had nominated candidates in four constituencies - Sonitpur, Darrang-Udalguri, Barpeta and Kokrajhar. Out of these, we will surely win the Darrang-Udalguri and Kokrajhar seats," Mohilary said

**MAC Avijit Kro calls for end to child labour amid abuse allegations**

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, May 7:** In response to disturbing reports of children allegedly being abused while working as domestic help in distant districts, Avijit Kro, member of the Autonomous Council (MAC) of Chinthong, has issued a stern warning against the practice.



Expressing grave concern over the welfare of children from remote areas of West Karbi Anglong, Kro emphasised the need to halt the exploitation immediately.

wards to work as domestic helpers elsewhere. He also pledged to ensure that minors from the Chinthong constituency would not be permitted to be taken away for such purposes.

"Effective immediately, I am issuing a strict warning to cease the practice of sending children to Nagaon, Roha, or Guwahati for domestic work. Any involvement in this exploitative system, be it by agents, parents, or families, will face severe consequences," Kro asserted.

The motivation behind this distressing trend lies in the financial struggles of families, who often resort to sending their children to

Highlighting the plight of these vulnerable children, Kro urged parents to refrain from sending their

work in exchange for the promise of education. However, this pursuit of education frequently leads to harrowing experiences, with many children falling victim to abuse at the hands of their employers. Tragically, Kro cited recent fatalities as a result of this exploitation.

**Vote for govt that will invest in infra, support farmers: Amit Shah**

**BENGALURU, May 7:** Union home minister Amit Shah on Tuesday appealed to voters in Karnataka to vote for a government that will continue to invest in infrastructure development of the state, support farmers and deliver justice to the poor.

Voting for the second phase of Lok Sabha polls in the state began in 14 constituencies at 7 am today and will end at 6 pm. Taking to 'X', Shah appealed to voters in Kannada.

"I appeal to the people to vote for the government that will continue to invest in infrastructure development of the state, support to farmers and justice for the poor, SCs, STs, OBCs and for the betterment of the state," he said. The first phase of polls in 14 constituencies of Karnataka on April 26 recorded a 69.56 per cent voter turnout.

The segments where polling is underway on Tuesday are: Chikkodi, Belgaum, Bagalkot, Bijapur, Gulbarga, Raichur, Bidar, Koppal, Bellary, Haveri, Dharwad, Uttara Kannada, Davangere and Shimoga.

A total of 227 candidates -- 206 men and 21 women -- are in the fray for the second phase covering the northern (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

**'It is for a better future for my child that I have voted today'**

**Women voters of Guwahati LS seat seek better future for kids, secure environment**

**GUWAHATI, May 7:** From aspiration of a better future for their children to the hope that the government will "work for the people" to appeal for a secure environment for office-goers, women voted with diverse issues in mind in Assam's Guwahati constituency on Tuesday, where two female candidates are locked in a direct fight.



As polling for the prestigious seat commenced along with three other constituencies in the third and final phase in the state, voters braved inclement weather to exercise their right of franchise.

10,01,200 are men and 58 are from the third gender.

while the Congress has fielded Mira Barthakur Goswami.

that I have voted today. We could not manage to rise much in life, but we do hope that we can give a good education to our son and the government will help us in it," Pushpa Boro, a voter at one of the five model-cum-all women polling stations, set up in Kendriya Vidyalaya, Khanapara, told PTI. This is the first time she is voting in a Lok Sabha election, and she came with her three-year-old son who had a nice time playing with the balloons which were used to decorate the polling station.

Sahitya Akademi awardee Anuradha Sarma Pujari, also a voter in the same polling station, said it is with the expectation of a better future that she cast her vote. "Everyone should come and vote as this is the least we can do for our country. We should vote as politically (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)


Women, who outnumber men by over 34,000 in terms of total voters in Guwahati, had their agenda in mind while choosing their representatives.

Out of the total 20,36,846 voters in Guwahati, 10,35,588 are women,

**Om Shanti ! Om Sadgati ! Om Shanti !**

**Date of Birth :**  
27/07/1961  
Lakhipur,  
[Goalpara]

**Date of Death :**  
08/05/2023  
Monday,  
[New-Delhi]



**MEENA NUNISA [Bablina]**

It's been a year since you left us. Everyday sweet memories of yours comes our way. Since you will never be forgotten, we pledge to you today. The hollowed space within our hearts is the, place, where you'll always stay. We still love you and deeply miss you though you are gone.

That, ten years ago, despite your best efforts, it was not possible to cure, Bhaswati [Lovely], our second daughter, of the infection she had contracted.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of April, 2014 we bid farewell to her as she left for another world.

In the process of caring for her, you too, unfortunately, picked up the disease, and [you] battled the same for ten years, finally losing out on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 2023.

And, you must have reunited with Bhaswati [Lovely] in the other world. Do stay with her always and give her all the possible love. And that, though you completed the tenure of your successful service on the 29<sup>th</sup> of February, 2020, but you could enjoy the benefits of pension only for three short years We are getting your dues [Pension] as "Family Pension".

Finally, today on Wednesday the 8<sup>th</sup> of May, your first death anniversary, we remember you with tearful eyes and beseech the Almighty to grant your soul, everlasting peace.

**Bereaved family members -**  
**Dr. Motilal Nunisa (Husband)**  
Ms. MAINODI [Babli] [Eldest daughter]

Ms. PONAXI [Lolo] [Youngest daughter]

**Brothers - in - law :**  
1. Pradeep Nunisa, DTO [Retd]  
2. Dr.Ruplal Nunisa, Addl.DHS, Assam  
3. Dr.Bishnu Ram Nunisa  
4. Dr.Dhruba Hojai, DHS [Retd], Assam

**Sisters - in - laws :**  
1. Smti. Usha [Nunisa] Hojai  
2. Smti. Alo [Nunisa] Thaosen  
3. Smti. Jayanti [Hojai] Nunisa, IAS  
4. Smti. Prabhati [Thaosen] Nunisa, IAS  
5. Dr. Ritu [Thaosen], Nunisa  
6. Smit. Anima [Thaosen] Nunisa,

**And all Nephews and Nieces -**  
Thairingdao Jaymala, Tanushree [Nathum], Donlikdi [Piky], Ronlikdi [Pinky], Priyashree [Jimju], Bangham [Mao], Dr.Ringlikdi [Nicky], Chiranjeev [Bonny], Ringsmaid, Shivraj [Veer], Repshodao [Tintin], Ringdao, Jushringdso !

# Household savings dip over ₹ 9 lakh cr in 3 years

## ₹ 14.16 lakh cr in 2022-23

**NEW DELHI, May 7:** Net household savings declined sharply by ₹ 9 lakh crore to ₹ 14.16 lakh crore in three years to 2022-23, according to the latest National Account Statistics 2024 of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

The net household savings peaked at ₹ 23.29 lakh crore in 2020-21. These have been on the decline since then, the data showed.

The net household savings declined to ₹ 17.12 lakh crore in 2021-22 and dipped further to a five-year low of ₹ 14.16 lakh crore in 2022-23.

The previous low of net household savings was ₹ 13.05 lakh crore in 2017-18 which increased



to ₹ 14.92 lakh crore in 2018-19 and ₹ 15.49 lakh crore in 2019-20. The data showed that the invest-

ment in mutual funds almost tripled to ₹ 1.79 lakh crore in 2022-23 in three years from ₹ 64,084

crore in 2020-21. It was ₹ 1.6 lakh crore in 2021-22.

The household investment in shares and debentures almost doubled to ₹ 2.06 lakh crore in 2022-23 from ₹ 1.07 lakh crore in three years from 2020-21. It was ₹ 2.14 lakh crore in 2021-22.

Bank advances (loans) to households have also doubled in three years to ₹ 11.88 lakh crore in 2022-23 from ₹ 6.05 lakh crore in 2020-21. It was ₹ 7.69 lakh crore in 2021-22.

Loans to households by financial corporations and non-banking financial corporations increased also fourfold to ₹ 3.33 lakh crore in 2022-23 from ₹ 93,723 crore in 2020-21. It was ₹ 1.92 lakh crore in 2021-22. (PTI)

## Senco Gold and Diamonds announces Bangle festival

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 7:** The Senco Gold and Diamonds has announced the launch of its new Bangle Festival and offers to mark the auspicious occasion of Akshaya Tritiya, the festival that is celebrated with great devotion across Indian dias an auspicious time to buy gold and invest in other precious metals to bring home, good luck & prosperity.

Senco Gold & Diamonds is giving discounts to its esteemed customers from April 8-May 12 of upto 60% in making charges on Diamond Jewellery & Polki Jewellery and upto 5% discount on Diamond Value pan India. The Brand is also giving upto 25% discount on making charges and competitive gold rate offers.

As a part of this offer, customers can choose from exclusive jewellery of more than 2000+ designs, and new products in everyday wear starting from ₹ 15,000-₹ 2,00,000, specially crafted by Senco Gold & Diamonds' skilled karigars to celebrate Bangle Festival; designs starting from as low as ₹ 8,000 matching every budget. For more details of discounts please visit us at <https://sencogoldanddiamonds.com/> With its vast collection of artistic bangles and bracelets, Senco Gold&Diamonds takes pride in celebrating the hands that create good fortune through their intricate karigari, adding an extra touch of prosperity to those who adorn them.

Suvankar Sen (MD & CEO, Senco Gold & Diamonds) said, "The falling gold price by ₹ 150 per gram from the high 6-7 days back has brought about renewed interest amongst consumers before Akshaya Tritiya. It's an auspicious occasion to buy Gold & Indian Consumers will want to continue the tradition and bring in prosperity and abundance by buying gold irrespective of the increased prices. The banking crisis in USA, geopolitical tension and fed rates will keep everyone on the tenterhooks and price will continue to look on upside due to uncertainties. We introduced a price guarantee scheme for six months under the Marigold scheme, which the industry offers only up to one month until Akshaya Tritiya, where a customer books gold and gets immunity from price rise. We are giving the customers Flexi Gold Offer, where customer will get the price on the day when they gave money for booking the gold jewellery and if prices fall, they get to buy more gold at then prevailing price".

## Equity markets end lower dragged by HDFC Bank, Reliance, ICICI Bank

**MUMBAI, May 7:** Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty declined on Tuesday dragged by HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries and ICICI Bank amid concerns over rich valuation of equities.

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

The NSE Nifty declined 140.20 points or 0.62 per cent to 22,302.50.

From the Sensex basket, Power Grid, IndusInd Bank, Tata Motors, JSW Steel, NTPC, HCL Technologies, Tata Steel, ICICI Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Axis Bank, HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries were among the major laggards.

Among the gainers, Hindustan Unilever climbed over 5 per cent. Tech Mahindra, Nestle, ITC, Wipro, Tata Consultancy Services and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the other major gainers.

"Domestic benchmark indices opened higher on Tuesday, aided by favourable global clues. However, after some initial jitters, the market saw massive profit-booking," said Hrishikesh Yedve, AVP Technical and Derivatives Research, Asit C. Mehta Investment Intermediates Ltd.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined 1.90 per cent and smallcap index dipped 1.65 per cent. Among the indices, realty dropped 3.41 per

## Gold climbs ₹ 200; silver jumps ₹ 700

**NEW DELHI, May 7:** Extending gains for second straight session, gold prices on Tuesday climbed by ₹ 200 to ₹ 72,450 per 10 grams in the national capital in line with firm trends in the global markets, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous session, the precious metal had closed at ₹ 72,250 per 10 grams.

Silver prices also jumped by ₹ 700 to ₹ 85,000 per kg. It had settled at ₹ 84,300 per kg in the previous session. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at ₹ 72,450 per 10 grams, up by ₹ 200, taking positive cues from the overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,319 per ounce, up by USD 7 from the previous close.

"Gold moved higher on indications that the US Federal Reserve could cut interest rates this year. The dovish remarks from the US policymakers have boosted hopes for the interest rate cuts. "Furthermore, rising geopolitical concerns in the Middle East also provided support for gold. Israel's rejection of a Hamas-backed cease-fire proposal to end the fighting in Gaza sparked the demand for safe haven assets," Gandhi said.

Silver was also marginally up at USD 27.25 per ounce. It had ended at USD 27.05 per ounce in the previous session.

"Gold prices are stuck in a range after gaining 1 per cent on Monday, supported by a weaker US dollar after the recent US data which have shown signs of slowdown in the economic activity, leading to rising bets for an early rate cut by the US Fed," Pranav Mer, VP - Research (Commodity & Currency) at BlinkX and JM Financial, said. (PTI)



cent, utilities (2.85 per cent), commodities (2.18 per cent), consumer discretionary (1.73 per cent) and telecommunication (1.43 per cent).

IT and tech were the gainers.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Shanghai settled with gains while Hong Kong ended lower. European markets were trading higher. Wall Street ended in the green on Monday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.23 per cent to USD 83.51 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 3,668.84 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

The BSE benchmark edged up 17.39 points or 0.02 per cent to settle at 73,895.54 on Monday. The NSE Nifty declined 33.15 points or 0.15 per cent to 22,442.70. (PTI)

## Indian Bank reports 55% growth in Q4 net

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 7:** Indian Bank Ltd registered a 55 per cent rise in its fourth-quarter (Q4 FY24) profit, at ₹ 2,247 crore, from ₹ 1,447 crore in the year-ago period.

The state-owned lender's net interest income increased by 9 per cent (YoY) to ₹ 6,015 crore in Q4 FY24 as against ₹ 5,508 crore in the corresponding period last year. Return on assets were up by 33 basis points (bps) to 1.15 per cent in March 2024 from 0.82 per cent in March 2023. Return on equity ascended by 358 bps to 19.06 per cent in Q4 FY24 from 15.48 per cent in March 2023. Bank's Global Business reached ₹12.22 lakh Cr, up by 12% YoY. Gross advances increased by 13 per cent (YoY) to ₹ 5,33,773 crore in March 2024. During the quarter under review, total deposits increased by 11 per cent YoY and reached to ₹ 6,88,000 crore. CASA deposit grew by 8 per cent, savings deposit by 7 per cent and current deposit by 9 per cent (YoY). Gross non-performing asset decreased by 200 bps YoY to 3.95 per cent in Mar '24 and net NPA reduced by 47 bps to 0.43 per cent. "Slippage ratio contained to 1.11 per cent in Mar '24 in comparison to 2.43 per cent in Mar '23, i.e improvement of 132 bps YoY," the lender mentioned. "Capital adequacy ratio stood at 16.44 per cent. CET-I improved by 63 bps YoY to 13.52 per cent. Tier I Capital improved by 55 bps YoY to 14.03 per cent," it further stated. The bank's Board of directors recommended a dividend of ₹ 12 per equity share for FY24, subject to requisite approvals.

The Bank has 5847 domestic branches (including 3 DBUs), out of which 1985 are Rural, 1530 are Semi-Urban, 1174 are Urban & 1158 are in Metro category. The Bank has 3 overseas branches & 1 IBU. The Bank has 4937ATMs & BNAs and 11297number of BCs.

## Rupee settles higher by 1 paise at 83.51 against US dollar

**MUMBAI, May 7:** The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and settled higher by 1 paise at 83.51 against the US dollar on Tuesday, amid a negative trend in domestic equities and strong dollar demand.

Forex traders said elevated significant foreign fund outflows in the international market dented investors' sentiments.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.48 against the greenback. The unit hit an intra-day high of 83.47 and a low of 83.52 against the greenback.

The domestic unit finally settled at 83.51 (provisional) against the dollar, 1 paise higher than its previous close. On Monday, the rupee settled 7 paise lower at 83.52 against the US dollar.

The Indian rupee traded almost flat on weak domestic markets and positive US Dollar. FII outflows also weighed on the rupee, said Anuj Choudhary Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

However, a soft tone in crude oil prices cushioned the downside. The US Dollar gained on weak Asian currencies after the Australian Dollar fell amid a less-hawkish-than-expected tone of the Reserve Bank of

Australia (RBA).

