Rise in UK knife attacks leads to a crackdown and stokes public anxiety

Saudi Prince Muhammad bin Salman's visit to Pak postponed: Reports

Odisha to go to twin polls for 4 LS seats, 28 assembly segments today

Hope there is resolution of remaining issues: Jaishankar



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DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG

MONDAY, MAY 13, 2024

PRICE ₹8 PAGES 12

Voting for 96 LS seats in 10 states/UT; 175 assembly seats in Andhra today

## Fate of several top leaders to be sealed

AMRAVATI/LUCKNOW, May 12: The electoral fate of several prominent candidates like Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, Union minister Giriraj Singh, TMC's firebrand leader Mohua Moitra and AIMIM's Asaduddin Owaisi will be decided on Monday when polling will be held in 96 Lok Sabha constituencies across 10 states and Union Territories in the fourth phase of the general

Voting will simultaneously be held in all 175 Assembly seats in Andhra Pradesh, which is witnessing a triangular contest involving ruling YSRC, the Congress-led INDIA bloc and the NDA, comprising the BJP, Chandrababu Naidu-led TDP and Pawan Kalyan-led Jana Sena Party (JSP).

As many as 28 legislative assembly seats of Odisha are also going to polls in this phase.

A total of 1,717 candidates are in the fray in the Lok Sabha seats and more than 19 lakh polling officials have been deployed at 1.92 lakh polling stations for the over 17.70 crore eligible voters, including 8.73 women, in this round of the seven-phase polls.

tests are those involving former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Akhilesh Yadav (Kannauj, UP) and Union ministers Giriraj Singh (Begusarai, Bihar), Nityanand Rai (Ujiarpur, Bihar) and Raosaheb

Danve (Jalna, Maharashtra). Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Among the keenly watched con- Chowdhury and former cricketer

Baharampur, WB), BJP's Pankaja Munde (Beed, Maharashtra), AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi (Hyderabad,

Telangana) and Andhra Pradesh Congress president YS Sharmila (Kadapa) are among the prominent candidates.

Union minister Ajay Kumar Mishra Teni, whose son is an accused in the 2021 Lakhimpur Kheri violence case, is eyeing a hat-trick from Kheri (UP), while TMC's Mahua Moitra, who was expelled from Lok Sabha in the wake of cash-for-query allegations, is seeking re-election from Krishnanagar in West Bengal.

Film star-turned-politician Shatrughan Sinha is seeking re-election from Asansol where he is pitted against BJP's veteran leader S S Ahluwalia. BJP's former West Bengal (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# 2,480 illegal immigrants detected in Manipur in 2023: CM Biren

IMPHAL, May 12: Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh on Sunday said 2,480 illegal immigrants were detected in the northeastern state in 2023 but the campaign was cut short after violence broke out on May 3 last

Addressing a press conference Singh said concerned with increasing deforestation and setting up of new villages by illegal immigrants, a Cabinet sub-committee was formed in February 2023 after a cabinet meeting attended by two Kuki ministers Letpao Haokip and Nemcha Kipgen. Haokip was made the head of the subcommittee to identify illegal immigrants.

"We are not biased against anybody but against illegal immigrants. It was a decision taken by the state cabinet," Singh said. "Biometrics were taken in ten villages of Chandel during which 1,165 illegal immigrants were found, 1,147 illegal immigrants were found in 13 villages of Tengnoupal district, 154 illegal immigrants in Churachandpur and rest were found in Kamjong district," Singh said.

These figures are not inclusive of the additional 5,457 illegal immigrants who entered Kamjong district, Singh said, adding biometrics of 5,173 people have been taken while 329 have returned back voluntarily after situation

improved in the neighbouring country. "The detection of illegal immigrants was not limited



to one community but was to cover the entire state of Manipur. They were found after visiting villages,' Singh said. "The campaign for identifying illegal immigrants was, however, cut short just after a month it started and had to be stopped after violence broke out on May 3," Singh said.

Singh expressed strong disappointment with the Geneva-based International Court of Jurists (ICJ) which had recently ordered Indian authorities to stop deportation in Manipur. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

#### HTBRIEF

#### Moukonwari competition

**DEMOW:** An all Assam based prize money Moukonwari competition will be organised in AEROCITY resort Rajmai near Demow on May 14, 2024. To participate in the competition it will be free. The Farmers and the People associated with Handicrafts will be felicitated. In the Moukonwari Competition, there will be first, second, and third prizes, seven competitors will be given consolation prizes and all the participants will be given certificates. Interested participants can contact the following contact numbers- 9101012536, 8136069051.

#### Sonia Gandhi spent more than 70 pc of MP funds on minorities, says Shah

RAEBARELI/PRATAPGARH Kerala. Congress leader Priyanka (UP), May 12: Union home minister Amit Shah on Sunday launched a blistering attack on senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi, accusing her of "spending more than 70 per cent of her MP funds on minorities" and the Gandhi family of being experts in lying.

Rahul Gandhi is fighting the Lok Sabha elections from Raebareli the seat held by his mother Sonia Gandhi for the last two decades. She recently moved to the Rajya Sabha. Rahul Gandhi has also been fielded from Wayanad in Gandhi Vadra addressed a rally in support of her brother Rahul Gandhi in Raebareli and accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of never visiting any village in his Varanasi constituency.

Raebareli will vote in the fifth phase of the Lok Sabha elections on May 20. Shah also addressed an election rally in Pratapgarh where he said that Rahul Gandhi can be scared of Pakistan's atom bomb but the BJP is not; Pakistan-occupied Kashmir belongs to India and "we will take it". (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## KAAC assures financial support for CUET exam applicants

HT Bureau
DIPHU, May 12: Richard Tokbi, the education incharge, stated on Sunday that the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) will provide all necessary support to students appearing for the Common University Entrance Test (CUET).

He informed that all expenses, including travel, food, and lodging, for students from both Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong, who have already passed their HS final year examination and are seeking post-graduate courses, will be covered by the KAAC relief fund.

"We have received information about the difficulties facing students appearing for the CUET exam as there are no examination centres here in Karbi Anglong right now. Our CEM, Tuliram Ronghang Sir, has assured us that he will support all those students appearing for the CUET exam for their entire expenses, including travel,



food, and lodging," stated the EM during a press conference. The EM also shared that in Karbi Anglong district alone, there are 4,572 students in the Arts stream, 492 students in Commerce, and 770 in Science streams preparing to appear (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

#### 8 police personnel fall ill after consuming wild mushrooms

**NORTH LAKHIMPUR, May 12:** At least eight Assam Police personnel fell ill after consuming wild mushrooms in Dhemaji district on Sunday, a senior officer said.

The personnel belonging to the 22nd battalion were posted at Panbari near Gogamukh along the interstate border with Arunachal Pradesh, he said. "The eight jawans consumed wild mushrooms for lunch on Sunday. After around 30 minutes of finishing their lunch, they fell ill and experienced dysentery and vomiting, following which they were (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



## Global order witnessed re-balancing in recent decades, says Jaishankar

NEW DELHI, May 12: In the last few decades, the global order has witnessed a "re-balancing" that is shaping its new directions, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar

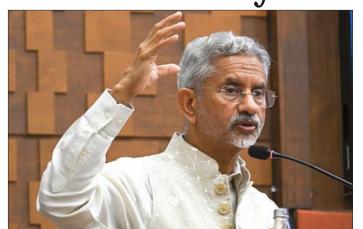
Addressing a gathering here at the launch of the Arbitration Bar of India, Jaishankar also said the requirement to harmonise, mediate and settle differences and disputes will be even more "as we progress on that journey towards Viksit Bharat"

This is a "very significant step" in the emergence of India as an arbitration venue, he said.

"I know that all of you appreciate its significance more than I do. But let me, as a foreign minister, today really place it in a larger context and a context that I will borrow again from the AG's (attorney general's) reference to a triangle, a Greek triangle. The triangle I use here is really one of law, business and diplomacy," he added.

In his address, Jaishankar said, "In the last few decades, the global order has witnessed a re-balancing that is shaping its new directions.

"One facet of that is the democratisation of institutions and activities. As economic capabilities emerge or, in our case, re-emerge,? it is natural that many of its accompanying dimensions also spread out much more in the world. In that sense, the event for which we have come is reflective of a larger redistribution of power, of influence and of capabilities in the world," the external affairs minister said.



Obviously, this does not happen by itself and it requires both the vision of a leadership as well as the commitment of the stakeholders to make it happen. And that is actually what is being witnessed in the country today, Jaishankar said.

India is currently the fifthlargest economy in terms of GDP and likely to become the third largest soon. It is only to be expected that a domain as crucial as arbitration to the international economy should also find adequate expression here, the minister added. Not just that, like in other spheres, "we need to develop highquality capabilities so that India too stands out in a competitive world", he said. Jaishankar later shared some photographs of the launch event on X.

"Glad to participate at the launch of the Arbitration Bar of

"If we are to get full mileage from our 3D dividend of democracy, demographics and demand, then high-quality arbitration is a notable factor in further attracting foreign direct investment (FDI), the minister added.

He concluded that India is poised to make crucial decisions about its future. There is a foundation of a decade of transformation on which "we are seeking to build a pathway for the next 25 years", he said. "Our goal is Viksit Bharat, that is developed India. This will not only have an economic matrix but an all-round development that would include quality of life, ease of doing business, deep national strengths, technological capabilities, a larger role in the international economy, but not least, the institutions, the infrastructure and the talent that would actually define Viksit Bharat," Jaishankar

"It will certainly be a nation that will see more intensive and consequential economic activities at home and abroad. The requirement to harmonise, mediate and settle differences and disputes will be even more as we progress on that journey towards Viksit Bharat," the minister added.