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on weak domestic markets and positive dollar amid geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.

"However, softness in crude oil prices and positive European and Asian markets may support the rupee at lower levels. Any intervention by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may also support the domestic currency. USDINR spot price is expected to trade in a range of ₹ 83.30 to ₹ 83.75," Choudhary added.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, fell 0.10 per cent to USD 83.25 per barrel.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was at 105.26, higher by 0.20 per cent.

On the domestic equity market front, Sensex declined 383.69 points, or 0.52 per cent, to settle at 73,511.85 points. The Nifty fell 140.20 points, or 0.62 per cent, to close at 22,302.50 points.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Monday, as they offloaded shares worth ₹ 2,168.75 crore, according to exchange data. (PTI)

## INOX Air Products to set up 190-tonne green hydrogen project in Rajasthan

**New Delhi, May 7:** INOX Air Products on Tuesday said it will set up its first green hydrogen project with an annual capacity of 190 tonnes at Chittorgarh in Rajasthan.

The clean energy will be supplied to Asahi India Glass Limited (AIS) under a 20-year offtake agreement, the company said in a statement.

"This will be India's first-ever green hydrogen plant for the float glass industry. The plant will have a capacity to generate up to 190 tonne green hydrogen per annum through the electrolysis process,"

it said.

The project will be powered by solar energy. INOX aims to commission the project by July 2024.

The project is expected to reduce carbon emissions by around 1,250 metric tonnes (MT) annually and 25,000 MT over the 20-year period.

Siddharth Jain, Managing Director of INOX Air Products, stated, "We are proud to begin our green hydrogen journey as we partner AIS for their Chittorgarh facility, and giving shape to our first green hydrogen plant. Under the leader-

ship of PM Modi, our country has laid tremendous focus on green economy, supported by a comprehensive National Green Hydrogen Mission, and an ambition to make India net-zero by 2070."

The company did not disclose any financial details related to the project.

Mumbai-based INOX Air Products is the largest manufacturer of industrial and medical gases in India. It has a manufacturing capacity of 3,400 tonnes per day (TPD) of liquid gases delivered from 47 operating locations. (PTI)

*Contd. from Page 1...*

## Over 74% polling in state;

electors at 26,63,987, while Kokrajhar has the lowest at 14,94,404 in this phase.

Meanwhile, a total of 965 Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) components -- control units, VVPATs and ballot units -- were replaced due to malfunctioning in the third and last phase of polling across the four Lok Sabha seats in Assam on Tuesday, officials said. In several cases, the components were replaced as the complete EVM set, while it was changed in parts in most of the cases after snags were detected, a senior official of the Election Department told PTI on condition of anonymity.

Several of these glitches were noticed during the mock polling, which started 90 minutes before the commencement of the actual voting, and those machines were replaced accordingly, he added.

An EVM has three components -- Control Unit (CU), Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) and Ballot Unit (BU). "In the four constituencies, 259 CUs, 447 VVPATs and 259 BUs were replaced in total from different machines," the official said. Out of these, 147 CUs, 210 VVPATs and 147 BUs were replaced during the mock poll after they malfunctioned, the official said. "During the actual poll, 112 CUs, 237 VVPATs and 112 BUs were changed. After replacing the machines, the polling continued smoothly," he added. As per the data compiled from all the constituencies, the highest 280 units of the three components combined together were replaced in Dhubri, followed by 265 units in Barpeta, 226 units in Guwahati and 194 units in Kokrajhar. (PTI)

## Voters will decide whether

reservation?" National Conference president Abdullah has said dialogue is the only way to resolve issues between India and Pakistan as any confrontation will have serious consequences for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Reacting to a recent statement of defence minister Rajnath Singh on taking back Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), the former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister on Sunday said no one is going to stop him.

"Let the defence minister do it. Who is going to stop him? In any case, they will not ask us. But let them remember this that they (Pakistan) are not wearing bangles, they also have an atom bomb. The unfortunate part is that the atom bomb will fall on us," he said. In an exclusive interview with PTI, Singh said India will never give up its claim on PoK but it will not have to capture it with force because the people of the region, on their own, would want to be part of the country after seeing the development in Kashmir. Abdullah also questioned the Centre's policy of holding talks with China but not with Pakistan. (PTI)

## BPF will win 2 LS

When asked if BPF will join any alliance post-poll, Mohilary said, "We will not join the NDA or INDIA after winning the polls. We have not held discussions with any parties. We have contested elections alone and we will maintain our neutral stand."

He claimed the BJP and its ally UPPL levelled a lot of allegations against BPF but all were without any basis. "UPPL filed a lot of complaints with the EC, but none have any proof," Mohilary said. (PTI)

## Modi govt neglected MP's

brutally beating an Adivasi youth in Betul. And last year, a disturbing video had gone viral that showed a BJP leader urinating on an Adivasi man in public," Ramesh said. It is clear that there is no space for the Adivasi community in "Modi Ka Parivar", he added. The Congress is committed to tribal welfare and has guaranteed a legal status to the SC-ST sub-plan, which would require the Centre to meet the 8.2-per cent budget target, Ramesh said. "Will the PM ever own up to his government's mistakes and truly commit himself to Adivasi welfare?" he asked. Ramesh further alleged that the Modi government has often overlooked the plight of India's migrant workers. "This disregard was especially evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when migrant workers faced immense hardships, travelling vast distances to reach their homes. Now, as voting day approaches in Khargone scheduled for Phase 4, there is a concern that approximately 20,000 migrant workers from this Lok Sabha constituency may be unable to cast their votes," he said.

The Congress's "Nyay Patra" (Lok Sabha poll manifesto) talks about bringing laws to regulate the employment of migrant workers and safeguard their fundamental legal rights, Ramesh said. "Has the BJP done anything to improve the lives of migrant workers? Do they have any plans to help migrant workers exercise their right to vote?" he asked while urging the prime minister to break his "silence" on these issues. (PTI)

## Vote to protect democracy and

of the country. This is an election to defeat historic unemployment, rampant inflation, institutional corruption and economic crisis." "Every single vote is important. Vote after giving it a deep thought and in large numbers, using your discretion. Vote for the future of you and your children," the Congress general secretary said.

More than 1,300 candidates, including around 120 women, are in the fray in the third phase of the election. As many as 17.24 crore people, including 8.39 crore women, are eligible to vote in this phase and 1.85 lakh polling stations manned by 18.5 lakh officials have been set up. (PTI)

## MAC Avijit Kro calls

awareness among parents and communities to curb the menace of child labor. In an effort to incentivise local education, Kro highlighted ongoing improvements in village schools, including primary, middle, and high schools. Additionally, plans for the establishment of a Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), a residential girls' secondary school in Chinthong, are underway. Kro also noted infrastructure enhancements at Chinthong High School as part of broader efforts to promote education within the community.

## Vote for govt that will invest

districts of the state where more than 2.59 crore voters are eligible to exercise their franchise in 28,269 polling stations. (PTI)

## Women voters of Guwahati LS

conscious citizens. We expect the new government will work for a better country and more development," the senior journalist and author added.

Nilufar Rahman, a school teacher, hoped for a more secure environment for office-goers like her and with two women candidates in the fray, she was optimistic that they would be considerate of their problems.

"As working women, we face many difficulties, including security issues, proper public transport and lack of other facilities. I hope the new MP will take up these matters," Rahman said before getting clicked at the polling station's selfie point. Octogenarian Suparna Das sounded less enthusiastic about the government addressing the people's problems but was out in the rain to cast her vote.

"I have always voted, as far as possible. There has been no change in our conditions, whoever may have formed the government. But I still feel it is my duty and I fulfil it. I do hope the government will work for the people," Das, who was accompanied by her nephew, added. (PTI)

## Hyundai's CSR wing launches initiative to preserve tribal and cultural heritage

### Creating livelihood opportunities for the artists and contributing to their social wellbeing

**CHENNAI, May 7:** Hyundai Motor India Foundation, the corporate social responsibility (CSR) division of automaker Hyundai, has launched 'Progress for Humanity' initiative, aimed at social-economic development of tribal communities and preserving cultural heritage among others.

Hyundai Motor India Foundation said it advocates supporting indigenous communities, conservation of cultural heritage and safeguarding traditions for future generations.

In a statement on Tuesday, the foundation said it has taken up dedicated efforts to preserve cultural heritage including 'Kattakuttu Sangam' -- a rural theatre form of Tamil Nadu, 'Sohrai' wall art of West Bengal, 'Ottam Thullal'

-- a performance art of Kerala, among others.

These initiatives have helped preserve India's rich culture, while creating livelihood opportunities for the artists and contributing to their social wellbeing, the statement said.

Hyundai Motor India Associate vice-president and vertical head - corporate affairs, Puneet Anand said, "Through our efforts towards upliftment of tribal communities and preservation of India's rich cultural heritage, Hyundai Motor India Foundation remains steadfast in its commitment to social responsibility."

The foundation was involved in the upliftment of tribal communities such as the Chenchu Tribe in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh and Irula



Tribe in Irungattukottai in Tamil Nadu.

"By integrating the members of the Chenchu and Irula tribes into afforestation efforts and assigning them as custodians, we

not only contribute to their upliftment, and economic and social wellbeing, but also strive to empower them to showcase their inherent talent and preserve their traditions," he said. (PTI)

## 47 candidates, including 6 women, in fray in four Lok Sabha constituencies Long queues outside polling booths in Assam amid drizzles

**GUWAHATI, May 7:** People lined up in large numbers since early morning across the four Lok Sabha constituencies in Assam where voting was underway in the third phase on Tuesday.

People used all modes of transport, including boats, to reach the polling stations across Guwahati, Barpeta, Dhubri and Kokrajhar constituencies to exercise their democratic franchise amid drizzles.

"Today is Phase 3 of the Lok Sabha polls. I am sure all those who are part of the 3rd phase will strengthen our democracy by exercising their franchise... The weather in Assam is perfect for celebrating the festival of democracy," Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said in a series of posts on X.

In the early hours, it seemed that the rain might play spoilsport, but people defied the odds and came out in large numbers.

Nagendra Nath Das, an 85-year-old retired school teacher, went to cast his vote at a booth in Daisingari village of Barpeta constituency along with his wife, son and daughter-in-law who was carrying her three-month-old baby in her arms.

"I have never missed voting and always ensured that my entire family casts their



votes. It is raining lightly now, but there is a likelihood of heavy downpours during the day. So, we decided to vote early," he told PTI.

Gaurav Goswami, a government officer, also cast his vote along with his wife and parents at the Housing Colony polling station in Guwahati in the morning.

"Last night, I sent a message to our family and college groups on WhatsApp appealing to cast our votes. I requested all not to miss this opportunity as it is the

only option we have with us to decide about our future," he said.

In Dhubri, hundreds of people travelled in country-made machine boats to reach their polling stations. While most came to the mainland from chars or riverine islands, some people had their booths in the chars as well.

"I waited for a boat since 6 am but could board one only at 7.30 am. There are very few boats compared to the large number of people coming out to vote," said Rahmat Ali from Mankachar.

Similar is the situation witnessed in char areas of Barpeta district with a large number of people opting for a boat ride to cast their votes.

"I reached the voting centre at 7 am. I am very excited to vote as it is my first time. I am voting for my future and to safeguard the Indian Constitution," 19-year-old Anowara Rahman said while standing in the queue at a voting centre located in a char.

A total of 81,49,091 people, including 41,00,544 men, 40,48,436 women and 111 persons of third gender, are eligible to vote in the third phase. 47 candidates, including six women, are in the fray in the four constituencies. (PTI)

## Youth injured in police firing in Jorhat

**HT Correspondent**

**JORHAT, May 7:** A youth has been injured after he had been reportedly shot by the police in Jorhat. The injured youth has been identified as Kusha Kutum of Randhanijan village on the outskirts of Jorhat. Kutum had been wanted in a water pump theft case and was injured when police personnel reportedly shot him while apprehending him on Monday.

According to sources, Kutum was fired upon by a police team that had gone to nab him from his house at Randhanijan after he allegedly tried to flee. He sustained injury in jury on the upper part of his body and was admitted to the Jorhat Medical College and Hospital.

Meanwhile, on Tuesday Kutum was shifted to the Assam Medical College and Hospital in Dibrugarh for advanced medical treatment.

## Lawyer arrested for fraud in Jorhat

**HT Correspondent**

**JORHAT, May 7:** A lawyer has been arrested by the police on charges of fraudulently producing an order in the name of the member of the Motor Accidents Claims Tribunal (MACT), Jorhat, awarding compensation to an accident victim's next of kin.

According to sources, Parthajyoti Gogoi of Mariani in the district has been arrested by the Jorhat police, who has registered under sections 120 B, 420, 468, and 471 of the IPC following an FIR lodged last week by Shantanu Khound, court administrative officer (Sheristadar) of the court of the Jorhat district and sessions judge. Khound alleged that Gogoi fraudulently made an order of paying ₹ 10.29 lakh in the name of MACT member, who is also the district and sessions judge.

The FIR alleged that the accused forged the signature of the court administrative officer by showing that he was certifying the order of awarding compensation.

After the victim failed to get the compensation amount and the matter came to the notice of the court of the district and sessions judge, the complaint was lodged against the lawyer at the Jorhat Police Station. It may be mentioned that the court order of judicial remand is yet to be passed till the filing of this report.

## Arms and ammunition seized at Manipur-Myanmar border

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 7:** The Indian Army in conjunction with the Manipur Police launched a joint operation with the recovery of a cache of warlike weapons including arms, ammunition, and explosives while a joint team of security forces disposed of firearms seized at the Manipur-Myanmar border, officials said on Tuesday.

Acting on specific intelligence of the presence of arms and ammunition in the fringe areas of Kangpokpi districts, the Indian Army and Manipur Police launched a joint operation. It recovered one 9 mm carbine, one 9 mm pistol, five grenades, ammunition, and warlike stores on Monday.

The recovered items have been handed over to Manipur Police, officials said.

Meanwhile, a cache of warlike stores including one .38 pistol with one magazine and two rounds, 10 improvised explosive devices (IEDs), three 36 HE hand grenades, 85 rounds of carbine, and 10 rounds of AK rifle were disposed of near the Key Location Point (KLP) post of Assam Rifles at Moreh, Manipur-Myanmar border on Monday, officials said on Tuesday.

These items were recovered from a sack concealed under a water tank on the roof of an abandoned building in the vicinity of Elora Hotel, Moreh on March 1, 2024.

## NFR holds steady growth in freight unloading during April

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 7:** The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) is continuously registering a steady growth in freight unloading.

1130 freight carrying rakes have been unloaded by the NFR during the month of April this year. The NFR has transported goods like FCI rice, sugar, salt, edible oil, food grains, fertilizer, cement, coal, vegetables, auto, tank and other items during the month and unloaded them in different goods sheds within its jurisdiction.

During the month of April, a total of 540 rakes of freight carrying trains were unloaded in the state out of which 335 were loaded with essential commodities. 25 rakes in Tripura, 18 rakes in Nagaland, nine rakes in Arunachal Pradesh, three rakes in Manipur and five rakes in Mizoram were unloaded during the month. Moreover, 76 freight rakes in West Bengal and 69 freight rakes in Bihar were also unloaded during the month of April within the jurisdiction of NFR.

Essential and other commodities are being transported regularly not only to meet the essential requirements of common people, but also to keep the local economic activity of the region moving and growing.

Advanced terminal handling facilities and introduction of more goods sheds have made the task of unloading more convenient for customers and other stakeholders to unload and clear inward rakes within a limited time frame. Continuous monitoring at all levels has also resulted in reduction of turnaround time and has increased unloading efficiency.

## Snapping of goods train services worry Tripura

**NFR seeks few more days for restoration**

**AGARTALA, May 7:** Snapping of goods train services due to a derailment in Assam's Dima Hasao district has become a cause of concern for the Tripura government, while the North East Frontier Railway has sought a "few more days" for restoration.

Goods train services to Tripura have been snapped since April 26 due to derailment of a goods train in Jatinga area of Assam, causing a shortage of goods in the northeastern state.