"The legal world will also make its expected contribution to the evolution of Viksit Bharat. I believe that the inauguration of the Arbitration Bar of India is one noteworthy step in that direction,"

## 449 infra projects hit by cost overrun of ₹ 5.01 trillion in March: MoSPI

NEW DELHI, May 12: As many as 449 infrastructure projects, each entailing an investment of ₹ 150 crore or above, were hit by cost overrun of more than ₹ 5.01 trillion in March 2024, an official report stated.

According to Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), which monitors infrastructure projects worth₹ 150 crore and above, out of 1,873 projects, 449 reported cost overrun and 779 projects were delayed.

"Total original cost of implementation of the 1,873 projects was ₹ 26,87,535.69 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be ₹ 31,88,859.02 crore, which reflects overall cost overrun of ₹ 5,01,323.33 crore (18.65 per cent of original cost)," the ministry's latest report for March 2024 said.

According to the report, the expenditure incurred on these projects till March 2024 is ₹ 17,11,648.99 crore, which is 53.68 per cent of the anticipated cost of the projects.

However, the number of delayed projects decreased to 567 if delay is calculated on the basis of the latest schedule of completion, it added. (PTI)

#### Contd. from Page 1...

#### Fate of several top leaders

president Dilip Ghosh and Trinamool Congress' Kirti Azad are contesting from Bardhaman-Durgapur. So far, till phase three of the Lok Sabha elections, polling has concluded in 283 seats out of 543. Polling will be held on Monday in all 17 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana, all 25 seats in Andhra Pradesh, 13 in Uttar Pradesh, five in Bihar, four in Jharkhand, eight in Madhya Pradesh, 11 in Maharashtra, four in Odisha, eight in West Bengal and one in Jammu and Kashmir.

Nearly 17.48 lakh electorate are eligible to vote in the election to the prestigious Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency and 24 candidates are in the fray. It is the first major election in Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019. The National Conference has fielded influential Shia leader Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi while youth leader Waheed Para is contesting on the People's Democratic Party ticket. The Apni Party has fielded Ashraf Mir, while the BJP is not contesting. The BJP-led NDA has MPs from over 40 of these 96 seats that will go to polls on Monday.

The voter turnout in the first three phases of the Lok Sabha elections was 66.14 per cent, 66.71 per cent and 65.68 per cent, respectively. The EC believes that the heatwave conditions are one of the reasons for lower voter turnout in the last three phases as compared to the 2019 parliamentary polls. Citing an India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecast, the poll authority on Sunday said that "there is no significant concern regarding hot weather conditions for the polling in Phase 4."

The weather forecast indicates that the parliamentary constituencies going to polls are likely to experience normal to below normal temperatures and there will be no heatwave-like conditions in these areas on polling day. Keeping in mind the hot weather conditions and people's reluctance to step out in the afternoon, the Election Commission has increased poll timing in some Telangana seats. While the usual hours of voting are from 7 am to 6 pm, they are curtailed keeping in mind the terrain, time of sunset and security situation. Issues like reservations, appeasement politics, corruption and jobs dominated the battle of narratives in the fourth phase of the Lok Sabha elections. Among the 13 poll-bound constituencies in Uttar Pradesh, a close contest is on between SP chief Akhilesh Yadav and sitting BJP MP Subrat Pathak in Kannauj, while in Unnao, incumbent BJP MP Sakshi Maharaj is up against SP's Annu Tandon.

In West Bengal, the EC has identified 3,647 polling stations as "critical" across the eight constituencies. A total of 152 companies (around 100 personnel each) of central forces would be deployed in Bardhaman Purba district, followed by Birbhum (131), Asansol Durgapur Police Commissionerate (88), Krishnanagar Police District (81), Murshidabad Police District (73) and Ranaghat Police District (54), an official said.

The voter turnout in the redrawn Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency, following the delimitation exercise in Jammu and Kashmir in 2022, will be keenly watched as most of the areas under the seat had previously witnessed low polling percentages due to boycott calls given by the separatists. To encourage people to exercise their franchise, district election officers in the constituency organised various outreach programmes, used audio, visual and print media and also held street plays and sports events. Officials said all arrangements have been put in place for Monday's polling. "A total of 17,47,810 voters have been enrolled in phase IV, including 8,75,938 men, 8,71,808 women and 64 third-gender voters. There are around 11,682 persons with disability and 705 voters above the age of 100 years," they said. As many as 2,135 polling stations have been set up across Srinagar, Ganderbal, Pulwama and parts of Budgam and Shopian districts where polling will be held. Twenty-six special polling stations have been set up for migrant voters of Kashmir Division with 21 in Jammu,

## four in Delhi and one in Udhampur District. (PTI) 2,480 illegal immigrants detected

Singh asked, "Does the organisation know the hardship faced by the indigenous population and issues of deforestation, demographic challenges and poppy cultivation caused by the illegal immigrants?"

"It is an irresponsible statement. Both the Centre and Manipur government are not under them. The deportations were also not forcible and no laws were broken. Myanmar authorities came to receive them after completing paper works and formalities" Singh said, adding

"NGOs which are focussed on earning funds should not interfere in the state issue as these are matters of survival for the indigenous people." Singh lauded the acknowledgement made by the National Green Tribunal over the loss of forest areas in Manipur.

NGT's Principal Bench in Delhi taking note of the data released by the chief minister on forest cover loss in the north eastern state had said they raised "substantial issues relating to compliance of environmental norms." Singh said "We have received information about displaced persons who after getting training from self-help groups are selling their products on the streets. We will engage a team or an NGO to purchase the products and sell them on

"We have also prepared to do something for the betterment of those staying in the relief camps once the election code of conduct concludes", Singh said. More than 219 people were killed and thousands displaced from homes after ethnic clashes broke out on May 3 last year, when a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal Valley. Tribals - Nagas and Kukis - constitute little over 40 per cent and reside in the hill districts. (PTI)

#### Sonia Gandhi spent more

He was referring to Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar's remarks on Pakistan having the atom bomb. At an election rally in Raebareli, Shah said, "You gave the Gandhi family a chance for years, but no development work has been done ... They (Congress) do not believe in development. They do not even come to you in your

Asking people to vote for BJP candidate Dinesh Pratap Singh, the Union minister said, "We will connect Raebareli with Modiji's development journey." "The 'shahzada' (prince) has come here to seek votes. You have been voting for many years. Have you received anything from the MP fund? If you have not received it, then where did it go? It went to their vote bank. Sonia Gandhi has spent more than 70 per cent of the MP funds on minorities," Shah claimed. MP fund refers to the Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme under which MPs can recommend development programmes involving expenditure of ₹ 5 crore each year in their constituencies. Intensifying his attack, he said, "This Gandhi family is an expert in lying. They are now promising ₹ 1 lakh for every woman. In the Telangana (assembly) elections, they had said that they would give ₹ 15,000 to every woman. The women of the state elected them (Congress) ... Forget about ₹ 15,000, they did not even give ₹ 1,500." "Many people here told me that this is a family seat... It is true. The people of Raebareli have made the Gandhi and Nehru families win for years. But after getting elected from here, how many times did Sonia Ji and her family come to Raebareli? Okay, Sonia ji's health is not good, but has Rahul baba or sister Priyanka come?"

After the rally, Shah visited the residence of Samajwadi Party MLA from Unchahar Manoj Pandey, who on February 27 resigned from the post of the party's chief whip and cross-voted in favour of the BJP candidate in the Rajya Sabha polls. In Pratapgarh, Shah said, "Mani Shankar Aiyar of the Congress, and INDI Alliance leader Farooq Abdullah said Pakistan should be respected because they have the atom bomb and don't demand Pak Occupied Kashmir. Today, I want to ask... is POK not a part of India? Rahul baba, if you want to be scared of the atom bomb, be scared, we are not scared. Pakistan-occupied Kashmir belongs to India and we will take it."

In a video, Aiyar has been heard saying that India should give respect to Pakistan as it is a sovereign nation and engage with it as it also possesses the atom bomb. He indicated in the video that if a "mad person" comes to power there and uses the atomic bomb, it will not be good and will have its effect here too. While Aiyar said the video was old and dredged up now as the BJP's election campaign is faltering, the Congress said it totally disagreed with the remarks made by Aiyar some months ago.

"Every child of Kaushambi is willing to lay down his life for Kashmir. The Congress, Samajwadi Party and the BSP were taking care of Article 370 as their 'illegitimate child'. You made Modi ji prime minister for the second time and he scrapped Article 370, worked to end terrorism in Kashmir and make it an integral part of India," Shah told the rally. (PTI)

#### KAAC assures financial

for the exam. Meanwhile, in West Karbi Anglong, there are 1,463 students in the Arts stream and 25 students in the Commerce stream slated to appear for the CUET exam. There are no students from the Science stream. In Assam, there are eight CUET examination centres, including Guwahati, Golaghat, Tezpur, Silchar, and Dhimaji. The nearest CUET examination centre for Karbi Anglong is in Dimapur, Nagaland.

The EM further mentioned that the KAAC authority has initiated the process of setting up a CUET examination centre in Karbi Anglong with New Delhi. Additionally, the EM informed that both HSLC and HS results have improved with increasing pass percentages. However, there is still room for improvement, and he urged all stakeholders, including social organizations, to extend their cooperation in cultivating an educational atmosphere in both Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong. Furthermore, APSC and UPSC free coaching centres have already been established in both Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong, he noted.