To tide over the situation, the Tripura government has already imposed restrictions on the sale of fuel as stock continues to remain low.

"Goods train services have not been restored despite all-out efforts by the NFR. We will take up the issue at the highest level," Tripura Transport Secretary UK Chakma told PTI.

The NFR, which had earlier assured of restoration of services by May 7, however, failed to meet the deadline and sought three more days.

NFR CPRO Sabyasachi Dey said, "Over 300 workers have been engaged in restoration work at Jatinga for the past few days. There is no disruption in passenger train services but good train services have been affected due to derailment of a goods train on April 26. We have sought time to restore the service at the earliest."

With the supply of foodgrains affected due to the disruption in goods train services, Tripura Additional Secretary for Food and Civil Supplies, Nirmal Adhikari, on Monday held a meeting with the representatives of Tripura Merchants' Association (TMA) and Tripura Wholesale Grocery Merchants' Association (TWGMA) to review the situation.

"There is no need to panic as the state has food stock for around a month. The meeting was aimed at reviewing the situation in the wake of disruption in goods train services to the state. We requested the merchants to continue procuring essential items, including foodgrains, by road till the train services were restored," an official said. (PTI)

## Operations suspended at Makum Motors; fuel dispenser dispenses water

**HT Correspondent**

**MARGHERITA, May 7:** Operations have been temporarily suspended at Makum Motors in Ledo after the fuel dispenser in the petrol pump allegedly dispensed water instead of petrol.

The driver of a Wagon r bearing the registration number 'AS 04 N 5018' had reportedly filled its fuel tank at Makum Motors on Monday night. However, the vehicle abruptly halted after just travelling three kilometres.

Upon inspection, the owner of the vehicle was startled to find water instead of the fuel in the tank of the vehicle.

Meanwhile, a delegation led by Kanchan Borah, general secretary of the Asom Jatiyotabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad's (AJYCP) Tinsukia district committee arrived on the spot. Members of the students' organisation lodged a written complaint at the Ledo Police Outpost.

In response to the situation, operations at Makum Motors have been temporarily halted.

"The tank of my vehicle was refilled at Makum Motors on April 30. However, the vehicle suddenly broke down just after travelling for three kilometres. When we got the car checked, the mechanic informed us that the tank was filled with water instead of petrol. I have taken the sample of the water in the fuel tank and showed it to the staff at the petrol pump," said the owner of the WagonR.

## Cannabis recovered from Agartala Railway station, two held

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 7:** In a significant breakthrough, the Agartala Government Railway Police (GRP) and Railway Protection Force (RPF) collaborated on Sunday night to apprehend two individuals involved in ganja smuggling at the Agartala railway station.

Acting swiftly on a tip-off, law enforcement officials conducted a joint raid, resulting in the arrest of Dipak Kumar and Roshan Roy.

During the operation, authorities seized a substantial quantity of contraband, with 61 kilograms of dry ganja recovered from the apprehended smugglers.

Further investigation revealed that the arrested individuals were transporting the illegal substance via train from Agartala to Bihar.

## Nearly 78% voters' turnout in Kokrajhar LS constituency

**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, May 7:** The third phase polling of the Lok Sabha elections in the Kokrajhar Lok Sabha constituency was conducted on Tuesday in a peaceful manner.

Nearly 78 per cent polling was reported in the Kokrajhar Lok Sabha constituency, which covers nine Legislative Assembly constituencies till 5 pm, the returning officer of the Kokrajhar Lok Sabha constituency and district commissioner, Pradeep Kumar Dwivedi stated.

However, voters' turnout may go up as voters in many polling stations in remote areas were still casting their votes till the filing of this report.

Voting began late in some polling stations due to complaints of EVM glitches, which were later repaired.

As per official update up till 5 pm the voters' turnout in the three Assembly segments under Kokrajhar HPC, namely Kokrajhar LAC is 74.67 per cent, Baukhangri LAC is 76.16 per cent and Dotma LAC is 77.40 per cent.

Assam cabinet minister, Urkhao Gwra Brahma cast his vote at Chalani Batabari LP School PS in Dotma LAC, Kokrajhar MLA, Lawrence Islyary cast his vote at the Gaurang School Polling Station in Kokrajhar LAC, Congress candi-



date Gorjun Mashary cast his vote at the Katigacha LP school PS in Baukhangri LAC, while BPF president Hagrama Mohilary cast his vote at Debagaon LP School in Kokrajhar LAC.

UPPL candidate, supported by NDA alliance, Joyanta Basumatary cast his vote at the Thangabari LP School polling centre in the early morning at Sidli Chirang LAC.

Meanwhile, police arrested a BPF supporter from Patharghat area under Kokrajhar Police Station for allegedly asking voters to cast their vote in favour of BPF during poll time.

On the other hand, a group of alleged miscreants have this afternoon attacked some BPF supporters near BPF central office along the JD Road. As a result, the cameraman of a private news channel sustained minor injuries.

Police rushed to the spot and no any major incident has been reported till now.

The chief executive member of Bodoland Territorial Region and UPPL president, Pramod Boro has expressed his confidence that the NDA alliance candidate for Kokrajhar Lok Sabha constituency, Joyanta Basumatary would win the elections with a huge margin of votes.

NDA candidate, Joyanta Basumatary said that he was confident of winning in the Lok Sabha polls.

Minister Brahma said that people have cast their votes in favour of NDA alliance candidate.

"This time the polling environment was very good and people have cast their votes in a smooth manner. The election procedures have been conducted in an efficient manner", said a voter in Kokrajhar.

## Hailstorm affects 962 people in Manipur

### Relief camps in Thoubal district housing those affected



**IMPHAL, May 7:** As many as 962 people of 237 families affected by recent violent hailstorm in Manipur are taking shelter in 12 relief camps opened by the district administration of Thoubal district.

Addressing a press conference on Tuesday, deputy commissioner of Thoubal, Ahanthem Subash said that the district administration had swung into action to provide relief to the people affected by the recent violent hailstorm and thunderstorm that lashed in the district on May 5.

While putting the preliminary report of damaging over 800 dwelling houses in the district, the DC said

that the extent of damage of dwelling houses in the district (Thoubal) might have been much more as complaints of damage of houses continued to receive besides conducting field visits by the officials of the district administration to assess the damage.

He said that the district administration has so far opened 12 relief camps while asserting that a total of 962 people, mostly women and children of 237 families are taking shelter in the camps.

Besides, many people are also taking refuge at relief camps opened by local clubs and civil society organisations in their respective areas and

the district administration is providing relief materials to the affected people through local voluntary organisations and gram panchayat pradhans and members, he said.

As per an official report, the violent hailstorm and thunderstorm that lashed across the state on Sunday has ravaged more than 15,000 houses with the largest number of damages in Imphal West, Imphal East and Bishnupur districts followed by Thoubal district.

As per the preliminary report, as many as 6053 dwelling houses were ravaged in Imphal West, 5600 houses in Imphal East, 1171 in Bishnupur and over 800 houses in Thoubal district.

It added that over 120 houses in Kakching district, 200 in Ukhrul district, 130 in Tamenglong district, 120 in Noney district, 292 in Kangpokpi district, 540 in Churachandpur district, 100 in Kamjong district, 16 in Chandel district and 275 in Tengnoupal district were also damaged or destroyed by the violent hailstorm and thunderstorm. (NNV)

## 33 schools in Wokha declared tobacco-free

**Efforts are being made to ensure that the remaining schools are declared tobacco-free very shortly**

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, May 7:** A total of 33 schools that government high schools, government middle schools and government primary schools in Wokha district were declared tobacco-free.

The declaration was made by Wokha chief medical officer Dr Zuben Kikon at the quarterly meeting of the district-level coordination committee and district-level enforcement squad of the National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP) at Wokha deputy commissioner's conference hall on Monday, an official release said on Tuesday.

Sr. dental surgeon and district nodal officer, NTCP, Dr Chenithung Yanthan while presenting the NTCP quarterly report said under Wokha district, there are 191 schools of 103 schools have



already been declared tobacco-free while 88 schools are yet to be declared tobacco-free.

He said efforts are being made

to ensure that the remaining schools are declared tobacco-free very shortly.

Yanthan also informed that out

of 65 health centres in the district, 50 health centres have already been declared tobacco-free. He added that five villages under the district have also been declared tobacco-free.

Yanthan said counselling is also being given to clients to quit the use of tobacco products and added that pharmacological supports are given to them.

Chairing the meeting, Wokha SDO (C) Nuhuta Tunyi SDO (C) asked all the stakeholders to put in concentrated efforts to achieve the targets of the various activities under the NTCP to reduce the use of tobacco.

He also asked the officials to undertake intensive awareness campaigns and sensitisation programmes to create awareness among the public about the harmful effects of tobacco consumption.

## Conrad Sangma directs relief materials to affected families



**SHILLONG, May 7:** Meghalaya chief minister Conrad K Sangma today directed the different district administrations to provide immediate relief materials to families affected by rain related incidents in seven districts of the state. More than 400 houses were damaged affecting nearly 1000 people following heavy rainfall on Sunday. He said that the government has also changed the guidelines to allow respective deputy commissioners to assess and distribute the CGI sheets at the district level. (NNV)

## Over 30,000 Myanmarese taking shelter in Mizoram

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 7:** Officials in Mizoram reported the arrival of approximately 50 additional refugees from Myanmar, bringing the total number of Myanmarese seeking shelter in the Northeast state to 34,332, as disclosed on Monday (May 06).

According to a government official in Mizoram, the recent arrivals, including 10 women, fled Paletwa in Myanmar's Chin region and sought refuge in Hruitezawl village in Mizoram's Lawngtlai district over the past few days to avoid forced recruitment into the ranks of the Arakan Army (AA) militant group. Originating from Rakhine in Myanmar, the Arakan Army stands as the largest armed ethnic faction in the country, actively recruiting individuals from the Chin region to bolster their resistance against the national military.

"Young individuals in Myanmar who resist compulsory recruitment by the Arakan Army are seeking sanctuary in Mizoram," stated the official.

Before this recent influx, 34,282 Myanmarese migrants had sought refuge in Mizoram's 11 districts in stages following the military coup in Myanmar on February 1, 2021.

Presently, a total of 34,332 Myanmarese nationals, including 10,900 women and 13,310 children, are residing in relief camps in Mizoram, while others are lodging with relatives or renting accommodations. In addition to the Myanmarese refugees, approximately 10,000 individuals, comprising men, women, and children, found refuge in Mizoram after ethnic violence erupted in neighbouring Manipur in May of the previous year.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

A kind word never goes to waste. -Chanakya

Kejriwal's battle with system

In the throes of India's General Election 2024, the political landscape is fraught with tension, intrigue, and allegations of villainy. At the center of this maelstrom stands Arvind Kejriwal, the Chief Minister of Delhi and leader of the Aam Aadmi Party, whose arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on charges of money laundering has ignited a firestorm of controversy.

Furthermore, the timing of these developments, including the sudden emergence of a new case just prior to the Supreme Court hearing, raises suspicions of orchestrated efforts to thwart any possibility of Kejriwal's release on bail. The involvement of key figures such as Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena in recommending the NIA probe only adds fuel to the fire of political intrigue.

As India navigates through the tumult of General Election 2024, it is imperative that the integrity of the electoral process remains sacrosanct. Any attempts to distort the level playing field through raids, arrests, or financial machinations must be met with the full force of scrutiny and accountability.

Biden's 'xenophobic' label for India and Japan is a costly mistake

By: Girish Linganna

US President Joe Biden is receiving criticism from many groups for describing India and Japan as "xenophobic" because they do not desire an influx of immigrants. This has raised concerns about a possible diplomatic mistake, considering the United States' enhanced relations with these Asian countries as part of its strategy to counter China.

Biden made these comments during a campaign fundraising event in Washington, primarily attended by Asian-Americans. It is noteworthy that these remarks followed his recent hosting of Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida during a state visit to the White House.

In his remarks, Biden grouped both adversaries and allies, stating that China, Japan, India, and Russia were encountering economic challenges due to their "xenophobic" attitudes. He suggested that their reluctance towards embracing immigrants was a contributing factor to their economic difficulties.

He stated that they have a lack of desire for immigrants. The Japanese and Indian embassies in Washington have not yet provided a comment in response to the request, and there has been no official statement from either country regarding the matter.

Overall, these reports shed light on the reactions and demographic situations in India and Japan in response to President Biden's remarks. Biden's comments received criticism from American defense and foreign policy analysts as well. Elbridge Colby, a former Pentagon official under President Donald Trump, emphasized the importance of speaking respectfully about Japan and India, as they are strong and crucial allies.

Bill Drexel, an expert on the Indo-Pacific region at the non-partisan think tank Centre for a New American Security, deemed the remarks unnecessary and counterproductive. Cleo Paskal, a non-resident senior fellow at the think tank Foundation for Defense of Democracies in Washington, acknowledged that she didn't believe Biden's comments would have a significant impact on the complex and interconnected relationships between countries.

John Kirby, the national security spokesman at the White House, clarified that Biden did not intend to insult other countries. He emphasized that officials in India and Japan were likely aware that there was no ill intent behind the comments. Both Tokyo and New Delhi are important partners of the United States in the Indo-Pacific region and are members of the Quad, an informal security alliance led by the US aimed at addressing Beijing's influence in this strategically significant area.

Ontological exegesis: A hermeneutical analysis of the Frontier Nagaland Territory movement and its implications for democratic praxis

In the noble pursuit of democratic governance, it is imperative that the voices of marginalised communities resound loudly, their aspirations dignified, and their rights safeguarded. The Frontier Nagaland Territory Movement stands as a beacon of the enduring quest for dignity, equality, and constitutional justice.

The Frontier Nagaland Territory Movement emerges as a captivating case study, inviting a comprehensive exploration of its historical underpinnings, its implications for democratic theory, and the broader socio-political landscape it navigates. Delving into this multifaceted phenomenon requires a meticulous examination of its historical context, objectives, and the intricate dynamics it embodies within the democratic framework.

Over the years, these communities have grappled with issues of Misgovernance/Fractured governance/Null governance, political representation, resource allocation, all-inclusive development of the region including human development and cultural assertion & preservation within the broader framework of the Nagaland state. This historical backdrop provides crucial insights into the grievances and aspirations that underpin the movement's objectives.

Central to the theoretical inquiry provoked by the Frontier Nagaland Territory Movement is the dialectical exploration of its implications for democratic theory. At the heart of this discourse lies an interrogation of the foundational principles that underpin democratic systems, namely representation, participation, equality, and the rule of law.

Representation, as a cornerstone of democratic governance, assumes paramount importance in the context of the Frontier Nagaland Territory Movement. The movement's advocacy for enhanced representation and participation of marginalised Eastern Naga communities underscores the imperative of equitable treatment as prescribed and guaranteed in the Constitution of India and substantive representation within the democratic frame-

work. By amplifying the voices of historically marginalised groups-Khiamnungan, Tikhir, Chang, Yimchunger, Phom, Eastern Sumis, Sangtam and Konyak, the movement challenges existing power structures and seeks to foster a more inclusive and representative socio-economic-political landscape. Similarly, the principle of participation assumes critical significance in understanding the dynamics of the Frontier Nagaland Territory Movement.

Representation, as a cornerstone of democratic governance, assumes paramount importance in the context of the Frontier Nagaland Territory Movement. The movement's advocacy for enhanced representation and participation of historically marginalised communities of Eastern Nagaland underscores the imperative of equitable political-economic-social-cultural-constitutional treatment and substantive representation within the democratic framework.

By amplifying the voices of historically marginalised Eastern Naga Tribes, the movement not only challenges existing power structures but also endeavours to foster a more inclusive and representative political landscape within the broader spectrum of constitutional governance. Through their active engagement in the political process, marginalised communities of Eastern Nagaland assert their right to be heard and contribute to shaping policies that directly impact their lives.

Similarly, the principle of participation assumes critical significance in understanding the dynamics of the Frontier Nagaland Territory Movement. The active engagement of communities in the pursuit of economic-social-political transformation highlights the democratic virtues of citizen participation and political agency. Through their advocacy and activism, the movement exemplifies the power of collective action in shaping the trajectory of democratic governance and advancing the interests of marginalised communities of Eastern Nagaland.

Moreover, the movement prompts a nuanced examination of the principle of equality within the

democratic framework. By advocating for the redressal of historical injustices and systemic inequalities, the movement underscores the imperative of equal treatment and social justice within democratic societies. Its quest for a separate territory within Nagaland reflects a broader aspiration for a more egalitarian and inclusive political order, grounded in the principles of equality and socio-economic-political equity.

The rule of law, as a foundational pillar of democratic governance, assumes particular relevance in the context of the Frontier Nagaland Territory Movement. The movement's steadfast commitment to pursuing its objectives through constitutional means underscores the importance of adherence to legal norms and institutional processes in democratic societies. By engaging in lawful advocacy and political activism, the movement reaffirms the rule of law as a safeguard against arbitrary power and a cornerstone of democratic legitimacy.

In addition to the theoretical discourse provoked by the Frontier Nagaland Territory Movement, it is imperative to consider its practical implications for governance and policy-making. The movement's demands for constitutional autonomy and self-governance with effective legislative, executive and financial powers necessitate a comprehensive reevaluation of existing institutional frameworks and governance structures within Nagaland, thus prompting policymakers to confront the challenge of balancing the aspirations of marginalised Eastern Naga communities with the imperatives of constitutional justice, socioeconomic-cultural-political equity, national unity and territorial integrity.

gitimate grievances of marginalised Eastern Naga Tribes but also seeks to safeguard the broader interests of the state and its citizens, ensuring stability, inclusivity, and equitable development. Moreover, the movement's call for constitutional autonomy underscores the need for a constructively proactive engagement with decentralisation strategies, including the devolution of power and resources to the "severely affected" local Eastern Naga communities, thereby fostering a more responsive and accountable governance framework that resonates with the diverse needs and aspirations of Nagaland's populace.

Finally, the movement serves as a potent reminder of the enduring struggle for democratic governance and constitutional justice in post-colonial societies. The Frontier Nagaland Territory Movement represents a manifestation of this ongoing struggle for decentralisation of governance, constitutional self-governance, socio-economic-political justice, dignity, and equality within the democratic framework. As such, it calls upon policymakers and scholars alike to reflect on the legacies of misgovernance/fractured governance/null governance, administrative injustice, political apathy blatantly exhibited in the state of Nagaland and work towards a more just and equitable future for all citizens.

By acknowledging and addressing the historical injustices perpetuated by misgovernance, political apathy and systemic inequality, affected Eastern Naga society can forge a path towards reconciliation, constitutional empowerment, and inclusive governance, thereby fostering a more democratic and egalitarian order in the state of Nagaland. The Frontier Nagaland Territory Movement emerges as a multifaceted phenomenon that transcends theoretical inquiry to encompass practical implications for governance, grand quest for claiming the constructive space in national narrative and the broader struggle for social justice.

As a Lawyer, Academician and a Political Theoretician deeply engaged in the examination of democratic systems and also as an integral part of the Frontier Nagaland Movement, I find in the movement a compelling case study that underscores the intricate interplay between historical grievances, political agency, and the pursuit of socioeconomic-cultural-political justice through constitutional mechanism. It prompts us to critically evaluate existing governance structures and policy frameworks in the state of Nagaland, challenging us to foster a more inclusive and equitable future for all citizens through meaningful dialogue, inclusive decision-making processes, and a steadfast commitment in the spirit of the "Supreme Law of the Land" to upholding democratic values. (The author is a Senior Faculty, Dept. of Political Science, Tetsu College. He is also the Director, Project Constitutional Justice, Tuensang, Nagaland)

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

Dr. Aniruddha Babar

India's 2024 parliamentary election: Narrative void to image politics

By: Dipak Kurmi

I've begun asserting that this parliamentary election lacks a coherent narrative. This assertion has proven challenging for media personalities and academics who specialize in decoding electoral dynamics. Interestingly, many esteemed journalists, columnists, and academics are now echoing this sentiment, acknowledging the absence of a national storyline in this election.

I've been advocating the notion that this election is more about images than narratives. Through various opinion pieces and television appearances, I've emphasized how leaders' images are competing across different states, with even regional party leaders entering the fray. This shift towards an "election of images" is a consequence of the repetitive and stagnant narratives that have characterized past elections.

Even those who now concede the narrative-less nature of this election must acknowledge its focus on images, with the Modi brand at its core. However, the challenge for opposition parties lies in their inability to craft compelling images of their leaders capable of countering the Modi brand at a grassroots level.

The Modi image brought forth a narrative integral to its construction: the development-centric "Vikasit Bharat" narrative. This narrative, bolstered by various developmental initiatives undertaken by PM Modi over the past decade, served as a cornerstone of his image. Meanwhile, Rahul Gandhi, struggling to establish a comparable image to Modi's, has turned to caste as a focal point in electoral discourse, aiming to cultivate caste-based polarization in the electoral arena.

Tribes, Gandhi injected new life into caste-based electoral discussions during the 2024 parliamentary elections. This shift reshaped the landscape of electoral discourse in India, diverting attention from development agendas, beneficiaries, and visions for a future India, and placing caste at the forefront of electoral debates.

This shift in discourse has steered India's democratic narrative from forward-looking to regressive. It has inadvertently paved the way for discourse centered on religion-based appeasement in Indian electoral campaigns. A key measure of a democracy's maturity lies in the nature of its debates. Established democracies worldwide strive to move away from divisive primordial identities, instead fostering discussions focused on long-term visions and plans for a more inclusive and equitable society.

Conversely, a regression to old, conventional, and regressive debates indicates a democratic deficit. Such a regression threatens to shake the very foundation of democracy, undermining its essence and integrity.

An important question arises: if this election is truly centered around the Modi image, what explains the low voter turnout in various states during the last two phases? From my perspective, those influenced by the Modi image perceive no significant challenge to his leadership. This confidence may contribute to the apathy reflected in the low voter turnout. Conversely, those hoping for Modi's defeat may feel disillusioned by the current political landscape.

The 2024 parliamentary election, now past its initial phases, has unveiled the shape and tone of political discourse driving this campaign. It remains to be seen whether upcoming phases will witness a resurgence of developmental and forward-thinking debates emblematic of Indian democracy, or if the trajectory will veer towards the familiar path of identity politics. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmi@rediffmail.com)



## Women voters will play a decisive role in bringing BJP tally in Karnataka

By: Dr. Gyan Pathak

The crucial third phase of Lok Sabha election is most likely to bring more seats in the BJP's bag compared to the first and second phase of elections, but it is not bringing any cheer on PM Narendra Modi's face. Conversely, the struggle of the BJP in retaining its seat, and there is every likelihood of losing many of them, has made PM Narendra Modi ever more concerned, since it enhances the challenge of making up the losses in the first three phases in the last four phases of election much more difficult.

With election of 94 Lok Sabha constituency in the third phase, election would be completed on 283 seats out of the total 543 in the country, leaving only 260 seats for the next four phases of election. In the fourth phase of election scheduled on May 13, another 96 constituencies are scheduled for polling.

PM Narendra Modi had given a call for 370 seats for the BJP and 400+ seats for the NDA, which at the end of the third phase seems to be unattainable. Moreover, BJP has performed badly in the first two phases and this trend will continue in the third phase on May 7.

Barring Gujarat, BJP's electoral performance does not seem to reach PM Modi's expectations. In Assam, Himanta Biswa Sarma tried his best, but BJP does not seem to increase its tally. At best the party can maintain only status quo. In the entire northeast, the party is all set to fail in retaining its tally compared to the 2019 election.

Bihar is going to have election in 7 phases, and by the third phase election to the 14 seats, does not enthuse the BJP. Chiefly because of the bad performance of its allies JD(U) and LJP (RV), which were contesting more seats in the first three phases. The election on 14 seats reveals that Congress-RJD-Left combine in the state giving tough electoral battle, and that is likely to continue even in the next four phases.

BJP is not likely to bag any seat in the first three phases though NDA tally may reach about 8 seats.

The situations in the other Hindi heartland states of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh have also turned difficult for the BJP. It triggered PM Narendra Modi unleashing his vitriolic communal campaign centred around SC, ST, OBCs and Muslims all for targeting Congress and INDIA bloc and deriving benefit from the communal polarization of Hindus in his favour.

Model Code of Conduct has clearly been violated lately, which might be a result of his despair. He is clearly seen swinging between hope and despair, on moment it seems best of times, and on the next seems to be worst of times for his electoral fortune.

With completion of election in Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan by third phase, uncertainty looms large for the BJP's prospect due to very close contests between the BJP and Congress in almost half of the seats, and many of them BJP is running a risk to lose. As far as Uttar Pradesh is concerned, unity within Samajwadi party, and among its support base have been seen unprecedentedly at very high level.

Having seen the contests in the 26 constituency by the third phase, BJP is running the risk of losing over half a dozen seats. It means it would be very difficult for the BJP to retain its 62 seats the party had won in 2019 Lok Sabha election. It has made the challenge for PM Modi and CM Adityanath Yogi very difficult in the next three phases of election in the state for 54 other seats. The realization of the dream of winning 75 seats from the state may just remain a dream, as the first three phases of election have already shown.

Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and West Bengal are all set to be a nightmare for the BJP, despite the party's claim of championing the Naari Shakti. The nightmare has started from the Karnataka, where PM Narendra Modi and the entire BJP machinery campaigned for their

ally's candidate who was accused of molesting women.

It has created the third phase election in Karnataka very tough for the BJP candidates who have become defensive, after losing their face. In Uttar Pradesh, the party has given ticket to the son of the accused molester of wrestler woman.

It would likely to impact women's voting pattern not only in Uttar Pradesh but also in Haryana, since the victims were of Haryana state. Then again there is West Bengal where Modi government is silent on molestation charges against their Governor while BJP has been raising Sandeshkhali women's molestation case in which a BJP leader was reported saying that Sandeshkhali allegations were false to defame TMC during election campaigns.

Thus, political outcome in the four states will depend on how women take the allegations against BJP as supporters of women molesters. It is despite the fact that PM Modi has warned Hindu women that their "Mangalsutras" are at risks of being taken away by Congress and INDIA bloc if they come to power, and would be handed over to the "Muslims".

Maharashtra remains politically complex even in the third phase, where BJP by and large depends on the performance of its allies in the splinter groups of Shiv Sena (Shinde) and NCP (Ajit Pawar). Uncertainty has put PM Modi on the tenterhooks.

PM Modi's concerns have increased on account of the party's running the risk of losing its two dozen seats in the third phase itself, on which INDIA bloc allies have lately offering very tough electoral battle. BJP will have to win at least 150 out of 260 in the next four phases to reach the magic mark of 272 to form government on its own, which is of course a very challenging situation. Major states in the next for phase are Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Punjab, Odisha, West Bengal, and Bihar, where the party's predicaments are numerous. (IPA Service)

## The role of women's reservation in bolstering their political participation

By: Poonam Kushwaha

The Chief Election Commissioner while kick-starting the festival of the world's largest democracy celebrated the fact that India's gender ratio of 948 to 1000 is a "very healthy sign" of women's political participation.

This should be read along with the President of India's assent to the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam Bill paving the way for 33% of seats for women in the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and the National Capital Territory Delhi.

This will go down in history as an important turning point in India's political landscape. The Bill which turned into an act is hailed as a step in the right direction towards achieving substantive democracy considering the country's appalling performance in the political empowerment indicator of the Gender Parity Index (127 out of 147 countries).

While India celebrates these positive developments, there are important questions that need to be addressed such as why it took over seven decades to enact this reservation. What was the rationale behind the need for reservation?

Can it really transform the fate of India's procedural democracy into a truly participatory democracy? Exploring the development of women's political rights and their representation will provide further insight into the issue.

**The hard-fought gender equality in politics**

The passage of the Bill is the culmination of decades-long advocacy for women's reservation in the Parliament aiming for the true realisation of democracy that gives fair representation to 50% of its population.

If the history of the fight for political gender equality is any indication, globally women have suffered greatly when it

comes to gaining political rights.

Until 1893, when New Zealand became the first nation to provide women the right to vote as equal citizens, women were regarded as second-class citizens and were not even allowed to vote, let alone having political representation.

Despite the Indian Constitution guaranteeing equal political rights to its half of the population since the time it attained independence, achieving political parity still seems like a distant dream.

**The evolution of women's reservation in political space**

Global organisations such as the United Nations Women and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) promote women's political representation, stating that the presence of women in Parliament directly correlates to the attention given to women's issues, and that gender equity and substantive democracy depend on the presence of women in Parliament.

There is a consensus on the importance of women's political participation, but the strategies to tackle underrepresentation are still a topic of debate.

The discussion around women's reservation in Indian politics dates back to 1931 when prominent figures such as Sarojini Naidu opposed giving women preference in the political sphere, arguing that this would violate their demand for absolute political status for women. Later, the issue was also brought up in the Constituent Assembly, and the founding fathers left it to a 'gentlemen's agreement,' convinced that the system would ultimately guarantee women's political representation.

The agreement between the gentlemen has clearly not been successful in fulfilling its promise, as only 15% of

women in the 17th Lok Sabha, compared to nearly 45% in Scandinavian countries, serves as evidence.

Another case can be taken of the recent Rajasthan Assembly elections, wherein the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) fielded women candidates. However, their winnability was low as compared to male counterparts pushing parties to prefer male candidates.

Despite this, not everything is hopeless; the Indian Constitution, as amended by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, granted women a 33% reservation in local self-government. However, the reservation of seats at the national and state level was greatly awaited following several setbacks in the Parliament in 1996, 1999, 2003, 2004, and 2010.

**Can women's reservation act deliver on its promises?**

The Women's Reservation Act seems to excite proponents of gender parity on the surface, but the devil is in the details.

The Act's implementation is dependent on a successful conclusion of the delimitation exercise slated for 2026, postponing the implementation timeline to 2029. Moreover, while the Act promises representation for women, it cannot guarantee the decision-making power being held by them.

Based on the experiences of the reservation of women in local government, there have been cases where Sarpanch Pati had taken on the role of Sarpanch instead of the female representatives. Moreover, women leaders at the helm have not been able to ensure women safety as witnessed in recent cases of sexual harassment emerging from a state ruled by a female chief minister.

The challenges ahead could impede the Act's success, nevertheless on the other hand,

having more women in positions of power in politics can lead to increased focus on women's issues in policymaking and implementation.

Despite concerns and flaws, the implementation of women's reservations in political leadership positions is crucial at the present moment.

The World Economic Forum (WEF), 2023 reports that it would require 131 years for the world to eliminate the gender gap. However, implementing affirmative actions such as reservations in politics could potentially accelerate this process.

**Women's empowerment must extend to politics**

Empowering women requires multiple key steps:

- Building capability is crucial, as highlighted by Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, through promoting gender equity in education.

- It is essential to raise political awareness among women regarding their political rights.

- Raising awareness among males about the importance of gender equality in society, including students through school curriculum.

- There was a time when emphasising on women's education, the first Prime Minister Pt Jawaharlal Nehru stated that educating a woman educates an entire family. It is now critical to apply this concept to the political realm.

- Empowering women politically can lead to securing social justice for marginalised women and ultimately strengthening democracy.

In the general elections, the "very healthy sign" of Indian democracy for women's representation as stated by the Chief Election Commissioner will be put to a litmus test. Society has a collective responsibility to pass the 50% of the population ensuring it has adequate representation. (Courtesy: The Quint)

## Women in their 40s and 50s are urged to stay active to improve their quality of life



By: Elizabeth Pratt

Women who exercise consistently in midlife have better health-related quality of life.

That's according to research published today in the journal PLOS Medicine in which researchers reported that women in their 40s and 50s who consistently adhered to physical activity guidelines had better physical functioning than their peers who didn't consistently exercise.