The press meet was attended by EM, KAAC, and BJP MP candidate Amarsing Tisso; secretary, KAAC educa-

tion, Dilip Terang; inspector of Schools, Karbi Anglong, Birensing Engti; and principal incharge, Diphu Government College, Mauzzam Husain Barbhuiya.

CUET is the premier entrance test for admission to 249 universities, including 54 prestigious central universities. It is based on a mission – One India Entrance Exam – to unify all disparate education boards, marking schemes, difficulty levels, and various tests conducted by different universities. Instead of struggling to clear astronomical cutoffs for the best colleges, all students get to compete on a common platform with uniform scoring. CUET has streamlined the admission process for students to secure seats in their preferred colleges.

The CUET exam is scheduled from May 15 to 18 in various centres across the country, with 8 centres in Assam.

## 8 police personnel fall ill

taken to a health centre at Gogamukh," he said. The doctor attending to them said it was a case of food poisoning and referred them to Dhemaji Civil Hospital for better treatment, the officer. "They are presently undergoing treatment at Dhemaji and their condition is stated to be stable," he added. (PTI)

#### IOB Reports Record Profits for Q4

GUWAHATI, May 12: Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) has proudly announced its highest-ever net profit, reaching ₹ 808 Crores for the fourth quarter and ₹ 2,656 Crores for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024. This remarkable achievement underscores the bank's robust financial performance in the face of evolving market dynamics.

During the fiscal year, IOB's operating profit years. surged by 13.83%, accompanied by a notable 26.54% increase in net profit. A significant highlight was the bank's exceptional control over slippages, with only ₹ 1517 Crores recorded, amounting to a mere 0.87% of performing advances as of March 31, 2023.

The quarter ended March 31, 2024, witnessed an impressive growth trajectory in interest income, rising to ₹ 6,629 Crores from ₹ 5,192 Crores, reflecting the bank's strong operational performance. Additionally, IOB strengthened its Net Interest Margin to 3.28%, compared to 2.93% as of March 31, 2023.

With total business soaring to ₹ 5,04,923 Crores as of March 31, 2024, IOB experienced substantial growth in Current Account Savings Account (CASA) by 43.90%, demonstrating its expanding market presence.

#### Adani Enterprises to invest ₹80k cr in current fiscal, says official

NEW DELHI, May 12: Adani Enterprises, billionaire Gautam Adani-led group's flagship firm that has interests spanning from new energy to airports and data centres, plans to spend ₹ 80,000 crore across businesses in the current financial year, a senior company executive said. A bulk of the capital expenditure planned for 2024-25 (April 2024 to March 2025) fiscal will be on new energy businesses and airports, said Saurabh Shah, deputy chief financial officer, at an analyst call, transcript of which was released by the company. "We are looking at a capex of about ₹ 80,000 crore in FY25, out of which a major part...will go in ANIL and airports business which take up about ₹ 50,000 crore of capex," he said.

ANIL is Adani New Industries Ltd which makes solar modules that convert sunlight into electricity, and green hydrogen. (PTI)

#### NAME CHANGE

I have changed my name from MO-HAMMED KOMRUL ISLAM to KAM-

My new name is KAMRUL ISLAM. My old name was MOHAMMED KOM-

RUL ISLAM. Vill+PO- Barhawar, PS- Murajhar,

Dist.- Hojai(Assam) PIN-782439

#### NAME CHANGE

I have changed my name from MOHAM-MAD ANCHAR ALI to ANSAR ALI. My new name is ANSAR ALI. My old name was MOHAMMAD AN-CHAR ALI.

Vill- Pub Dhaniram Pathar, P.O -Telibasti, P.S.-Hojai,

Dist.- Hojai(Assam) Pin-782435

#### NAME CHANGE

I have changed my name from MO-HAMMED ABDUL JOLIL to ABDUL

My new name is ABDUL JALIL. My old name was MOHAMMED ABDUL

Vill+ P.O.- Barhawar, P.S.- Murajhar Dist.- Hojai(Assam)

PIN- 782439

#### week, analysts said. News flows around the general election would also be tracked by investors, market experts said.

Besides, investors would also take cues from the trading activity of foreign investors, the movement of global oil benchmark Brent crude and the rupee-dollar trend.

NEW DELHI, May 12: Stock

"Investors will be bombarded with economic data on both domestic and global fronts. Domestically, watch for Consumer Price Index (CPI) and Wholesale Price Index (WPI). Globally, focus will be on the US Producer Price Index (PPI) and Consumer Price Index (CPI) figures.

"Additionally, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell's speech will be a key event to watch. China's industrial production data and Japan's GDP figures round out the important releases for the week," said Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd. Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said that the current trend in the domestic markets is likely to continue in the short-

Bharti Airtel and Mahindra & Mahindra are among the major companies scheduled to announce their earnings during the week. "The outlook for the market

will be guided by major global and domestic economic data, India's WPI inflation data, US PPI data, Core CPI data, initial jobless claims, Japan's GDP data, India Q4 company results and speech by Fed Chairman Jerome Powell," Arvinder Singh Nanda, Senior Vice President, Master Capital Services Ltd, said. "Overall, we expect the market to consolidate in a broader range and take cues from Q4 results, global factors and news flows around the general election," said Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial



## **HPCL post ₹81,000 cr profit in FY24** NEW DELHI, May 12: State-owned fuel re-

be a natural accompaniment of

@makeinindia as our economy

grows and the nation globalises.

The Modi government recognises

the importance of high quality ar-

bitration as it improves ease of

doing business. #TeamMEA is

platform, Jaishankar said he is

tion is one among the legal com-

munity's many contributions

Earlier, in his address, the exter-

nal affairs minister said in a world

where time is of essence and cer-

tainty is of paramount importance,

'confident that today's inaugura-

In his post on the microblogging

doing its part," he said.

towards a Viksit Bharat".

resolution".

tailers Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd reported bumper profits totalling about ₹ 81,000 crore in FY24, which far exceeded their annual earning in pre-oil crisis

The combined standalone net profit of IOC. BPCL and HPCL in April 2023 to March 2024 (FY24) was better than their annual earning of ₹ 39,356 crore in pre-oil crisis years, regulatory filings by them showed.

All the three companies posted the highest ever standalone as well as consolidated net profit in FY24. The retailers have resisted calls to revert to daily price revision and pass on softening in rates to consumers on grounds that prices continue to be extremely volatile - rising on one day and falling on the other - and that they needed to recoup losses incurred in the year when they kept rates lower than cost. IOC in 2023-24 posted a standalone net profit of ₹ 39,618.84 crore, according to the company's regulatory filing. This is compared with ₹ 8,241.82 crore annual net profit in 2022-23. While the company could argue that FY23 was impacted by the oil the pre-crisis years - ₹ 24,184 crore net profit in

2021-22 and ₹ 21,836 crore in 2020-21. BPCL posted a net profit of ₹ 26,673.50 crore in FY24, higher than ₹ 1,870.10 crore earning in 2022-23 and ₹ 8,788.73 crore in FY22. HPCL's 2023-24 profit of ₹ 14,693.83 crore is compared with a ₹ 8,974.03 crore loss in FY23 and a profit of ₹ 6,382.63 crore in 2021-22, ac-

cording to the filings The losses in FY23 led to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announcing ₹ 30,000 crore for IOC, BPCL and HPCL to support their energy transition plans in her budget for 2023-24. Mid-way through the year, that support was halved to ₹ 15,000 crore. The support which was to happen by way of equity infusion via a rights issue, hasn't been given yet.

The three companies, which control roughly 90 per cent of India's fuel market, 'voluntarily' have not changed petrol, diesel and cooking gas (LPG) prices for the past two years, resulting in losses when input cost was higher and profits when raw material prices were lower. They posted a combined net loss of ₹21,201.18 crore during April-September 2022 despite accounting for ₹22,000 crore announced but not paid LPG subsidy for the previous two years.

Subsequent softening of international prices and government giving out LPG subsidy helped IOC and BPCL post annualised profit for 2022-



23 (April 2022 to March 2023 ) but HPCL was in the red. In FY24, things have changed dramatically. The three firms posted record earnings in the first two quarters (April-June and July-September) when international oil prices - against which domestic rates are benchmarked - almost halved to USD 72 a barrel from a year ago.

International prices rose again in the subsequent quarter to USD 90, leading to moderation of their earnings. But, on a year as a whole they had rich profits. The fuel price freeze that began on April 6, 2022, had a loss as high as ₹ 17.4 a litre on petrol and ₹ 27.7 per litre on diesel for the week ended June 24, 2022. However, subse-And in mid-March, they cut petrol and diesel prices by Rs 2 per litre each just before general elections were announced.

International oil prices have been turbulent in the last couple of years. It dipped into the negative zone at the start of the pandemic in 2020 and swung wildly in 2022 - climbing to a 14-year high of nearly USD 140 per barrel in March 2022 after Russia invaded Ukraine, before sliding on weaker demand from top importer China and worries of an economic contraction.

But for a nation that is 85 per cent dependent on imports, the spike meant adding to already elevated levels of inflation and derailing the economic recovery from the pandemic.

So the three fuel retailers froze petrol and diesel prices for the longest duration in the last two decades. They stopped daily price revision in early November 2021 when rates across the country hit an all-time high, prompting the government to roll back a part of the excise duty hike it had effected during the pandemic to take advantage of low oil prices.