"Combined with existing evidence, this study contributes to growing evidence of the benefits of maintaining or adopting an active lifestyle in mid-age," the study authors said in a press statement.

"An important public health message is that being active for as many years as possible, even if women start to meet physical activity guidelines in their mid-50s, could have important health benefits in terms of physical health, especially in physical functioning," they added.

**Details from the study on midlife women and exercise**

The researchers from Australia examined data from more than 11,000 women beginning in 1996. The women were born between 1946 and 1951, meaning they were 47 to 52 years of age when the study began.

The participants were categorized into those who met the physical activity guidelines Trusted Source from the World Health Organization consistently over a 15-year period, those who initially did not meet the guidelines but began to meet them at the age of 55, 60 or 65, and those who never met the guidelines.

The quality of life related to the health of the women was assessed using a physical health composite score. This was derived from a survey that asked 36 questions about functional health and well-being.

The researchers reported that women who met the physical activity guidelines as well as those who first began meeting these guidelines when they were 55 had a 3 point higher physical health composite score than women who didn't meet the guidelines.

The study authors said that "women should be active throughout mid-age, ideally increasing activity levels to meet the guidelines by age 55, to gain the most benefits for physical health in later life."

**How much exercise do you need?**

The World Health Organization recommends adults should engage in 150 to 300 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic physical activity every week.

Alternatively, it is recommended adults should do at least 75 to 150 minutes of vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity or an equivalent combination of activity of both moderate and vigorous intensity.

Adults should also engage in muscle strengthening activity two or more days each week.

"We have very good evidence that physical activity is one of the best things women can do to keep themselves healthy throughout their lifespan. It doesn't do us any good to live for many years if we are unable to do all the things we need and want to do to enjoy that time. Movement maintains good joint mobility and muscle strength, improves circulation, in-

creases bone density, and helps prevent major diseases," said Dr. Nicole Yedlinsky, a family medicine and sports medicine physician at The University of Kansas Health System who was not involved in the study.

"When we think about longevity, we don't just want to live longer, we also want to live well," Yedlinsky told Medical News Today. "Quality of life is extraordinarily important. Exercise is fundamentally important to all our body systems: our heart, lungs, brain, gut, joints, bones, and muscles. Regular physical activity is the key piece to minimizing the physiologic decline that normally comes with aging."

Easing in to an exercise routine The researchers found that women who began meeting exercise guidelines at age 55 still received the same benefits as their peers who had been consistently exercising prior to that.

Experts say midlife women, particularly those who are menopausal, should slowly ease in when beginning an exercise routine.

"All the symptoms of menopause can impede a woman's ability to workout. Irregular periods make it hard to know when the best time of day is to work out. Hot flashes and night sweats make the thought of working out and breaking a sweat less desirable. Emotional upheaval including depression and anxiety also prevents trips to the gym or putting on your tennis shoes. Heart palpitations also scare menopausal women from doing any activity that increases the heart rate," said Dr. Sherry Ross, an OB/GYN and women's health expert at Providence Saint John's Health Center

in California who was not involved in the study.

"Starting slowly is recommended for menopausal women who are just starting to become physical active," Ross told Medical News Today. "Getting into a regular routine is the best strategy. If you have any type of bone loss, especially osteoporosis, associated with aging and menopause, I would avoid exercises that may increase the risk of falling or create instability."

**The challenges of exercising in midlife**

While the benefits of physical activity are well established, the study authors note that for many women in this age group life transitions such as marriage, having children, children leaving the family home, retirement, and bereavement can influence activity level.

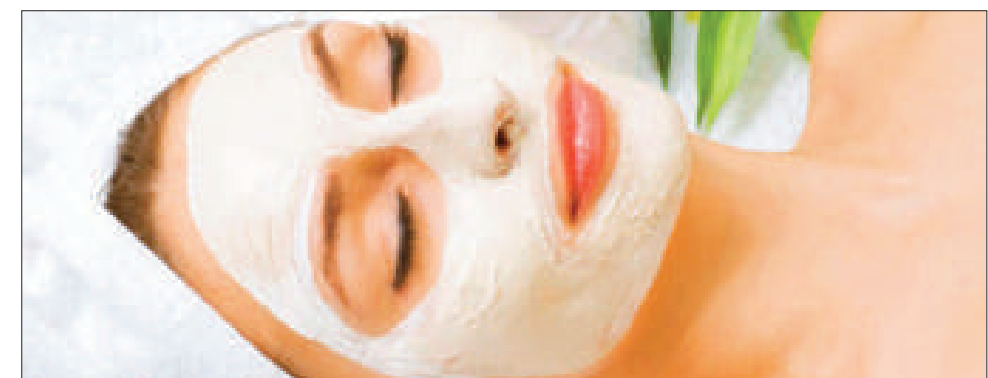
However, experts say it is important that midlife women take the time to prioritize their own health and quality of life by engaging in regular movement.

"The benefits of consistent exercise in quality of life become more clear when looking at the four functional benefits of many exercises: strength, stamina, flexibility and balance. The loss of any of these four types of physical capacity are hallmarks of physical infirmity and erosion of quality of life. For people looking forward to enjoying extended work or recreational activities as they age, loss of strength, stamina, flexibility and balance limit the scope of life and are predictors of loss of independent living capacity in older age," said Dr. Charlie Porter, a cardio-oncologist at The University of Kansas Health System who was not involved in the study.

"Middle aged' women are facing many demands from others and get little encouragement from anyone to take time for their own emotional and physical benefit," Porter told Medical News Today. "This study provides encouragement for women in this stage of life to look at physical exercise for themselves as a way of sustaining and maintaining their own long term health and physical capacity. On an airliner, parents are instructed to put their own oxygen mask on before they put the mask on their children. Starting and staying with an exercise program in the time of life with maximum demands to serve others can be thought of like putting an oxygen mask on before helping others.)"

(Courtesy: Medical News Today)

## Herbal face packs to revitalize the skin



By: Shahnaz Husain

Summer has arrived – and so have all our summer skin problems. Oiliness, acne, dullness and what not! Summer can be a challenging season for our skin, especially if we live in hot and humid areas or spend a lot of time outdoors.

With the scorching heat waves engulfing us as soon as we step out, the excessive sweat makes it extremely difficult to keep on any skincare or makeup product, naturally turning the face dull, greasy and prone to infections.

Taking care of your skin during the summer months is essential to avoid common skin issues and maintain healthy, glowing skin.

Going for a facial every time you feel your skin unattractive is not a healthy practice as the salons are expensive, time consuming and use nothing but harsh chemical products.

If you want to rejuvenate your skin by removing excess dirt, dead skin cells and oil in your face without spending a single penny for a salon like effect then head for your kitchen pantry than departmental store for organic face masks which will also save money and time both.

Many ingredients available at home make ideal ingredients for face packs for refreshing and revitalizing the skin, as well as enhancing beauty. Fresh home ingredients leave the skin refreshed and glowing.

With homemade packs allergic reactions are rare. You can relax and pamper yourself in your own home, where many ingredients with beauty benefits are easily available, like honey, curd, milk, eggs, fruits, and spices. These can be easily mixed into a face pack.

Many other ingredients can be added like rose water, dried and powdered orange and lemon peels, ground almonds, oats, wheat bran (choker), gram flour, chocolate, wine and so on. Applying such ingredients can actually nourish and revitalize the skin powerfully, while others, like tulsi, neem, fenugreek, cinnamon, sandalwood and turmeric have antiseptic, healing and soothing properties.

**Here are a few home-made packs for refreshing and revitalizing the skin:**

Make a cold infusion of Hibiscus flowers, by allowing them to stand overnight in cold water, in a ratio of one to six. Next morning crush the flowers. Strain and keep the water. Mix the flowers with 3 teaspoons oats, 2 drops tea tree oil and add the water to mix into a paste. This hibiscus pack helps to cleanse, refresh and tone the skin, adding a glow. Apply on the face and wash off after 20 to 30 minutes.

Take honey and yogurt and add a few tablespoons of red wine. Apply this on the face and leave it on for 20 minutes. Rinse with plain water. This softens and moisturizes the skin, removes tan and also adds a glow.

Avocado pulp can be mixed with aloe vera gel and applied on the face to nourish and moisturize the skin. Wash off with plain water after 20 minutes. Fresh and raw avocado should be used. Avocado contains about 20 vitamins and minerals. It is rich in antioxidants, which help to delay visible signs of skin ageing.

Mix cucumber and ripe papaya pulp with curd and two teaspoons oats. Lemon juice can also be added. Apply on face and neck. Wash it off after half an hour. Helps to remove tan and brighten the skin.

For oily skin, soak one tablespoon moong dal in water for a few hours. Make a paste and add one tablespoon tomato pulp. Apply on face with a light massage. Wash off with water after 20 minutes. Reduces oiliness and brightens the skin.

Take two teaspoons choker (wheat bran), one teaspoon each ground almonds, honey, curd and egg white or rose water. Mix together and apply on the face, avoiding lips and area around eyes. Wash off after 30 minutes.

Allow marigold flowers to stand in warm water overnight. Add yogurt and sandalwood paste and mix together to make a smooth paste. Apply on the face, avoiding the lips and area around eyes.

For dry skin, add red wine to aloe vera gel and dried milk powder. Apply on the face and wash it off after 20 minutes.

Add a few strands of saffron to warm milk and wheat bran (choker). Let it stand for a couple of hours. Then apply it on the face, using cotton wool. It is said to lighten skin colour over a period of time. Mix together three teaspoons cocoa powder and 2 teaspoons oats with egg white and one teaspoon each honey and curd. Adjust the ingredients, so that it is a thick paste, which does not drip. If it is too thin, add more cocoa powder. To make it thinner, add more curd or milk.

For dry skin, add egg yolk, instead of egg white. First cleanse the skin and then apply the mask, avoiding the lips and area around eyes. Wash it off after 20 to 30 minutes with plain water. (The author is an international fame beauty expert and is called the Herbal Queen of India)

# Putin begins his fifth term as president, more in control of Russia than ever

**MOSCOW, May 7:** Vladimir Putin began his fifth term on Tuesday as Russian leader at a glittering Kremlin inauguration, setting out on another six years in office after destroying his political opponents, launching a devastating war in Ukraine and concentrating all power in his hands.

At the ceremony inside the gilded Grand Kremlin Palace, Putin placed his hand on the Russian Constitution and vowed to defend it as a crowd of hand-picked dignitaries looked on. "We are a united and great people and together we will overcome all obstacles, realize all our plans, together we will win," Putin said after being sworn in.

Since succeeding President Boris Yeltsin in the waning hours of 1999, Putin has transformed Russia from a country emerging from economic collapse to a pariah state that threatens global security. Following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine that has become Europe's biggest conflict since World War II, Russia has been heavily sanctioned by the West and is turning to other regimes like China, Iran and North Korea for support.

Already in office for nearly a quarter-century and the longest-serving Kremlin leader since Josef Stalin, Putin's new term doesn't expire until 2030, when he will be constitutionally eligible to run again.

In a heavily choreographed performance,



Putin was pictured in his office looking at his papers before walking along the Kremlin's long corridors, pausing at one point to look at a painting, on the way to his inauguration.

His guard of honor waited in the sleet and rain for hours, in temperatures hovering just above freezing, while Putin headed to the Grand Kremlin Palace in a car.

Putin used the first moments of his fifth term to thank the "heroes" of his war in Ukraine and to rail against the West.

Russia "does not refuse dialogue with Western states," he said. Rather, he said, "the choice is theirs: do they intend to continue trying to contain Russia, continue the policy of aggression, continuous pressure on our country for years, or look for a path to cooperation and peace."

The Russian leader was greeted with applause when he entered the hall with more

than 2,500 people who, his spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said, had been invited to the ceremony. They included senior members of the Russian government as well as celebrities including American actor Steven Seagal.

A French diplomat confirmed the French ambassador attended the inauguration. The diplomat spoke on condition of anonymously because they were not authorized to speak publicly. U.S. Ambassador to Russia Lynne Tracy did not attend and Russian state news agency Tass reported she was out of the country. The question now is what the 71-year-old Putin will do over the course of another six years in the Kremlin, both at home and abroad. Russian forces are gaining ground in Ukraine, deploying scorched-earth tactics as Kyiv grapples with shortages of men and ammunition. Both sides are taking heavy casualties.

Ukraine has brought the battle to Russian soil through drone and missile attacks, especially in border regions. In a speech in February, Putin vowed to fulfill Moscow's goals in Ukraine, and do what is needed to "defend our sovereignty and security of our citizens."

Shortly after his orchestrated reelection in March, Putin suggested that a confrontation between NATO and Russia is possible, and he declared he wanted to carve out a buffer zone in Ukraine to protect his country from

cross-border attacks.

At home, Putin's popularity is closely tied to improving living standards for ordinary Russians. Putin on Tuesday once again promised Russians a prosperous future, but since the invasion of Ukraine, many have seen their cost of living go up.

Putin began his term in 2018 by promising to get Russia into the top five global economies, vowing it should be "modern and dynamic." Instead, Russia's economy has pivoted to a war footing, and authorities are spending record amounts on defense.

Analysts say now that Putin has secured another six years in power, the government could take the unpopular steps of raising taxes to fund the war and pressure more men to join the military. At the start of a new term, the Russian government is routinely dissolved so that Putin can name a new prime minister and Cabinet.

One key area to watch is the Defense Ministry. Last year, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu came under pressure over his conduct of the war, with mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin launching withering criticism against him for shortages of ammunition for his private contractors fighting in Ukraine. Prigozhin's brief uprising in June against the Defense Ministry represented the biggest threat to Putin's rule. (AP)

## Israeli forces seize Rafah border crossing in Gaza, putting cease-fire talks on knife's edge

**CAIRO, May 7:** Israeli tanks seized control of Gaza's vital Rafah border crossing on Tuesday as Israel brushed off urgent warnings from close allies and moved into the southern city even as cease-fire negotiations with Hamas remained on a knife's edge.

The foray came after hours of whiplash in the Israel-Hamas war, with the militant group on Monday saying it accepted an Egyptian-Qatari mediated cease-fire proposal. Israel, however, insisted the deal did not meet its core demands.

The high-stakes diplomatic moves and military brinkmanship left a glimmer of hope alive - if only barely - for an accord that could bring at least a pause in the 7-month-old war that has devastated the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli incursion overnight appeared to be short of the full-fledged offensive into Rafah that Israel has planned, and it was not immediately known if it would be expanded. The looming operation has raised global alarm over the fate of around 1.3 million Palestinians crammed into the city - and threatened to widen a rift between Israel and its main backer, the United States. U.S. President Joe Biden warned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu again on Monday against launching an invasion of the city after Israel ordered 100,000 Palestinians to evacuate from eastern parts of Rafah.

The Israeli 401st Brigade entered the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing early Tuesday, the Israeli military said, taking "operational control" of the crucial border point. Footage released by the military showed Israeli flags flying from tanks that seized the area. Details of the video matched known features of the crossing. Both the Rafah crossing and the Kerem Shalom crossing between Israel and Gaza - the two main routes for entry points for aid to the beleaguered territory - have been closed for at least the past two



days. Though smaller entry points still operate, the closure is a blow to efforts to maintain the flow of food, medicine and other supplies that are keeping Gaza's population alive at a time when officials say the northern part of the enclave is already experiencing "full-blown famine."

Jens Laerke, a spokesman for the U.N. humanitarian affairs office known as OCHA, said Israeli authorities have denied it access to the Rafah crossing. He warned that disruption at Rafah could break the fragile aid operation, saying all the fuel keeping the humanitarian work moving comes through the crossing. "It will plunge this crisis into unprecedented levels of need, including the very real possibility of a famine," he said. The Israeli military "is ignoring all warnings about what this could mean for civilians and for the humanitarian operation across the Gaza Strip."