The freeze continued into 2022 but the warled spike in international oil prices prompted a Rs 10 a litre hike in petrol and diesel prices from mid-March 2022 before another round of excise duty cut rolled back all of the ₹ 13 a litre and ₹16 a litre increase in taxes on petrol and diesel done during the pandemic. (PTI)

## Inflation data, Q4 earnings, trends to drive markets this week: Analysts

markets will be driven by domestic inflation data, ongoing quarterly earnings from corporates and global trends this

> tainties "In the data-hectic week ahead, investors' attention will be focused on the release of India and US CPI data, Europe and Japan's GDP releases, and the FED chair speech. Furthermore, the next set of O4 results will also attract market sentiment," he added. DLF, Zomato,

term due to election-led uncer-

Services Ltd. (PTI)

## **Body of woman** found in Nagaon

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, May 12: The body of

a woman was found in a house at Salna Simonabasti in Nagaon on the morning on Sunday.

**MONDAY, MAY 13, 2024** 

The victim has been identified as Maiya Koruwa, who lived along with another woman in a house at Salna Simonabasti. Her companion, Babita Bhumiz was also rescued from the house with grievous injuries, sources said

Senior police officials rushed to the spot and began investigations into the incident

However, the police are yet to determine what had led to the death of the victim and how her companion sustained grievous in-

Cut marks were visible on the body of the deceased and her companion, police sources said.

According to some locals, both the women had been living together in the house for over years. But when the front door of the house remained closed till late in the morning, one neighbour entered into the house and found Maiya Koruwa lying dead, while the other inmate Babita Bhumiz was lying with severe wounds inside the house

Meanwhile, the police have sent the body of the deceased to the hospital for autopsy, while the injured woman was immediately rushed to a local hospital for treat-

## Centenary celebration of Bibar Laisi held at Kokrajhar Govt College



KOKRAJHAR, May 12: The centenary celebration of 'Bibar Laisi' the first Bodo journal was organised at the Mahini Mahan Brahma Hall of the Kokrajhar Government College here on Sunday. The event was organised by the Kokrajhar Government College to

mark the 100 years of the Bodo journal. The Bibar Laisi was published in 1924 with Satish Chandra Basumatary, the imminent writer and social thinker as its first editor. It was published by the then Bodo Students's Union, known as the Bodo Satro Sonmilan in 1924. It was published in eight volumes. The era

from 1920 to 1937 is called Bibar Mooga in Bodo literature. Assam cabinet minister, Urkhao Gwra Brahma, Bodo Sahitya Sabha president, Surath Narzary, former secretary of Sahitya Akademi, Kolkata region, Ram Kumar Mukhopadhyay, Sahitya Akademi award winner, Gobinda Boro, Krishna Gopal Basumatary, director of UN Academy Kokrajhar, principal of Kokrajhar Government College, Di-

macha Dwibrang Mwchahary were present on the occasion. Minister Brahma also unveiled a souvenir 'Thaijiri' on the occasion. He said that the Bibar Laisi is regarded as the first journal in the Bodo language, which is a torch bearer of the Bodo literature world. He has recalled contributions of leading persons who were prominently involved while its publication.

"Today, I am very much happy to be part of the centenary celebrations of the Bibar Laisi. The first Bodo journal has completed 100 years. I am happy to inaugurate the souvenir commemorating the day,'

## Governor attends Narayan Seva Sansthan's artificial limb camp

Human service is the best religion: Kataria

GUWAHATI, May 12: Governor Gulab Chand Kataria on Sunday said that service is an expression of sacrifice and is the way to transform oneself from Nar to Narayan.

Kataria said this while attending the Narayana Artificial Limb Measurement Camp held in Paltan Bazar in the city on Sunday. The free camp was organized for the differently-abled individuals.

Kataria commended Narayan Seva Sansthan for its longstanding commitment to this cause and congratulated its founder, Kailash Manay and president, Prashant Agarwal for their humanitarian

Governor Kataria said, "Serving humans is one of the best services one can do. Narayan Seva Sansthan is a sacred institution of selfless service. With the basic mantra of Nar Seva Narayan Seva,

#### Cancellation, rescheduling of trains in hill section

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, May 12: In view

of the ongoing track repairing works at KM - 110/6-7 between Jatinga Lampur and New Harangajao under Lumding division of the Northeast Frontier Railway, a few trains have been cancelled or rescheduled.

The Guwahati - Silchar -Guwahati) Express scheduled to depart on May 13 from their respective destinations will remain cancelled. The Silchar - Naharlagun - Silchar Special scheduled to depart on May 13 and 14 from Silchar and Naharlagun respectively will remain cancelled.

On the other hand, the Agartala Anand Vihar Terminal Tejas Rajdhani Express commencing on its journey on May 13 is rescheduled to depart from Agartala at 23:10 hrs. The Silchar -New Delhi Poorvottar Sampark Kranti Express commencing on its journey on May 13 is rescheduled to depart from Silchar at



this institute has been working for the welfare of the poor, needy and disabled people. Since its establishment 39 years ago, this institute has been engaged in the dedicated service to humanity."

The Governor also said that one should not keep any thought of discrimination in one's mind while

rendering services. One should do service with a selfless spirit just to experience happiness. He also reiterated Swami Vivekananda's lines who had said that only those who are living for others are truly human beings. Therefore, there should be a feeling of service among the people.

In his speech, the Governor said that Narayan Seva Sansthan has been working tirelessly for the up liftment of the differently-abled individuals and hailed the Sansthan for its nationwide outreach programme. He also assure Raj Bhavan's support for expanding the organisation's services. He also extended his best wishes for the well-being of the differentlyabled individuals and their families who attended the camp.

The camp saw the participation of over 1000 disabled individuals and representatives from more than 30 local organisations. The Governor distributed 11 wheelchairs and also inquired about the experiences of individuals with disabilities, who benefited from artificial limbs. Over 500 differently-abled individuals attended the camp, where a 20-member team from the Sansthan provided services. Measurements were taries.

taken for fitting artificial limbs on 205 people and calipers on another 80. Additionally, over 130 patients were selected for free surgeries in Udaipur. Beneficiaries from states Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram also attended the camp.

The programme was attended by the first Lady of Assam, Anita Kataria, director of Narayan Seva Sansthan, Vandana Aggarwal, former DGP Umesh Kumar, Vinod Lohia of Purbottar Pradeshiya Marwari Sammelan, Mahaveer Prasad Jain of Digamber Panchayat Bhavan Trust, , Ramesh Goenka of Marwari Hospital, Ratan Lal Sharma of Brahmin Sabha, director of Narayan Seva Sansthan Vandana Agarwal, Bajrang Lal Surana of Shwetamber Jain Terapanth Sabha and Kailash Lohia of Guwahati Gaushala along with a host of other digni-

#### Workshop on solid waste management held

HT Correspondent NAGAON, May 12: The Assam

Science Technology and Environment in collaboration with Eco Club of the Dhing College has organised a day-long workshop on solid waste management at the college premises It was organised with special sup-

port of Union ministry of environment, forest and climate change.

The primary aim of the workshop was to educate students and provide them with holistic understanding on solid waste management (SWM) issues, ill effects of wrong practices of SWM, best practices of SWM, importance of proper sanitation, sowing awareness of good practices on solid waste management, wastewater treatment, livelihoods, and publicprivate partnerships to gain knowledge in sustainable waste and environmental management system.

It also focused on different types of waste, their handling, storage, disposal requirements and their potential effect on the environment.

The workshop was inaugurated by Biman Hazarika, principal of the col-

While addressing the occasion, Hazarika highlighted on solid waste and the need for its management.

A handbook on solid waste management penned by Sanjeeb Kumar Nath, was inaugurated by Hazarika too. Nath, co-ordinator of Eco Club, elucidated the workshop's objec-

Following the inaugural session, technical sessions were initiated in which over 135 participants including students, faculty members and resource persons from 14 high schools, ME schools and Eco-Club participated in the workshop.

Pradeep Baishya, associate professor of the mechanical engineering department of the Assam Engineering College, Farista Yasmin, associate professor and head of the department of botany of the Nowgong College (Autonomous), Ajit Debnath, associate professor and head of the department of economics of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev Vishwavidyalaya, Binita Baishya and proprietor of the Eco Waste Management attended the event as the resource persons in the technical

## Mother's Day celebrated in Hojai



HT Correspondent HOJAI, May 12: The Hojai Public Senior Secondary School celebrated the 'Mothers' Day' at their school auditorium at Pachim Nandapur in Hojai on Sunday with pomp

and gaiety. The school invited all the mothers of the students. Madhabi Lata Devi, principal of the school inaugurated the 'Mothers' Day' function. Devi along with the teaching staff felicitated all the mothers with the traditional phulam gamocha.

Speaking on the occasion, the principal offered warm to all mothers, thereby expressing her deep love and respect for their fices, rendering continuous efforts, assistance and dedicating their precious lives in making their ward a responsible citizen, who can contribute in the up liftment of the nation. She further advised all the students to respect their mothers and follow their valuable advice, without which they can't achieve a bright future.

She also added that the blessings of their mothers will bring them successful accomplishment. At the end of her speech, she expressed sincere gratitude to all mothers for their heartfelt presence in the function. Also, a cultural programme was organised where all the mothers and children

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, May 12: The Dibrugarh University has formally conferred the is your Birth Right', a book on Doctorate of Literature degree on Padma mental health and healthy Shri Imran Shah in his residence at Dhai Ali in Sivasagar. A group of professors led by the uni-

versity's registrar, Paramananda Sonowal and former president of Asom Sahitya Sabha, Prahlad Tassa handed him the degree at his residence on Saturday. The certificate and citation was handed over to the litterateur by prpfessor and head of the department of sociology, Deva Kumar Chakravarty, deputy registrar, Arijit Hazarikar. Rohini Borgohain and former secretary general of Sahitya Sabha, Jagadish Patgiri. The meeting held on the occasion was presided over by Jyoti Prasad Saikia, professor of the department of sociology.