The military also carried out a flurry of strikes and bombardment across Rafah overnight, killing at least 23 Palestinians, including at least six women and five children, according to hospital records seen by The Associated Press. The Israeli military claimed it seized the Rafah crossing after receiving intelligence it was "being used for terrorist purposes."

The military did not provide evidence to immediately support the assertion, though it said Hamas fighters near the crossing launched a mortar attack that killed four Israeli troops and wounded others near Kerem Shalom on Sunday. (AP)

## Nepal's ruling coalition party splits

**KATHMANDU, May 7:** The Janata Samajbadi Party-Nepal (JSP-N), one of the coalition partners in Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda-led government, has split after a majority of its lawmakers and over two dozen central committee members applied for a new party at the Election Commission.

A faction of the JSP-N led by the party's federal council chair Ashok Rai registered the application for a new party while the party's chair Deputy Prime Minister Upendra Yadav, who is also minister for health and population, is on a trip abroad.

Pradip Yadav, a lawmaker of the JSP-N, said that 29 central committee members and seven lawmakers have jointly applied to form a new party.

Of the party's 12 House of Representatives members, seven - Rai, Sushila Sherstha, Pradip Yadav, Nawal Kishor Sah, Ranju Kumari Jha, Birendra Mahato and Hasina Khan - have supported the new party named 'Janata Samajbadi Party' (without the 'Nepal' of the mother party).

The Election Commission on Monday officially recognised the Ashok Rai-led Janata Samajbadi Party (JSP) as a new political party.

Party insiders said that Rai registered the new party at the advice of Prime Minister Prachanda to counter Yadav, whose relations with the ruling alliance have soured lately. There are reports Yadav was trying to ally with the opposition Nepali Congress and the ruling party alliance CPN-Unified Socialist-led by Madhav Kumar Nepal after NC President Sher Bahadur Deuba reportedly offered the Prime Minister's post to Yadav to topple the Prachanda-led government.

However, the ruling coalition consisting of the CPN-UML led by K P Sharma Oli and the CPN (Maoist Center) has managed to maintain a narrow majority in the Parliament with the latest political developments.

Leaders of the Rai-led faction claimed they had to revolt against the party leadership as Yadav was running the party in an autocratic way.

"The chair ran the party unilaterally and disrespected lawmakers," Pradip said. (PTI)

## Xi begin Serbia visit on the 25th anniversary of NATO's bombing of the Chinese Embassy

**BELGRADE, May 7:** Chinese leader Xi Jinping's visit to European ally Serbia on Tuesday falls on a symbolic date: the 25th anniversary of the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade during NATO's air war over Kosovo.

U.S. jets dropped five bombs on the Chinese Embassy compound in the Serbian capital on May 7, 1999, setting it ablaze and killing three Chinese nationals. Twenty other people were injured in the incident, which has burdened relations between the two powers ever since. Xi referred to the bombing in an op-ed published in Serbia's Politika newspaper on Tuesday, saying that "we must not forget that 25 years ago today, NATO bombed the

Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia," according to translations carried by Chinese state media.

"The Chinese people value peace but will never allow historical tragedies to happen again," Xi added. The Western military alliance had launched the air war in March that year to force then Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic to end a brutal onslaught against ethnic Albanian rebels in Kosovo.

The U.S. at the time apologized and said the embassy bombing was a mistake that happened due to faulty intelligence. The intended target, Washington said, was the headquarters of a Serbian state arms exporter located on the same

street, a few blocks away.

"Imagine that somebody would, even by accident, strike an American Embassy somewhere around the world. The reaction would be immediate," said Sven Biscop, a professor of European foreign and security policy at the Ghent University and Egmont Institute.

"So for a country like China, it is also clear that this is a big thing," he added. "And, of course, it has not been forgotten." Angry protesters in China stormed U.S. diplomatic installations as the bombing fueled anti-American sentiments and speculation that the attack was intentional rather than accidental. Mistake over the incident has endured to this day.

"We will probably never really conclusively know either way," Biscop said. "But one thing is sure. In war, incidents like that do happen, and I usually tend to go for the most simple explanation rather than try to invent complicated theories."

While straining Beijing's relations with the U.S., the embassy bombing brought China and Serbia closer together. China has emerged as Serbia's largest provider of foreign direct investment and its second-largest trading partner after the European Union.

Beijing opposed the NATO bombing campaign and has since backed Belgrade's bid to counter the Western-backed push for independence in Kosovo, a former Serbian province. (AP)

## Police break up pro-Palestinian camp at Amsterdam university as campus protests spread to Europe

**THE HAGUE, May 7:** Police arrested about 125 activists as they broke up a pro-Palestinian demonstration camp at the University of Amsterdam early on Tuesday, as protests that have roiled campuses in the United States spread to Europe.

Police in the Dutch capital said in a statement on the social media platform X that their action was "necessary to restore order" after protests turned violent. There were no immediate reports of injuries.

Video from the scene aired by national broadcaster NOS showed police using a mechanical digger to push down barricades and officers wielding batons and shields moving in to end the demonstration, beating some of the protesters and pulling down tents.

Protesters formed barricades from wooden pallets and bicycles, NOS reported. Scores of demonstrators occupied a small island at the university on Monday, urging Amsterdam universities to break academic ties with Israel because of its offensive in Gaza in the aftermath of the deadly Oct. 7 attacks by Hamas militants in southern Israel.

There have also been demonstrations in recent days at campuses in France and the United Kingdom. Photos from the Amsterdam campus Tuesday morning showed tents, banners and food along with piles of cobblestones that had been pulled up from the street.

Before police moved in, scuffles broke out Monday night between two rival groups of activists. Police said in a statement that they cleared the makeshift camp after the protesters refused repeated orders to leave.

"The protest in this form created a very



unsafe situation, partly due to the barricades that prevented emergency services from entering the site. In the event of a disaster, the activists themselves could possibly become stuck on the site," police said. They said the campus was calm Tuesday morning, but that officers remained present in the area.

Calls to the university went unanswered early Tuesday and the university did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment.

In Finland, dozens of protesters from the Students for Palestine solidarity group set up an encampment outside the main building at the University of Helsinki. Demonstrators said they would stay at the site in central Helsinki until the university, which is Finland's largest academic institution, cuts academic ties with Israeli universities.

In Denmark, students set up a pro-Palestinian encampment at the University of Copenhagen. About 45 tents were erected on the lawn outside the campus of the Faculty of Social Sciences, known as CSS. The faculty sits in an old municipal hospital in the heart of the Danish capital.

The university's administration said students can protest on campus but called on

them to respect the rules on its grounds. "Seek dialogue, not conflict and make room for perspectives other than your own," the administrators said in a statement posted on X. It said the administration "cannot and must not express an opinion on behalf of university employees and students about political matters, including about the ongoing conflict" in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

On their Facebook page, members of the activist group Students Against the Occupation said their attempts to talk to the administration over the past two years about withdrawing the school's investments in companies with ties to activities in Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories have been in vain.

"We can no longer be satisfied with cautious dialogue that does not lead to concrete action," the group said.

In Paris, student groups called for gatherings in solidarity with Palestinians later Tuesday. On Friday, French police peacefully removed dozens of students from a building at the Paris Institute of Political Studies, known as Sciences Po, after they had gathered in support of Palestinians.

On Tuesday, students at the prestigious institution, which counts French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal and President Emmanuel Macron among its alumni, were seen entering the campus unobstructed to take exams as police stood at the entrances.

Protests took place last week at some other universities across the country, including in Lille and Lyon. The Prime Minister's Office said police had been requested to remove students from 23 sites on French campuses. (AP)

## Police search Brussels office of prominent far-right German lawmaker over China spying allegations

**BERLIN, May 7:** Authorities were searching the European Parliament office of a prominent German far-right lawmaker in Brussels on Tuesday, Germany's top prosecutor's office said.

Maximilian Krah, the Alternative for Germany party's top candidate in the upcoming European Parliament elections, has been under scrutiny after an assistant of his was arrested last month on suspicion of spying for China.

Jian Guo - a German national who had worked for Krah since his election to the European Union legislature in 2019 - has been accused of working for a Chinese intelligence service and of repeatedly passing on information on negotiations and decisions in the European Parliament in January.

Prosecutors allege that he was also spying on Chinese dissidents in Germany.

The arrest cast an unflattering light on the far-right Alternative for Germany, or



AfD, which already faced criticism for having Russia-friendly positions. The European Parliament elections will take place June 9 in Germany.

The federal public prosecutor's office said in Tuesday's statement that "the European Parliament has consented to enter the premises."

More than 20 people could be seen in the hallway near Krah's office on the fifth floor of the European Parliament, but reporters

trying to cover the search where not allowed to get close to the office.

An apartment of Guo in Brussels had already been searched last month, the prosecutors' statement said. Prosecutors said that on Tuesday both the offices of Krah and Guo in Brussels were searched on the basis of orders issued by the investigating German judge and a European investigation order.

Krah had dismissed his assistant last month after he was arrested, but both the German government and opposition lawmakers have sharply assailed the Alternative for Germany for its alleged closeness to China and also Russia.

Despite the allegations, Krah remains the AfD's top candidate for the European Parliament election.

News magazine Der Spiegel and public broadcaster ZDF reported last month that Krah was questioned by the FBI at the end of a visit to the United States in December

about possible payments from pro-Russian sources.

Krah has denied receiving any such payments. He wrote on the social platform X that the preliminary investigation was expected but added that "we are still in the area of suppositions and insinuations."

Separately, the no. 2 on the AfD's list for the European Parliament election, Petr Bystron, last month denied allegations in a Czech daily that he may have received money from a pro-Russian network.

Also last month, German authorities also arrested three other people suspected of spying for China and arranging to transfer information on technology with potential military uses.

Prosecutors said the three German citizens are accused of having acted for Chinese intelligence since before June 2022. They are also suspected of violating German export laws by exporting a special laser without permission. (AP)

## Tornado causes extensive damage to Oklahoma town and 1 death as powerful storms hit central US

**OKLAHOMA CITY, May 7:** A tornado destroyed homes and toppled trees and power lines when it roared through a small Oklahoma town, one of several twisters that erupted in the central United States amid a series of powerful storms that stretched into Tuesday. At least one death was reported.

The tornado ripped through the 1,000-person town of Barnsdall, about a 40-minute drive north of Tulsa, on Monday night.

At least 30 to 40 homes in the Barnsdall area were damaged, the Oklahoma Highway Patrol reported, and the state Department of Health reported a nursing home was damaged and patients were being evacuated. A natural gas leak and numerous road closings due to debris also were reported, according to Osage County Emergency Management.

"We've got one confirmed fatality and multiple injuries," Osage County Sheriff Eddie Virden told KOKI-TV.

Damage also was reported in Bartlesville, about 20 miles northeast. "We did take a direct hit from a tornado" in the city, said Kary Fox of the Washington County Emergency Management. "Please stay off the roadways. Stay out of those damaged areas. We're having a lot of difficulty getting in to do assessments to check on people, to see if they've got any injuries because of the traffic congestion."

The National Weather Service in Tulsa had warned Monday evening that "a large and life-threatening tornado" was headed toward Barnsdall, with wind gusts up to 70 mph (112 kph). Meteorologist Brad McGavock said information on the tornado's size and how far it traveled



wasn't immediately available Monday night.

The storms began earlier Monday with gusty winds and rain. But after dark, tornadoes were spotted skirting northern Oklahoma. At one point in the evening, a storm in the small town of Covington had "produced tornadoes off and on for over an hour," the National Weather Service said. Throughout the area, wind farm turbines spun rapidly in the wind and blinding rain.

In Kansas, some areas were pelted by apple-sized hail 3

inches (7.6 centimeters) in diameter. The storms tore through Oklahoma as areas, including Sulphur and Holdenville, were still recovering from a tornado that killed four and left thousands without power late last month. Both the Plains and Midwest have been hammered by tornadoes this spring.

Oklahoma's State Emergency Operations Center, which coordinates storm response from a bunker near the state Capitol, remains activated from last week-end's deadly storms.

Monte Tucker, a farmer and rancher in the western Oklahoma town of Sweetwater, had spent Monday putting some of his tractors and heavy equipment in barns to protect it from hail. He said he let his neighbors know they could come to his house if the weather becomes dangerous. (AP)

## Czech Republic's top court rules that surgery is not required to officially change gender

**PRAGUE, May 7:** The Czech Republic's highest court on Tuesday ruled to dismiss part of a law requiring people to undergo gender-affirmation surgery, including sterilization, in order to officially change their gender.

The Constitutional Court said the requirements are "unconstitutional" and "in conflict with the fundamental right of trans people to have protected their physical integrity and personal autonomy in connection with their human dignity."

Only two of the court's 15 judges opposed the verdict, which cannot be appealed. Lawmakers must change the affected sections of the law by the middle of next year.

The court ruled at the request of a person who was seeking a gender change. The authorities refused to register him as a man because he had not undergone surgery.

The Czech practice was criticized by LGBTQ+ rights groups. (AP)

## Want 400 seats to ensure Cong doesn't bring back Article 370 and put 'Babri lock' on Ram temple: PM

**DHAR (MP), May 7:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said he wants the BJP-led NDA to win 400 seats in the ongoing Lok Sabha polls to ensure the Congress does not bring back Article 370 in Kashmir and put a "Babri lock" on the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Addressing an election rally at Dhar in Madhya Pradesh, Modi also accused the Congress of belittling Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, adding the opposition party has started saying he had a very little role in framing the Constitution.

"The truth is that the Congress parivar deeply hates Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar," Modi said.

The PM said the Congress is spreading rumours that if he gets 400 Lok Sabha seats, he will change the Constitution.

It seems as if the Congress people's intelligence is focussed on their vote bank, he said.

"It is important for the people of the country to know that the BJP-led NDA already has 400-plus seats in Parliament. We used this number to scrap Article 370 (which provided special status to Jammu and Kashmir)," the PM said.

"Modi wants 400 seats so that the Congress won't bring back Article 370 to spoil the game, Modi wants 400 seats so that the Congress won't put a Babri lock on the Ram temple in Ayodhya," he said.

The PM said that about 14 days back, he challenged the Congress to give in writing to the 140 crore

people of the country that it will not give reservation on the basis of religion.

"Secondly, I asked them to give in writing that they will never snatch the reservation being given to the SCs, STs and OBC and thirdly, to give in writing that they will never give reservation to Muslims by committing a dacoity from the existing OBC quota, but they are not responding and sitting silently by putting a lock on their mouths," he said.

The PM said he wants 400 seats in the Lok Sabha to prevent the Congress from "dacoity" of the OBC quota to benefit its vote bank.

"We have also used these 400 plus seats to extend SC/ST quota for 10 years, appoint a tribal woman as the country's President for the first time and to provide reservation to women," Modi said.

The PM said he is asking for 400 seats so that he can stop every conspiracy of the Congress and the opposition INDIA alliance.

"Modi is asking for 400 seats so that the Congress does not hand over the country's vacant land and islands to other countries, it does not take away the reservation given to SCs/STs/OBCs and give it to its vote bank, and does not declare all castes of its vote bank as OBC overnight," he said.

Further targeting the Congress, he said the opposition party doesn't want to give the credit to Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar. (PTI)

## Uddhav does 'dogli rajneeti', he is totally opposite to Balasaheb: Shinde

*'Balasaheb was always against the Congress and he always used to say he would never join hands with the Congress, but Uddhav Thackeray has done exactly what Balasaheb didn't want to do'*

**THANE, May 7:** In an all-out attack on his former party chief-turned-rival, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Tuesday accused Uddhav Thackeray of doing "dogli rajneeti" (double-faced politics) and alleged that his predecessor was plotting an attack on his house while pretending to be making a peace offer for his return to the Shiv Sena after they split nearly two years ago.

Shinde, who now heads the "real" Shiv Sena, also said Uddhav was totally opposite to the party founder Balasaheb Thackeray and was only interested in furthering his self-interest, unlike his father who always stood by his party's workers and never went back on his words.