Shah expressed his gratitude on receiving the highest degree from the university. He said that their generation had put in a lot of effort to produce literary works to enrich Assamese literature. The present generation, he said, has already an enriched environment and their job is to create more and scale higher on literary

## Dibrugarh University confers D Lit on Padmashree Imran Shah Book on mental health released

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, 'BORNTOFIT-Healthy Lifestyle lifestyle was released in Tezpur on Sunday. The book has been written by software engineer, Deba Jyoti Das, who is working as a programme manager in a

software company in Bengeluru. Das addresses the pressing issue of mental health and wellbeing among students and middle-aged individuals navigating the competitive landscape of self-reliance through his book.

The book serves as a guide to reverse one's biological age and stay young throughout their lifes-

It offers practical strategies for reclaiming control of one's life and healthy habits. It has also received acknowledgment from many renowned artists and celebrities. The book has also managed to become Amazon's no 1 best seller in recent times. Das, who had been brought up in Tezpur city and graduated from the Darrang College, pursued mechanical engineer from the Assam Engineering College. He then earned his M. Tech degree from the national Institute of Technology, Trichy having experience of working in various

Netkraft, software companies

like MindTree, Wipro, CISCO

Speaking to The Hills Times, Das said, "The recent statistics from India's education ministry in the Rajva Sabha underscored the severity of the issue with 77 students tragically losing their lives to suicide in higher educational institutions between 2019 fields of different multi-national and 2023. companies including Metafusion,

A significant number of such cases have been reported from prestigious institutions such as IITs, IIMs, AIIMS, and major enThe ministry also reported a

concerning number of dropouts (33,979 students) from these institutes during the same period, highlighting the urgency of ad dressing the underlying factors contributing to student distress.

The major causes of these distressing statistics are multifaceted and include academic pressure, career uncertainty, low self-esteem, relationship issues, perfectionism, and unrealistic expectations, among other deeply rooted social issues.

"It is essential that we collectively address these challenges

'BORNTOFIT' aims to address these crucial problems among students and middle-aged individuals to build strong characters and improve emotional and physical health," Das said, adding this endeavour aims to raise awareness and initiate positive change in addressing mental health and well-being in our

## SSB organises blood donation camp in Gossaigaon



**HT Correspondent** GOSSAIGAON, May 12: The 31st battalion of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) has organised a voluntary blood donation camp at its battalion headquarters in collaboration with RNB

Civil Hospital. A medical team led by Muklasur Rahman from RNB Civil Hospital conducted a check up of donor Sh. Ranjeet Singh, assistant commandant (communication) and 30 other officials thoroughly.

During the blood donation camp, approximately 30 units of blood were donated by the SSB personnel, which can be used for different life-saving purposes.

Sh.Parag Chaturvedi, second-in-command of the 31 battalion, after donating blood asserted that the donated blood will help to meet many medical needs, providing a critical transfusion to someone in need of blood or restoring the strength of a cancer patient.

He again said that sympathy alone cannot save people in chronic conditions, but blood can. He appealed to all the Jawans of the battalion to come forward and donate blood regularly. Regular blood donation is linked to lower blood pressure and a lower risk of heart

## Consecration ceremony of Gautam Buddha statue held

50 Tamang Buddhist monks hailing from various parts of country participated



**HT Correspondent** 

MARGHERITA, May 12: A three-day-long consecration ceremony of a statue of Gautam Buddha at the newly inaugurated Gompa in Bargolai Bashbari playground in Margherita in Tinsukia district concluded successfully on

Situated within the confines of the Bargolai

Bashbari playground this event marked a momentous occasion for devotees and participants alike. The final day of the unveiling programme commenced amidst great anticipation and spiritual fervour.

A grand religious procession was taken out on Sunday along the National Highway 315 in Bargolai, which saw the participation of a large

number of devotees from the Tamang Buddhist community, with more than 5000 individuals congregating to partake in the festivities.

Moreover, 50 esteemed Tamang Buddhist monks hailing from various regions across the country further enriched the cultural and spiritual significance of the occasion.

A notable highlight of the ceremony was the esteemed presence of the venerable Archarya Khem Rimborji Sangey Ludu, the highest-ranking Buddhist monk from Jaigaon in West Bengal to preside over the proceedings. On Sunday, amidst an aura of reverence and

solemnity, Sangey Ludu unveiled the newly constructed Gautam Buddha Gompa, symbolizing the culmination of meticulous planning and devout dedication. The solemn observance spanned three consecutive days that began on May 10 and con-

As devotees and participants bid farewell to this momentous event, the resounding echoes of spiritual chants and prayers reverberate throughout the Bargolai Banhbari playground, leaving an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of all those in attendance.

cluded Sunday with the final day of the

## Padma Shri Jatin Goswami Gurudev honoured with 'Kushilaba Kala Nidhi 'title



**HT Correspondent** 

MORIGAON, May 12: Sangeet Natak Akademi awardee, Padma Shri Jatin Goswami Gurudev on Sunday was honoured with the ' Kushilaba Kala Nidhi'(Treasure of Art) title for his immense contribution to the field of Sattriya Sangeet during a function held at the District Library in Morigaon.

Gurudev has been presented the title 'Kushilaba Kala Nidhi' on the occasion of the annual function of the Sankari Sangeet prayer performed by the district president Srimanta Sankardeva Sangha, Atul Chandra Das, who was accompanied by the president of Sankari Sangeet Vidyalaya, Gyan Muhan Deka and the

principal of the

Vidyalaya, Prasanna

Vidyalaya. The pro-

gramme began with a

Kr. Medhi. Thereafter exam secretary of the Vidyalaya, Mridul Kr. Bora lit the ceremonial. The students staged dances on the eve of the annual

function of the organisation. Moreover a song 'Tejare Kamalapati ' composed by Janardan Kalita was formally inaugurated by Padma Shri Jatin Goswami. Later Krishna Bora provided the vote of thanks in the programme.

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#### QUOTE OF THE DAY

Mother is the name for God in the lips and hearts of little children. -William Makepeace Thackeray

#### **Short respite** for Kejriwal

n granting interim relief to Kejriwal, the Supreme Court has shown the willingness to go beyond technicalities and take a folitical' stand against what has been widely seen as a political arrest by the Modi government. The decision by the bench comprising Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta will be remembered for long as a landmark for a holistic approach and being guided by the spirit of the law rather than its letter. Kejriwal's arrest on March 21 last, by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with a money laundering case tied to the Delhi liquor policy, came at a critical juncture just ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. This timing raised eyebrows and led to allegations of political motivations behind his arrest. The Supreme Court's decision to grant him interim bail until June 1, is therefore seen as a befitting response from the court to a political move by the ruling party. The judiciary is expected to function independently of political influence, ensuring that justice is served without bias. However, the circumstances surrounding Kejriwal's arrest and the subsequent bail reveal that the Supreme Court's decision was influenced by the political context rather than purely legal considerations.

The court's decision to grant bail, despite strong opposition from the ED, which argued that the right to campaign was neither a fundamental nor a constitutional right, suggests a recognition of the political implications of Kejriwal's continued detention. The perception is further reinforced by the court's statement that while examining the question of grant of interim bail, the peculiarities associated with the person in question and the surrounding circumstances must be considered. Supporters of Kejriwal and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) as well as the constituents of opposition INDIA Bloc have hailed the decision as a victory for democracy, suggesting that the judiciary had acted to correct a perceived political wrong. On the other hand, the ED's opposition to the bail, citing the continuous nature of elections in India and the potential precedent it would set, has failed to impress the court, despite an expressed concern that the judiciary must avoid stepping into the political arena.

The Supreme Court's decision can be analysed from multiple angles. Legally, it upholds the principle of bail being the norm and jail the exception, especially when the accused has not been convicted. Politically, it raises questions about the extent to which the political narrative can influence the court. The decision also has implications for the electoral process, as it allows a key political figure to participate in the elections, potentially affecting the outcome. Bail to Kejriwal has been seen as a morale booster for the opposition bloc, whose constituents had rallied round his arrest to put up joint resistance, despite the political differences that persisted among themselves over electoral adjustments in individual states. Just as the arrest served as a rallying point, the bail is expected to provide new impetus to the fight against blatantly authoritarian traits of the Modi government.

## Low voter turnout a systemic issue globally, needs targetted corrective action

By: K Raveendran

The role of State Bank of India in suppressing information about the Supreme Court-struck down electoral bonds has been well-exposed. Now more evidence of SBI's 'political mandate' is emerging. For no rhyme or reason, an inhouse describes as the myth of voter apathy in the current elections. Hi study covered only the first two phases of polling, but the turnout in the just-concluded third phase also indicates a decline, compared to the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

SBI' chief economic advisor Samya Kanti Ghosh argues that comparing the absolute number of votes cast is a better way to analyse the turnout, rather than comparing past and present and future in terms of percentages. According to him, while the voting is about 3.1 percentage points below the trend observed in 2019, the numbers can swell in the remaining phases of polls and there will be a 'J-shaped' increase. He also notes that the first two phases of polls witnessed salutary changes like higher women's participation on an incremental

basis, and those in reserved seats. In Phase 1, 66.14 percent voted, and in Phase 2, 66.71 turned up at the polling stations, marking a drop from the 2019 figures of 69.43 percent and 69.17 percent, respectively. The turnout in the third phase has been reported at 64.4 percent, nearly 3 percent lower than 2019.

It was widely reported that the lower turnout in the early phases of polling had the BJP leadership worried over its implications. There have even been suggestions that Modi shifted his campaign thrust to causing religious divide by raising Muslim-sensitive issues due to the feared setback on account of the poor voter response in the early phases. Of late he has been telling his election rallies the primary need to go for voting. The SBI assessment thus appears to be an economist's reassurance to the politician.

Voter turnout, simply put, is the percentage of eligible voters who cast their ballots during an election. It transcends mere numbers; it reflects citizens' engagement with the democratic process. When citizens exercise their right to vote, they contribute to the vibrancy of democracy. Conversely, low voter turnout can have far-reaching consequences

for democracy itself. When citizens turn up at polling booths, they validate the democratic process, reinforcing its legitimacy. Conversely, low turnout can distort the representation of people's will, potentially altering electoral outcomes. Two landmark elections—2014 and 2019—highlight the correlation between voter turnout and electoral outcomes. In both instances. there was higher voter participation and the BJP, riding on this wave of engagement, secured a clear majority. The increased voter turnout bolstered the BJP's mandate, allowing it to form a stable government. The surge in the voter turnout

in 2014 and 2019 also coincided with an increase in young voters. However, empirical evidence from India's 61st Amendment, which lowered the voting age from 21 to 18 in 1988, reveals a nuanced picture. It turns out that the franchise extension has had minimal electoral effects. While youth participation remains a critical concern, there is also need to examine the role of older voters as voter fatigue is often attributed to the elderly. Also requiring examination is whether the prolonged election periods is adding to voter fatigue. There is widespread criticism that the extended election period has been unduly long, putting pressure on resources of political parties. There have even been suggestions that the longer period works in favour of the BJP, which has no dearth of resources.An unexplored area in voter behaviour or fatigue relates to the increasing urban migration of rural youth. According to available statistics, approximately 35 percent of India's population are migrants, primarily residing in cities. Many fail to re-register to vote, despite provisions allowing it. The loss of trust in political institutions has been a global phenomenon as the 21st century witnesses rising skepticism among large sections of people and India is no exception. Corruption scandals, inadequate representation, and the perception that individual votes hardly matter contribute to disillusionment. It will take a mammoth effort to restore the lost confidence and this has to be seen in the context of the need for reforms the political processes. Trust-building, streamlined processes, and targeted campaigns can bridge gaps and as India's democracy evolves, understanding these dynamics is es-

sential. (IPA Service)

# Is Russia mulling to experiment with using nuclear weapons in space

Russia recently rejected a UN resolution proposed by the US and Japan, which aimed to prevent the development and use of nuclear weapons in space. This action by Russia indicates that they are moving closer to making the idea of using nuclear weapons in space a possibility.

Thankfully, Russia did not express any intention to deploy a nuclear weapon in space, which would be a violation of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. However, the Russian UN representative criticized the new resolution, referring to it as a deceptive tactic and claiming that they were being manipulated.

If Russia or any other country were to detonate a nuclear weapon above Earth, the consequences would be alarming. Such an explosion could be just as destructive as a ground-level detonation, posing a significant

Detonating a nuclear bomb on the ground versus in orbit shows some significant differences. Dr. Michael Mulvihill, a research fellow at Teesside University, explains to BBC Science Focus that when nuclear weapons are detonated on the ground, they primarily emit a large amount of energy in the form of X-rays.

The X-rays released by a nuclear explosion in the atmosphere can heat the air to extremely high temperatures, resulting in a blazing inferno (destructive fire or intense heat). This intense firestorm generates the powerful shockwave and iconic mushroom cloud that engulfs debris and gives rise to fallout.

Fallout refers to the radioactive particles and debris that are dispersed into the atmosphere after a nuclear detonation. When a nuclear weapon is detonated in space, since there is no atmosphere, it does not produce mushroom clouds or shockwaves like it does on Earth. However, this doesn't mean that the effects are any less frightening. The consequences can still be quite alarm-



ing in their own way

According to Mulvihill, in the vacuum of space, a nuclear explosion releases an immense amount of energy in the form of X-rays, gamma intense

of neu-

streams

trons, and charged particles at the subatomic level (means lesser than atom). Additionally, it generates a phenomenon called an

electromagnetic pulse, or EMP. An electromagnetic pulse (EMP) is a sudden surge of electromagnetic energy. When an EMP interacts with the upper atmosphere, it has the ability to remove electrons from it. This can result in the disruption of radar systems, communication failures, and the disabling of power sys-

Following the initial explosion, a band of radiation envelops the Earth, which can endure for months, or even years, without certainty. This radiation has the potential to harm satellites and, as Mulvihill highlights, it poses a significant danger to individuals in space during that period, including astronauts aboard the

According to Mulvihill, the EMP would disrupt the power systems on the ISS, causing severe damage to the life support systems and other critical components responsible for maintaining the station's atmosphere. Additionally, Mulvihill suggests that the astronauts onboard

would likely be exposed to dangerous levels of radiation. The conditions in orbit would be extremely inhospitable to life. As the number of satellites in

DEGREE OF THOUGHT around 10,000 cur-By: Girish Linganna rently in low Earth orbit and tens of thousands more planned for future launches, the implications of detonating nuclear weapons in

increase,

space continues to

space become increasingly significant. This is due to our growing dependence on the systems we deploy in orbit. When viewed from the Earth's surface, aside from causing

power grid failures and communication disruptions, the effects of a nuclear explosion in space could have a certain mesmerizing beauty. As the charged particles resulting from the explosion interact with the Earth's magnetic field and atmosphere, they would create stunning auroras that span vast distances and could persist for several days. So, at least in that aspect, there would be a captivating spectacle to witness. During the Cold War, the

United States and Russia, as global superpowers, conducted nuclear tests in various environments, including on land, underwater, and even inside mountains. They explored almost every possible scenario for detonating nuclear weapons.

Therefore, it is not unexpected that nuclear weapons have been detonated in space before. The of five space nuclear tests, with the most well-known one, as mentioned by Mulvihill, taking place on July 9, 1962, in the vicinity of the beautiful Pacific island of Hawaii.

Starfish Prime, a nuclear test, was conducted at an altitude of 400km (250 miles) above Johnston Island. It had an explosive yield of 1.4 megatons, approximately 100 times more powerful than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima

The EMP from the Starfish Prime test affected electrical systems, such as streetlights and phones, even in Hawaii, located 1,450 km (900 miles) away from the detonation. This unexpected impact revealed details about the test that were meant to be kept secret. The resulting red auroras extended over the Pacific Ocean and persisted for a substantial duration of time.

According to Mulvihill, during that period, there were approximately 22 satellites in space, and about one-third of them were rendered inoperable. Among the affected satellites was Telstar 1. the pioneering television communication satellite. Telstar 1, which represented advancements in technology in the United States, experienced an early failure in orbit, lasting only seven months, due to the impact of the Starfish Prime test.

Subsequently, there was a collective realization that conducting nuclear warhead tests in space was an unwise course of action. As a result, the Outer Space Treaty (OST) was established. Signed in 1967 by the United States, United Kingdom, and Soviet Union, the Outer Space Treaty (OST) has garnered more than 100 signatories. It designates space as a domain available for peaceful activities exclusively. This brought a sense of reassurance to the global community, enabling the utilization of space for beneficial endeavors such as astronomy, space sta(60 years). So, what factors have since evolved?

Speculation regarding a shift in the state of orbital security emerged when, earlier this year, the chairman of the US House Intelligence Committee, Mike Turner, issued an ambiguous alert regarding a "significant national security risk" posed by Russia. Subsequently, media sources started disseminating information suggesting that the perceived danger revolved around the potential presence of "nuclear weapon in space."

While the situation is undoubtedly worrisome, Mulvihill emphasizes that there is no need to lose sleep over it. He reassures that as Russia remains a party to the Outer Space Treaty (OST), the deployment of any form of weaponry in space would be unequivocally prohibited and deemed illegal. Additionally, he highlights that, as evidenced by Starfish Prime, nuclear weapons deployed in space do not discriminate their targets. Therefore, any detonation would result in equal harm to Russia, its allies, and other nations

It would not solely impact systems like Starlink, which provides internet access to numerous countries (presently 75 countries), but also Chinese satellites and those of other nations

Another potential scenario is the development of nuclear-powered "jammers" by countries. These jammers would utilize nuclear energy to generate signals capable of interfering with, rather than destroying, other satellites.

However, in the grand scheme of things, these actions might simply be a form of geopolitical posturing. Mulvihill suggests that the concept of deterrence revolves around sending messages and attempting to persuade others that one is willing to take such actions, without actually reaching that point. He believes that this psychological perspec-

## There is no version of liberalism that can take economies out of present stagnation

By: Prabhat Patnaik

E ach strand of political praxis is informed by a political philosophy which analyses the world around us, especially, in modern times, its economic characteristics. On the basis of this analysis, the particular political philosophy sets out the objectives which have to be struggled for, and the political praxis informed by it carries out this struggle. The objective may be difficult to achieve, more difficult in certain contexts than in others, and this difficulty may act as a hurdle for political praxis; but this does not constitute a crisis for that political philosophy. The sheer difficulty of achieving an objective does not constitute a crisis. A crisis of a political philosophy arises when it has an internal contradiction, when the objective it puts forward is logically in conflict with some other feature in which it believes.