In an exclusive interview with PTI at his residence here, Shinde alleged that Uddhav Thackeray abandoned Balasaheb's ideology for the greed of the chief minister's chair when he broke ties with the BJP to join hands with the Congress.

"We are the real Shiv Sena and taking forward Balasaheb's vision of Hindutva and the state's development," he said.

Uddhav Thackeray's outfit cannot be called a "Hindutva" party as they joined hands with the Congress which insults Savarkar and they cannot even refer to Balasaheb as "Hindu Hriday Samrat" anymore, he said.

Asked whether Uddhav Thackeray called him to come back and



offered him the chief minister's post after his rebellion in June 2022, Shinde said, "He sent an emissary to me and while that person was talking to me, he announced he was throwing me out of the party."

"He (Uddhav) was holding a meeting where they called for burning my effigy, attacking my house, those sorts of things were happening. These meetings were happening when they had supposedly sent people to talk to me. 'Dogli rajneeti, chehre pe alag, pet mein alag, honthon pe alag (This is double-faced politics, something on the face and something totally opposite behind it),' the chief minister said.

that forms the foundation of this government. The work we are doing, so many major schemes we have launched, development is the main agenda for all of that and that is the real agenda of the Shiv Sena and that is what Balasaheb had dreamed of," he said.

He also said that Uddhav Thackeray's outfit can't be called a "Hindutva" party.

"They have abandoned Balasaheb's ideology, they have joined hands with the Congress which insults Savarkar. They can't speak a single word for Savarkar now as their lips have been sealed by their partners. They have forgotten to speak about Hindutva now. They have forgotten Balasaheb's slogan, 'Garv se kaho, hum Hindu Hain'. They don't even refer to Balasaheb as 'Hindu Hriday Samrat' anymore. They have abandoned Hindutva as well as the ideology of Balasaheb," he said.

Shinde said Balasaheb was always against the Congress and he always used to say he would never join hands with the Congress. But Uddhav Thackeray has done exactly what Balasaheb didn't want to do, he said.

Asked about Uddhav Thackeray's statement that BJP leader Devendra Fadnis, former chief minister and now Shinde's deputy CM, had promised to groom Aditya Thackeray as a chief minister, Shinde said this is a new "jumla".

"First he claimed Amit Shah told

him he will get 2.5 years as chief minister. The talk happened behind closed doors. If he had to take that 2.5 years, then when Fadnis was telephoning him for a meeting, he didn't take a single call after 50 odd calls. That shows he did not want to sit out. Had he sat with the BJP, he would have got 2.5 years later if there was a commitment but he wanted it first. Since he was not interested, that's why he joined hands with the Congress and the NCP," he said.

On his experience of working with both Balasaheb and Uddhav Thackeray, Shinde said, "Balasaheb was a great person with great thinking and ideology. He was the one who would stand behind his party workers. He had a great vision for the development of the country and of the state, as also for taking forward Hindutva."

"Uddhav is completely the opposite. He is only interested in furthering his own self-interest, he has nothing to do with the party or party workers. Despite having a chief minister of Shiv Sena, Shiv Sena was going downhill, and MLAs were not getting funds. What face they will show to the people?" Shinde asked.

"Everyone was worried. Party workers were going to jail despite him being chief minister. What does all this mean? Shiv Sena was totally going down," he claimed. "His ideas are totally different from that of Balasaheb," Shinde added. (PTI)

## Kejriwal fails to get immediate relief from SC in money laundering case

**NEW DELHI, May 7:** Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal failed to get any relief from the Supreme Court on Tuesday, with a two-judge bench rising without pronouncing an order on granting him interim bail to enable him to campaign in the Lok Sabha elections.

Kejriwal has been accused of money laundering in a case linked to the alleged Delhi excise scam. A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta, which reserved its order on grant of interim bail earlier during the day and said it will be pronounced at 2 p.m., rose without delivering its verdict.

The bench reserved its decision after hearing the arguments put forth by senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi and Additional Solicitor General S V Raju, who appeared for Kejriwal and the Enforcement Directorate, respectively.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who also appeared for the probe agency, staunchly opposed showing any leniency to Kejriwal on account of the Lok Sabha polls and said

granting interim bail to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener would amount to creating a separate class for politicians.

The bench has divided the hearing on Kejriwal's petition against his arrest into two parts. His main petition challenges his arrest by the ED and seeks it to be declared as illegal, while the second aspect pertains to grant of interim bail keeping in mind the ongoing Lok Sabha polls. The court has reserved the order on the issue of grant of interim bail. Before rising for the day, the bench indicated that tomorrow the judges will be sitting in different combinations, and if the hearing on matters listed for Wednesday gets completed and the judges have time in hand, they would resume hearing Kejriwal's plea against his arrest by the ED.

"If not tomorrow, then we may take up the matter on Thursday. If not on Thursday, then we will be taking up this matter next week," said Justice Khanna, without specifying any

time frame for pronouncement of verdict on the issue of interim bail.

Meanwhile, a Delhi court extended Kejriwal's judicial custody in the money laundering case till May 20.

Special Judge for CBI and ED matters Kaveri Baweja extended Kejriwal's custody after the AAP leader was produced before the court through a video conference on the expiry of his remand granted earlier.

Kejriwal was arrested on March 21 and is currently lodged in Tihar Jail under judicial custody. On April 9, the Delhi High Court had upheld Kejriwal's arrest, saying there was no illegality and the ED was left with "little option" after he skipped repeated summonses and refused to join the investigation.

The matter relates to alleged corruption and money laundering in the formulation and execution of the Delhi government's now-scrapped excise policy for 2021-22. (PTI)

## Model Code of Conduct turned into 'Modi code of conduct' under BJP rule: Mamata



**PURULIA (WB), May 7:** West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday alleged that the Election Commission has turned a blind eye to the allegations against BJP leaders that they indulge in hate speeches during campaigns, converting the Model Code of Conduct to "Modi code of conduct".

Addressing an election rally at Purulia, the TMC supremo also claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other top BJP leaders consider only themselves as Hindus, and they do not think about other communities.

Modi and other BJP leaders by their "hate-filled speeches" are intimidating lower caste Hindus, minorities and other marginalised sections, but the Election Commission is silent, she alleged.

"The Election Commission's Model Code of Conduct has turned out to be a mockery and should be rechristened as Modi code of conduct. But we will continue to flag every incident of violation of rights of citizens of this country," Banerjee said.

Continuing her tirade at Modi, Banerjee said she has not seen another PM who utters so many lies.

She asked, "What happened to

his 2014 promise of giving ₹ 15 lakh in the bank account of every citizen? What happened to his promise to give free LPG gases? What happened to his 'Beti Bachao Beti Pado' project?"

"In every village, BJP leaders are making a false promise of giving ₹ 3000 to every poor woman under the 'Annapurna Bhandar' scheme. Remember, the BJP has withheld 100 days wage to the poor in Bengal for three years. The BJP is also not releasing a single paisa for rice, we have shouldered the entire amount so that our poor don't feel the crunch," she added.

The TMC supremo claimed that Modi visits Bengal only during polls, and resurfaces only ahead of the elections.

At another rally in Bisnupur in Bankura district, Banerjee alleged that the BJP is offering cash to tribal people to win votes.

"They had also offered cash to the mothers of Sandeshkhali as part of their conspiracy to weave a narrative to defame Bengal and its women. They have misjudged Bengal's women, their dignity and self-respect," she said.

In a recent viral video, it was claimed that BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari was behind the

Sandeshkhali incidents and several women were paid money to raise protests against TMC leaders accusing them of committing atrocities on them.

"The BJP thinks that by distributing cash, they can win votes. But by such conduct, they are showing disrespect to the people of Bengal. If any BJP leader visits your residence before the day of voting and offers money, demand ₹ 15 lakh. Ask them what happened to the earlier promises of Modi," she said.

Banerjee said if the BJP returns to power for the third time, it will throw "Dalits and other communities out of the country".

Raising the slogan "Modi Hatao Desh bachao", she alleged that the BJP is conspiring to implement the Uniform Civil Code which will make SCs, STs, OBCs and Muslims lose their identity.

Banerjee claimed that she received a message that a person belonging to the minority community was beaten to death on the way to a polling booth.

She, however, added that she does not have details about the incident.

Banerjee wondered whether the EC would take action on it. (PTI)

## Muslims should get reservations, but not on basis of religion: Lalu

**PATNA, May 7:** RJD president Lalu Prasad on Tuesday said he was in favour of extending reservation benefits to Muslims but emphasised that it should be based on social backwardness and "not on the basis of religion".

Notably, several Muslim sub-groups figure in the lists of OBCs in Bihar and a number of other states. However, their inclusion in Karnataka, which is currently under Congress rule, has come under fire from the BJP, which was defeated in assembly polls last year.

Prasad spoke to PTI-Video here after his remarks on reservation benefits for the minority community earlier in the day kicked up a storm and drew flak from Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Should not Muslims too get reservations (aarakshan to milna chahiye na Musلمانon ko)", was Prasad's terse reply to journalists when they asked him about allegations by Modi and other BJP leaders that the RJD and its allies like the Congress wanted to extend quota benefits to the minority community, depriving OBCs, Dalits and tribals of their due.

The RJD supremo's remark came under attack from Modi at a rally in Madhya Pradesh where he tore into the former chief minister of Bihar, whom he did not mention by name.

"A person who has serving sentences for

eating up fodder meant for cattle (an allusion to the fodder scam), who is out on bail because of poor health, has said just a few hours ago that reservations should be given to Muslims. The gentlemen is revered by the Congress. Just look at their brazenness", Modi said at the rally.

He also alleged "what they imply is that not just a portion, but the entire quotas should be given away to Muslims", adding that this was because of "politics of appeasement" practiced by INDIA bloc.

Reacting to the PM's outbursts, Prasad said in his typical style, "I am senior to Narendra Modi (in politics). He does not know many things that I know. It was during my reign Mandal Commission recommendations were implemented (in Bihar)".

"There are hundreds of social groups which got reservations as per the Mandal Commission report. But it was done not on the basis of religion. In the Constitution, there is no provision for reservations on religious basis", Prasad told PTI video.

He also alleged "Narendra Modi and his party want to scrap the Constitution and do away with reservations. This is proven by the fact that the previous BJP government headed by late Atal Bihari Vajpayee had set up a commission to review the Constitution". (PTI)

## 'Systemic fraud'; state was duty-bound to maintain records: SC

**NEW DELHI, May 7:** Terming the alleged recruitment scam in West Bengal "systemic fraud", the Supreme Court on Tuesday said authorities were duty-bound to maintain the digitised records pertaining to the appointment of 25,753 teachers and non-teaching staff.

A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra was hearing a batch of petitions challenging the Calcutta High Court's April 22 decision that invalidated the appointment of 25,753 teachers and non-teaching staff in state-run and state-aided schools of West Bengal.

"The public job is so scarce.... Nothing remains if the faith of the public goes. This is systemic fraud. Public jobs are extremely scarce today and are looked at for social mobility. What remains in the system if their appointments are also maligned? People will lose faith, how do you countenance this?" the CJ asked the lawyers representing the state government. The bench said the state government has nothing to show that the data was maintained by its authorities and asked about its availability. "Either you have the data or you do not have it.... You were duty-bound to maintain the documents in digitised form. Now, it is obvious that there is no data. You are unaware of the fact that your service provider has engaged another agency. You had to maintain supervisory control," the bench told the state government's lawyers. (PTI)

## West Nile fever in Kerala: State govt orders all districts to be vigilant

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, May 7:** The Kerala government on Tuesday said that West Nile fever cases have been reported from Thrissur, Malappuram and Kozhikode districts of the state.

State Health Minister Veena George, in a statement, confirmed that cases of the viral infection have been reported in the state and that all the districts have been asked to be vigilant.

As part of the vigil against the viral fever, spread by the Culex species of mosquitoes, the Minister has ordered that steps be taken for mosquito control by destroying their breeding grounds, the statement said.

The minister said that there was no need to be concerned, but requested anyone showing signs of fever or other symptoms of the West Nile infection to seek treatment immediately.

The main symptoms of West Nile infection are headache, fever, muscle aches, dizziness and loss of memory, but most patients do not experience these, she said.

Some people experience symptoms like fever, headache, vomiting and itching and in one per cent of the cases, it can lead to brain damage resulting in unconsciousness and sometimes death, the minister's statement said.

But the death rate is relatively low compared to Japanese encephalitis which shows similar symptoms and is more dangerous.



It said that instructions to begin pre-monsoon cleaning activities were already given in a high-level meeting held last week and now the District Medical Officers (DMOs) have been directed to further intensify the same.

As there is no medicine or vaccine available against West Nile virus, symptomatic treatment and prevention are key, the minister said.

As part of the preventive measures, she suggested wearing clothing that completely covers the body, use of mosquito nets and repellants and keeping one's home and surroundings clean.

Earlier in the day, Kozhikode district health officials confirmed reports of five cases of West Nile fever there.

The infected persons, which included children, are all fine now and back at their homes with no new cases reported from the areas they live in, an official of the Kozhikode district surveillance team said.

He also said that presently there was one person who is suspected of suffering from the vector-borne infection and is undergoing treatment.

The official said that the samples of those who exhibited symptoms of the disease and had undergone treatment were sent to the National Institute of Virology in Pune as a routine exercise.

"The results came back now and indicated that they were suffering from West Nile fever. They are all better now," he said.

The West Nile fever is spread by the Culex species of mosquitoes. It was first detected in 1937 in Uganda.

The fever was first detected in Kerala in 2011 and a six-year-old boy from Malappuram died due to the fever in 2019.

Thereafter, in May 2022, a 47-year-old man died of the fever in Thrissur district.

The West Nile virus can cause a fatal neurological disease in humans but most of those infected may not show any symptoms. (PTI)

## Telangana CM violated poll code, defer Rythu Bharosa payment: EC

**NEW DELHI, May 7:** The Election Commission on Tuesday directed the Telangana government to defer payments under the Rythu Bharosa scheme till Lok Sabha polls are held in the state on May 13, saying chief minister Revanth Reddy violated the model code of conduct by referring to the payouts in his public speeches.

In a letter to the Telangana chief electoral officer, the Commission said Reddy had violated the model code of conduct by publicly speaking about the ensuing disbursement under the scheme on or before May 9. Elections to all 17 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana will be held in the fourth phase on May 13.

"In the above premise and clear violation of Model Code of Conduct by Revanth Reddy, President Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee and star campaigner and Chief Minister, the Commission has directed that disbursement of balance instalment under the Rythu Bharosa scheme for Rabi season of 2023 will be effected only after completion of poll in the state of Telangana on

13.05.2024," the Commission said.

It also expressed concern over attempts to politicise the ongoing scheme during the elections and held that such actions were deemed as attempts to influence voters and disturb the level playing field.

The commission noted that similar directives were issued for the Rayathu Bandhu scheme during the Telangana assembly elections in 2023 on the condition that no new beneficiaries will be added to the scheme and the disbursement of instalments will be done without any publicity. The commission had asked the the Telangana government to make payments through bank transfers and that no public function or political functionary will be involved in the process. The scheme has been renamed as Rythu Bharosa by the Congress government in Telangana.

The EC noted that a minister of the erstwhile BRS government too had violated the model code of conduct by attempting to take credit for the scheme's disbursement during the election period. (PTI)

# Rohit takes good decisions under pressure, his presence will be key in T20 WC: Yuvraj

**NEW DELHI, May 7:** Rohit Sharma is a sensible captain who takes good decisions under pressure and his presence will be crucial for India, feels former all-rounder Yuvraj Singh who wishes to see his "close friend" win the elusive T20 World Cup next month.

Besides reaching the final of the 50-over World Cup and the WTC Final last year, India made the semifinals of the 2022 T20 World Cup under Rohit's captaincy.

The opener is set to lead the 'Men in Blue' once again at the T20 World Cup in the Caribbean and USA, starting on June 2.

"(Rohit's presence is going to be) very crucial. I think we need a really good captain, a sensible captain who takes decisions well under pressure. And he's the one to take them," Yuvraj, who is the T20 World Cup 2024 ambassador, told ICC.