Many would argue that the objective of socialism that the political philosophy, Marxism, puts forward has in the present context become somewhat more difficult to achieve; but this, while explaining the present weakening of the Left, does not constitute any crisis for Marxism. The political philosophy called liberalism however is facing a crisis in the sense that the objective it puts forward for the achievement of what it perceives as human freedom is logically impossible to achieve in a world which liberalism itself holds dear; in other words there is a logical contradiction within itself which has arisen in the course of the development of the economy and to which it has no answer. The crisis that liberalism faces is of

Modern liberalism was developed in response to the Bolshevik Revolution during the capitalist crisis of the inter-war period, as a way of resolving that crisis, and other similar crises that could arise in future, without transcending capitalism. It believed that the combination of western-style liberal democracy and capitalism tempered by State intervention, provided the best framework for achieving human freedom. It believed that under the institutions of western-style liberal democracy, the State, far from being a class State, would express social "rationality", and would do so better than under any other institutional framework. Hence such a liberal democratic State can intervene in the economy both to rectify any malfunctioning that may arise because of the spontaneous working of capitalism, and also to make this spontaneous working, even when it is not a case of malfunctioning, conform to the demands of social rationality. This version of liberalism, in whose formation the English economist John Maynard Keynes had played a major role and which



Keynes had called "new liberalism", differed from earlier versions of liberalism in so far as those earlier versions had wanted State intervention to be kept to a minimum, in the erroneous belief, that had prevailed earlier, that the capitalist economy always operated at "full emplovment".

This new version of liberalism, even if we do not go into its validity within the institutional framework it envisages (and it is utterly invalid, among other things, because of the phenomenon of imperialism which it does not even cognize), certainly ceases to be valid when capital, including finance, gets globalised. This is because we do not in this case have a nation-State presiding over capital that is essentially national, but a nation-State confronting globalised capital; and in any such confrontation the nation-State must yield to the demands of globalised capital for fear of triggering a capital flight, which means, as even the most ardent "new liberal" would admit, that the State cannot possibly act as the embodiment of social rationality.

Put differently, the presumption behind "new liberalism" was that the domain over which the writ of the State ran and the domain over which the capital originating in that country operated, more or less coincided. This was in fact the case when Keynes was writing and even later. But with increasing globalisation of capital, this presumption loses its validity. And when this happens, then it is unreal even to pretend that the executive of the State would be goaded by public opinion to act in ways that it thinks are socially rational, irrespective of whether globalised capital concurs with such action.

The roots of the crisis of liberalism therefore lie in the phenomenon of globalisation; but this crisis clearly manifests itself in the period of crisis of neo-liberalism when large-scale mass unemployment appears on the scene, which was exactly what Keynes thought was the Achilles heel of capitalism that, unless overcome though State intervention, would make the system vulnerable to Bolshevik-style revolution.

The pursuit of Keynesian "demand management" that was supposed to overcome the crises of overproduction that plagued capitalism, requires that larger State expenditure, the panacea for the crisis, should be financed either by raising more taxes at the expense of the rich or by raising no extra taxes at all, that is, through a larger fiscal deficit: larger State expenditure financed by raising more tax revenue at the expense of the working people who consume much of their incomes anyway, would not add to aggregate demand and hence would not alleviate the crisis. But these two ways of financing additional State expenditure, taxing the rich and increasing the fiscal deficit, are both opposed by globalised finance capital which therefore eliminates the scope for any fiscal intervention by the State against the crisis. It can of course intervene through monetary instruments but these, as is well-known, are extremely blunt, often encouraging inflation that compounds the crisis, rather than stimulating larger private spending. Within neo-liberalism therefore there is no way of overcoming the crisis; Keynes's "new liberalism" comes a cropper. The cul-de-sac or dead end of the neo-liberal economic regime therefore becomes a crisis for the political philosophy of liberalism.

This entry into the economic cul-desac can be illustrated with the example of Europe. Until the mid-seventies the unemployment rate in EU countries (15 at the time) had been less than 3 per cent for a long period. It started climbing in the late seventies and the eighties as globalisation proceeded, and has remained roughly above 7 per cent on average since then, though with variations between countries; and State intervention has been unable to bring it down.

Since a single nation-State cannot intervene to boost aggregate demand and reduce unemployment when confronted with globalised capital, the country can either impose capital controls to get out of the vortex of globalised finance alto-

gether, or have a co-ordinated fiscal stimulus along with other countries in which case capital's tendency to fly out of any country that expands demand can be checked (since all countries would be following a similar policy of expanding State expenditure). The first of these entails getting out of the neo-liberal regime: capital controls would also necessitate, sooner or later, trade controls, and this means that the basic character of a neoliberal regime, namely relatively unrestricted flows of capital and goods and services, would be infringed. International finance capital will oppose this tooth and nail, so that such a course would require an alternative class mobilisation that cannot remain confined to a programme of preserving monopoly capitalism.

The second of these routes, if it is to be a genuinely coordinated fiscal stimulus across all countries, requires a degree of internationalism that capitalism, with its in-built tendency for dominating the periphery, is incapable of demonstrating. It can therefore at best introduce a coordinated fiscal stimulus within the metropolis even while imposing fiscal austerity on the periphery, which would mean a tightening of imperialism. Capitalism may well try this, but such a tightening of imperialism cannot be acknowledged by liberalism as a feather in its cap; on the contrary it would mean a defeat of liberalism as it presents itself, namely, as an alternative non-socialist path to human freedom. It is this predicament of liberalism that constitutes its crisis. It cannot claim that freedom is possible within capitalism when there is large-scale unemployment which also keeps down wages. causing a general stagnation or worsening in the condition of labour. It cannot overcome this material reality without transcending neo-liberal capitalism, the requisite class alliance for which would carry the economy beyond capitalism itself. (The talk of retreating to a pre-neoliberal capitalism is analogous to the talk of returning to an always mythical 'free competition capitalism' as a means of doing away with the ills of monopoly capitalism, that Lenin had pilloried in his book Imperialism). Any acquiescence in a coordinated fiscal stimulus among metropolitan countries alone for reducing unemployment that leaves out the periphery from its ambit, amounts to a betrayal of what liberalism claims it stands for. Classical liberalism had come to grief

during the Great Depression. Keynesian, or new liberalism, has come to grief with the crisis of neo-liberalism. And there are no other versions of liberalism that are available, or even possible, which can take economies out of their current stagnation while keeping them confined to their capitalist integument. (IPA Service) Colorectal cancer is rising in children, teens, and young adults, study finds



**By: Corrie Pelc** 

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esearchers also found increases among children ages 10 to 14 and young adults ages 20 to 24.

The majority of colorectal cancer cases occur in adults over the age of 50, but new research shows this form of cancer is on the rise in young adults and teenagers. Now, a new study reports from 1999 to 2020, rates of colorectal cancers grew 500% among children ages 10 to 14, 333% among teens ages 15 to 19, and 185% among young adults ages 20 to 24. The research is being presented on May 20 at Digestive Disease Week 2024 in Washington, DC.

#### Rising colon cancer rates in young people

For this study, researchers used data from the Centers for Disease Control Wonder Database to analyze trends in colorectal cancer rates for people ages 10 to 44 from 1999 to 2020. When examining the researchers found changes in colorectal rates, including:

• Children aged 10 to 14 from 0.1 per 100,000 in 1999 increased to 0.6 per 100,000 in

• Teens aged 15 to 10 from 0.3 per 100,000 in 1999 increased to 1.3 per 100,000 in

• Young adults aged 20 to 24 from 0.7 per 100,000 in 1999 increased to 2 per 100,000 in 2020

Scientists also observed a 71% increase in colorectal cancer cases in adults ages 30 to 34 and a 58% increase in adults ages 35 to 39 from 1999 to 2020. "Colorectal cancer is no longer considered just a disease of the elderly population," said lead researcher Islam Mohamed, MD, an internal medicine resident physician at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, in a news release.

"It's important that the public is aware of signs and symptoms of colorectal cancer.'

Why is colorectal cancer rising in young people?

While a family history of colorectal cancer is an unmodifiable risk factor, past studies show there are several modifiable risk factors, including:

- Diet physical activity

• poor sleep alcohol use

tobacco use

"The fact that people are being diagnosed with colon cancer at a younger age provides us a lot of insight that the clock starts ticking at a young age," Anton Bilchik, MD, PhD, surgical oncologist, chief of medicine and director of the Gastrointestinal and Hepatobiliary Program at Providence Saint John's Cancer Institute in Santa Monica, CA — who was not involved in this study explained to Medical News Today. "We need to be very aware of things that can be done to prevent the development of colon cancer," Bilchik said, noting preventive strategies like regular physical activity and eating less processed food and red meat.

Jacqueline Casillas, MD, board certified pediatric hematologist/oncologist and medical director of the Jonathan Jaques Children's Cancer Institute at MemorialCare Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach in California, not involved in this study, told MNT: "While we don't know all of the etiologies, I think it (the study) does highlight some of the possible risk factors, like we know that we have increasing rates of obesity within the United States — is that a risk factor? We do eat a lot of processed foods and so is it that we're not eating the healthy diet recommendations with fruits, vegetables, and a high fiber diet versus our processed

foods and a high-fat diet." Other possible causes of colon cancer

Bilchik said another possible

cancer cases in younger people may be related to antibiotic "It's well known that our body has trillions of bacteria known as the microbiome and that these bacteria play an im-

portant role in the immune system and in preventing the development of colorectal cancer, as well as cardiovascular illness," he explained. "And it's certainly possible that the indiscriminate use of antibiotics at a young age may be neutralizing some of these

important bacteria, predisposing younger people to the development of colon cancer down the road. Bilchik added everyone should pay more attention to doing things that are anti-inflammatory rather than pro-in-

shown to promote cancer. "Inflammation has been associated with the development of colorectal cancer and all of the factors and all of the risk factors and lifestyle and what we eat can be considered proinflammatory," he detailed.

flammatory, which have been

"We should pay attention at a young age to what is anti-inflammatory, such as eating the right foods, eating a balanced diet, eating fresh food, and most importantly exercising and avoiding a sedentary

Casillas said that people should not forget about other risk factors for cancer that have been shown in older adults, noting the following:

"While children might not be drinking alcohol, teens are exposing themselves to alcohol," she explained.