The World Cup 2023 final

loss to Australia saw India's quest for an ICC title stretch to 10 years with their last victory dating back to the Champions Trophy in 2013 under the leadership of Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

Yuvraj feels India needs someone with Rohit's expertise to lead the Indian team at the marquee event.

He was the captain when we lost in the (Cricker World Cup) 50-over final (in 2023). He has won five IPL trophies as a cap-

tain. I think we need somebody like him to captain India."

Yuvraj has witnessed Rohit's journey since the 37-year-old made his debut for the Indian team as a teenager way back in 2007.

Recalling his first impression of the flamboyant opener, Yuvraj joked "Very poor English."

"Very funny guy. From the streets of Borivali (in Mumbai), we always tease him. But a great guy at heart."

Yuvraj's final season as an active cricketer came under Rohit's captaincy at MI.

"The more success he's had, he has never changed as a person. That's the beauty of Rohit Sharma. Fun-loving, always having fun with the guys. A great leader on the park and one of my closest friends from cricket."

"I really want to see Rohit Sharma with a World Cup trophy and a World Cup medal. He really deserves it." (PTI)



**BOTH TEAMS ARE LOCKED IN AT 12 POINTS FROM 11 GAMES**

## Inconsistent SRH take on LSG in push for play-offs spot



**HYDERABAD, May 7:** Sunrisers Hyderabad will be eager to move on from their underwhelming batting display when they host Lucknow Super Giants in a crucial Indian Premier League match here on Wednesday.

Both teams are locked in at 12 points from 11 games with SRH making the top four cut based on a slightly superior net run rate of -0.065 compared to LSG's -0.371. The Sunrisers find themselves in a fierce competition for the top four spot with Kolkata Knight Riders (16), Rajasthan Royals (16) and Chennai Super Kings (12) stationed above them on the points table.

The winner of the duel will take a leap in the playoff race.

The Pat Cummins-led side has ample talent but has been unable to hold on to a winning run recently. Sunrisers have lost three of their last four matches, mainly because their destructive batting line-up hasn't delivered.

In their last match against Mumbai Indians, which they lost by seven wickets, they failed to put up a good target on the

board, which has been their strong suit this season.

Barring Travis Head, who has been their stand out performer, the other batters in the side have faced a recent slump.

After displaying his power-hitting ability, young opener Abhishek Sharma has breached the 30-run mark just once in the last four games.

And while SRH head coach Daniel Vettori has conceded that the openers are not expected to do the job all the time, the middle order needs to step up.

The flamboyant Heinrich Klaasen has also been unable to strike the ball consistently and Nitish Reddy too has been patchy. The bowlers have fared better compared to their batting counterparts.

T Natarajan has been consistent with the ball while seasoned seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar also seems to have found his mojo after his incisive spell helped SRH eke out a one-run win against RR.

LSG, on the other hand, have to get over their overall lackluster

display against Kolkata Knight Riders, when they not only conceded the first-ever 200 plus score at the Ekana Stadium but also folded their innings at 137.

It was a day when skipper KL Rahul failed to anchor the innings while the likes of Marcus Stoinis and Nicholas Pooran were unable to get the big shots when needed.

Ayush Badoni has had a subdued run in this IPL and the uncapped Indian player would be keen to shrug off the rustiness.

LSG's struggles with the ball have been majorly due to the lack of firepower in their pace-bowling department.

With tearaway pacer Mayank Yadav ruled out of the IPL and left-arm pacer Mohsin Khan also picking up an injury, the onus will be on Afghan quick Naveen-ul-Haq, young Yash Thakur, Stoinis and spinners Krunal Pandya and Ravi Bishnoi to deliver.

Squads:  
Sunrisers Hyderabad: Abhishek Sharma, Travis Head,

Heinrich Klaasen (wk), Aiden Markram, Abdul Samad, Nitish Reddy, Shahbaz Ahmed, Pat Cummins (c), Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Jaydev Unadkat, T Natarajan, Mayank Markande, Umran Malik, Anmolpreet Singh, Glenn Phillips (wk), Rahul Tripathi, Washington Sundar, Upendra Yadav (wk), Jhathavedh Subramanyan, Sanvir Singh, Vijayakanth Vijayakanth, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Marco Jansen, Akash Maharaj Singh, Mayank Agarwal.

Lucknow Super Giants: Quinton de Kock, KL Rahul (c & wk), Deepak Hooda, Ayush Badoni, Marcus Stoinis, Nicholas Pooran (wk), Krunal Pandya, Ravi Bishnoi, Mohsin Khan, Shamar Joseph, Yash Thakur, Manimaran Siddharth, Prerak Mankad, Arshad Khan, Krishnappa Gowtham, Amit Mishra, Kyle Mayers, Ashton Turner, Matt Henry, Naveen-ul-Haq, Devdutt Padikkal, Yudhvir Singh Charak, Mayank Yadav, Arshin Kulkarni.

Match starts 7:30pm IST. (PTI)

## No plans to rest Bumrah yet: MI batting coach Pollard

**MUMBAI, May 7:** Mumbai Indians have no plans to rest ace India pacer Jasprit Bumrah ahead of the T20 World Cup even though they are out of contention for the IPL playoffs, said batting coach Kieron Pollard.

MI defeated Sunrisers Hyderabad by seven wickets here on Monday after Suryakumar Yadav (102 not out) struck his second IPL century to help his team chase down a target of 174 with 16 balls to spare.

The win helped MI end their four-match losing streak and record only their fourth win in 12 matches. "I certainly haven't had any discussions about that," Pollard told media after the game when asked if there are any plans to rest Bumrah for MI's remaining two matches keeping in mind the upcoming T20 World Cup. "I don't think that's my role and function at this point in time. But let's see what happens. We are all here to play an entire IPL. Sometimes when we think too far ahead of different things, thinking about World Cups, all these things could affect performances even from before the team was selected." (PTI)

## Stimac announces 2<sup>nd</sup> list of probables for WC qualifiers, injured Jhingan misses out

**NEW DELHI, May 7:** Injured central defender Sandesh Jhingan missed out as Indian senior men's team head coach Igor Stimac on Tuesday announced his second list of 15 probables for the Bhubaneswar camp ahead of the FIFA World Cup 2026 preliminary joint qualification round 2 matches against Kuwait and Qatar. The first list of probables was announced on Saturday.

Key defender Jhingan, who sustained a right knee injury during India's Asian Cup group match against Syria in January, missed out of the list.

The 26 players from the first list will begin training in the Odisha capital on May 10. The 15 players from the second list, comprising players from Mumbai City FC and Mohun Bagan SG, who contested the ISL Cup final, will join the camp on May 15. A total of 41 players will take part in the national camp. The Blue Tigers will face Kuwait in Kolkata on June 6 before travelling away to take on Qatar on June 11 in their last two matches of Group A.

India are currently placed second in the group, with four points from four matches. The top two teams in the group will qualify for

Round 3 of the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers and book their berth at the AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027. The second list of 15 probables for the Bhubaneswar camp (training from May 15):

Goalkeepers: Phurba Tempa Lachenpa, Vishal Kaith

Defenders: Akash Mishra, Anwar Ali, Mehtab Singh, Rahul Beke, Subhasish Bose

Midfielders: Anirudh Thapa, Deepak Tangri, Lalengmawia Ralte, Lallianzuala Chhangte, Lisiton Colaco, Sahal Abdul Samad

Forwards: Manvir Singh, Vikram Partap Singh

The first list of 26 probables for the Bhubaneswar camp (training from May 10):

Goalkeepers: Amrinder Singh, Gurpreet Singh Sandhu.

Defenders: Amey Ganesh Ranawade, Jay Gupta, Lalchungnunga, Muhammad Hammad, Narender, Nikhil Poojary, Roshan Singh Naorem.

Midfielders: Brandon Fernandes, Edmund Lalrindika, Imran Khan, Isak Vanlalratfela, Jeakson Singh Thounaojam, Mahesh Singh Naorem, Mohammad Yasir, Nandhakumar Sekar, Rahul Kanholkar, Suresh Singh Wangjam, Vibin Mohanan. (PTI)

## Surya has to bat at No. 3 in T20WC, says Lara rooting for India-West Indies final

**NEW DELHI, May 7:** Suryakumar Yadav has to bat at number three, said the legendary Brian Lara as he rooted for an India-West Indies final at the T20 World Cup next month to fix the "wrong" of 2007 when India's early exit "killed us in the Caribbean".

India have expectedly retained proven performers like skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli in the squad, while deciding to keep young talent like Shubman Gill and Rinku Singh among reserves. Suryakumar, though, is part of the main squad.

"My one advice, and I don't know if you're going to like it or not, but Sky has to bat at three. He just has to bat at three. He is one of the great-

est T20 players in the game. And you speak to players like Sir Viv, and he will tell you he used to want to get out there in the middle."

Lara said in an interaction with PTI editors at its headquarters which was facilitated by Star Sports. "And I feel that that's the same thing with SKY. So, get on it as quickly as possible. He's not an opener, get him out there and if he can bat for 10-15 overs, you know what's going to happen. He's going to put you in an unassailable position if you bat

him first, or he's going to win the game if he's batting second. And then let everybody sort of position themselves outside of that, but a good structure is important," he explained.

Suryakumar usually bats at number four for India and Kohli at three. Kohli opening the innings alongside Rohit to accom-

modate Surya at three is an option which will leave Yashasvi Jaiswal on the bench.

"Just find a way to make Suryakumar bat at three," stressed Lara. Lara, who is doing commentary in the IPL, said India doing well could also culminate in a final showdown with West Indies, which would make up for the disaster that was the 2007 ODI World Cup where India made a preliminary round exit. "The West Indies should do well. They have a lot of individ-

ual stars and when they come together as a team they do well. India, with all their cry over selection, they find themselves in the top four. "England they seem to enjoy Caribbean a lot, lay on the beach a lot. England will be there and fourth spot, Afghanistan, they are capable of getting into the four," he said.

"India and West Indies final is going to make up for so much wrong that has happened in the past. India missing out in 2007 in second round, that killed us in the Caribbean. We don't want that to happen again. So, India and West Indies in the final and may the best team win," he added. India have picked four spinners in the squad, including Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Axar Patel and Ravindra Jadeja, the last two being all-rounders. Lara sees only a couple of them playing in the eleven. "In terms of spinners, I don't want to dig too deep into having four spinners because I don't think you're going to play four spinners. But I like the fact that Chahal is there. He is not just an IPL star. You look at him, oh, you look at the brains that he put behind the ball, the deliveries, he's out-thinking the batter." (PTI)

"He's (Marsh) progressing well. Probably a little slower than expected. But we've got plenty of time now that he has been ruled out the IPL. (Our) first game is just short of a month away now. So ample time for him to get ready," McDonald told reporters.

"You probably won't see him bowl in the next couple of weeks here. It'll probably happen the week before we leave. And then he'll be able to ramp that up when we're over there."

"We'll be able to cherry pick the moments during the tournament where he'll be useful with the ball, (and) we've got some all-round depth in the squad, which gives us good coverage anyway," he added.

McDonald said there was no concern around Marsh's lack of match practice over the last two months as Australia will play some practice games before their T20 World Cup opener against Oman on June

## Mitch Marsh's progress is slower, but he will be fit to bowl in T20WC: McDonald

**BRISBANE, May 7:** Australia coach Andrew McDonald on Tuesday said even though skipper Mitchell Marsh's progress is slower than expected, the all-rounder will be fit to bowl in the upcoming T20 World Cup in the Americas.

March, who played for Delhi Capitals, returned from the Indian Premier League in early April to recover from a right hamstring injury ahead of the shortest format's marquee event.

Besides Marsh, members of Australia's World Cup squad who are not part of IPL assembled here on Tuesday for a training camp before jetting off for the Caribbean on May 25.

"He's (Marsh) progressing well. Probably a little slower than expected. But we've got plenty of time now that he has been ruled out the IPL. (Our) first game is just short of a month away now. So ample time for him to get ready," McDonald told reporters.

"You probably won't see him bowl in the next couple of weeks here. It'll probably happen the week before we leave. And then he'll be able to ramp that up when we're over there."

"We'll be able to cherry pick the moments during the tournament where he'll be useful with the ball, (and) we've got some all-round depth in the squad, which gives us good coverage anyway," he added.

McDonald said there was no concern around Marsh's lack of match practice over the last two months as Australia will play some practice games before their T20 World Cup opener against Oman on June

5. "No real concern about match fitness. We've got a couple of practice games when we get to Trinidad in the support period. So he'll likely get plenty of match opportunities.

"And if not, we'll be able to simulate those through practice, which our coaching staff are pretty good at. By the first game against Oman, we're confident he'll be up and running," McDonald said.

Asked about the exclusion of young batting sensation Jake Fraser-McGurk from Australia's squad and the fact that they will only have one player in their squad under the age of 28 in Cameron Green, McDonald said: "There's been a discussion around the age profile of our team in all formats.

"I'm a big believer in you don't know when the end is going to be. And a lot of people write off those players just based around their age. We feel as though in the last 12 months in particular in the white-ball space we've given plenty of opportunities to other players," he said.

"Have we gone back to the tried and tested in terms of World Cups and the performers that we know can perform on that stage? There's no doubt about that. It's players that have been there before and done it and are still in good form. And you look at David Warner in the last 15 games for Australia, his record is outstanding.

"Josh Hazlewood, Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, those players that are probably the elder statesman of the team are still performing at international level. And that goes a long way." (PTI)

## Rohit will lead India in the next month's 20-team global showpiece 'Fatigued' Rohit needs break to freshen up ahead of T20I World Cup: Michael Clarke

**MUMBAI, May 7:** Former Australia captain Michael Clarke does not read much into Rohit Sharma's string of poor scores, but suggests that the "fatigued" Indian skipper take a break to freshen up ahead of the T20I World Cup. Rohit, who will lead India in the next month's 20-team global showpiece, has four single-digit scores in his last five outings for his franchise Mumbai Indians in the ongoing IPL.

The 37-year-old has had a busy season this year with an intense five-Test series preceding the IPL for Mumbai Indians, who are all but eliminated from the race to

the playoffs this year.

"Rohit, being the wise judge of his own performances, will undoubtedly be disappointed, especially considering his strong start. In my view, he might be feeling a bit fatigued as well," Clarke told Star Sports.

"A break to freshen up could do wonders for him, but as the Indian captain and a key player for Mumbai Indians, you're not getting a break. He's going to have to find form," Clarke continued.

Rohit played as an impact substitute in their match against Kolkata Knight Riders last week, raising some concerns for the In-

dian camp.

However, he played a full game against Sunrisers Hyderabad three days later.

Clarke said it is only a matter of time before Rohit gets back to his usual elements as a batter.

"He was in a great mood. He's happy, which is a really good sign. He doesn't seem to be struggling with his timing; it's just a matter of getting out," he said.

"With someone like Rohit, it's only a matter of time before he finds his form again. Hopefully, he stresses less and focuses on his game because he's too talented to keep missing out. He's at his best

when he's timing the ball, rather than trying to force it," he added.

Clarke, meanwhile, also had praise in store for Rohit's deputy for the World Cup and MI skipper Hardik Pandya, who returned with 4-0-31-3 in their seven-wicket win over SRH on Monday.

"In the last couple of games, he's been taking wickets with his bowling, making some adjustments along the way. For an all-rounder, success in one department boosts confidence across the board," Clarke said.

"This aspect is crucial for Hardik Pandya's cricket in any format — he needs to contribute

with the ball. Initially, he didn't bowl as much as expected or desired in the first half of this tournament. However, in the last three or four games, he's returned to form."

Clarke also said Pandya used his bouncers effectively which is an essential weapon in his armoury. "He used his bouncer effectively, which I love seeing because it is a strong weapon in his arsenal. He executed the basics flawlessly, which is not only beneficial for Mumbai but also for Indian cricket as a whole, as it will enhance his overall performance," said Clarke. (PTI)