"It's really important to

focus that in terms of our cancer prevention and control efforts about the risks associated with alcohol, tobacco use, obesity, as well as just the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle so we're not seden-

Should young people be worried about colon cancer?

Bilchik said while he found the study provocative, we must be somewhat cautious when interpreting the findings. "They use percentages, which are very high, to suggest that there is a 400% or 500% increase in very young people being diagnosed with colon cancer," he continued. "But if you translate that to absolute numbers, we're talking about the difference between 1 or 2 out of a million versus 6 out of a million," Bilchik explained.

"So I think when we talk about these absolute numbers versus the percentages, the percentages sound very alarming, but the actual numbers suggest that it still is not very common among really young people," Bilchik added.

Casillas said this study is important as it will help with future studies as we do not want to continue to see this incident pattern continue to increase.

"It's an important foundational study so we can see what we have to do for defining (the) next steps for hopefully early diagnosis or mitigating any risk for developing (colorectal cancer)," Casillas added.

"I think it's going to be important for the research community (to continue) to explore these different factors to try to understand the why." (Courtesy: Medical News Today)

## Euthanasia for mental disorders: In a warming world, will eco-anxiety lead to more such appeals?



By: Preetha Banerjee

organisms genetically wired to strive to survive. the concept of wishing for death despite being physically healthy can be confounding, even for the most pro-choice individuals, although the euthanasia debate has been around since the 1870s.

Next month, 28-year-old Dutch woman Zoraya ter Beek will be administered a sedative by a doctor at her home. Moments later, she will be given a medication to stop her heart from functioning. Although the process is entirely legal, the news naturally created a stir.

Her boyfriend, who she lives with along with their two cats, will bury her ashes in a spot she chose inside a forest near their home, the media reported.

Ter Beek is physically healthy, according to doctors. She has lived with autism her entire life and has been suffering from debilitating depression and borderline personality disorder. When doctors confirmed that there is no further line of treatment that can ease her suffering, she applied for euthanasia on grounds of crippling mental ailments.

Despite the decades-long moral battle on the topic, applications for euthanasia / assisted dying have been on the rise in the countries that have legal provisions for it - in 2022, euthanasia cases in the Netherlands (total over 8,500) grew by 1,000 since the previous year. In Canada, cases jumped 31.2 per cent to 13,241, compared to 2021.

Also, more countries are considering policies that respect people's will to end their lives, albeit with strict conditions and medical review. After Netherlands and Belgium legalised voluntary euthanasia assisted dying in 2002, as many as five countries followed suit and some others are negotiating the bill in the parliament.

The role of climate change cannot be ruled out in this trend of more people seeking medical assistance to end their lives. In 2017, a 68year-old Howard Breen in Canada appealed for 'Medical Aid in Dying' citing unbearable mental suffering stemming from concerns over climate change and its impact on the planet and future generations. Though his request was declined as one of the assessing doctors did not consider 'eco-anxiety' an eligible condition, his case brought the mental agony wrought by climate change into the main discourse.

Apart from his case, establishing a direct link of euthanasia appeals and climate change has been difficult. But a closer look at the main reasons cited by people applying for euthanasia / assisted dying shows how many of them are proven to be influenced by environmental rea-

Most patients seeking euthanasia suffer from terminal cancers, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, multiple sclerosis and severe chronic obpulmonary disease structive (COPD), and some report mental health disorders.

All of these health conditions have been observed to have been worsened by exposure to pollution, fluctuations in temperatures and humidity, extreme weather events triggered by climate change, among other environmental factors.

But, like the latest case, most euthanasia seekers reported that it is the psychological suffering, rather than physical pain of their disease, that motivated them, according to a

There have been instances in Belgium and the Netherlands, where individuals suffering from severe, untreatable depression and anxiety have applied for euthanasia / assisted dying and have been allowed. These cases often involve patients who have undergone extensive treatment for their psychiatric conditions without relief, leading to a determination that their suffering is unbearable and without prospect of improvement, a scientific study established.

A study in the Netherlands examined 1,122 patients with psychiatric disorders who requested euthanasia or assisted suicide between 2012 and 2018. It found that requests were often made by patients with depressive disorders.

Across the world, a link has been established between climate change and higher suicide rates. A 2018

Stanford study showed that by 2050, climate change could lead to 21,000 additional suicides in the United States and Mexico if current warming trends continue.

Air pollution and ambient temperature are potential environmental factors affecting suicide, according to a 2021 study published in the International Journal for Environmental Research and Public Health. The

Exposure to traffic-related air pollution may cause defects in neural maintenance / regeneration and structural abnormalities in the brain through decreases in brain-derived neurotrophic factors. Particulate matter and ozone (O3) were reported to activate hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal stress response axis and overactivation or dysfunction of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis can lead to depressive behaviors. High air pollution levels are associated with inflammatory effects on the brain involved in the pathogenesis of neurotoxicity. Diesel exhaust particles and O3 may decrease serotonin levels leading to aggressive and depressive be-

High temperature might be associated with higher levels of aggression, which is associated with elevated suicidal behaviors, it added. "The experience of sudden warmth in the daytime after cold nights can trigger temperature-related overreaction in brown adipose tissue, intensify anxiety, leading to suicidal behaviors.'

Climate change and air pollution feed into each other. Thus, incidence of all mental health conditions like schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression and personality disorder that are significantly more likely to occur in people exposed to toxic air, is further heightened because of climate change.

Moreover, eco-anxiety is a serious threat and is being scientifically studied worldwide. Large-scale studies showed at least half the respondents, mostly young people, were severely worried about climate

The American Psychological Association described eco-anxiety as 'a chronic fear of environmental doom', ranging from mild stress to clinical disorders like depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide, and maladaptive coping strategies such as intimate partner violence and substance mis-

Studies have also established that climate anxiety and trauma may even have intergenerational effects, especially where environmental damage involves loss of a way of life or culture. The rising figures of climate migration adds to this con-

Emotions such as fear, anger, powerlessness and exhaustion can shore up with gradual, long-term changes in climate, noted a 2019 study by the American Psychological Association. It mentioned cases "in which fear of extreme weather approaches the level of phobia and the 'unrelenting day-by-day despair' that can be experienced during a drought"

The report also cited research that showed some people are "deeply affected by feelings of loss, helplessness, and frustration due to their inability to feel like they are making a difference in stopping climate

The scientists also described a psychological phenomenon called 'solastalgia' – the stinging feeling of loss people experience when their home environment is irrevocably altered. The authors compared it to the sense of desolation experienced by people forced to migrate out of their home. "Solastalgia may have a more gradual beginning due to the slow onset of changes in one's local environment.'

They referred to a 2013 paper that recorded the emotional experience among residents of Ghana who were forced to move from the northern region of the country to the capital, Accra, because local conditions no longer supported their farming practices. The "respondents expressed nostalgia and sadness for the home left behind and helplessness due to changes in their environments, such as deforestation, that were described as sad and scary", the authors noted. (Courtesy: Down To Earth)

#### Understanding Electrophysiology and Arrhythmia: Causes, symptoms, types, and treatment ing or pounding in the chest)

By: Dr T.S. Kler

lectrophysiology is a branch of cardiology that focuses on the electrical activity of the heart and its relationship with heart rhythm disorders, known as arrhythmias. Arrhythmias are abnormalities in the rhythm of the heart, which can manifest as irregular heartbeats or abnormal heart rates. These disturbances can range from harmless to life-threatening, and they affect millions of people worldwide.

What is Arrhythmia?

Arrhythmia refers to any irregularsteady rhythm, pumping blood throughout the body. However, in individuals with arrhythmias, this rhythm is disrupted. Arrhythmias can occur when the electrical impulses that coordinate heartbeats are delayed, blocked, or travel along abnormal pathways. This disruption can lead to the heart beating too fast (tachycardia), too slow (bradycardia), or irregularly.

Symptoms of Arrhythmia: Symptoms of arrhythmia can vary depending on the type and severity of the condition. Common symptoms include:

2. Dizziness or lightheadedness

3. Fainting or near-fainting spells

4. Shortness of breath

5. Chest pain or discomfort

6. Fatigue 7. Weakness

**Types of Arrhythmia:** There are several types of arrhythmias, including

• Atrial Fibrillation (AFib): The most common type, characterized by rapid and irregular beating of the upper chambers of the heart (atria).

• Bradycardia: When the heart ity in the heartbeat. Normally, the beats too slowly, usually defined as heart contracts and relaxes in a a resting heart rate below 60 beats per minute.

> • Tachycardia: When the heart beats too quickly, often defined as a resting heart rate above 100 beats per • Supraventricular Tachycardia

> **(SVT):** Episodes of rapid heart rate originating above the ventricles. • Ventricular Tachycardia (VT): Rapid heart rate originating in the lower chambers of the heart (ventri-

> cles), which can be life-threatening. Treatment of Arrhythmia: Treatment for arrhythmias aims to

> restore normal heart rhythm, control

symptoms, and prevent complica-

tions. Options include:

**Medications:** Antiarrhythmic drugs to regulate heart rhythm and

• Cardioversion: Electrical shock to restore normal heart rhythm.

Catheter Ablation: A procedure to destroy small areas of heart tissue that are causing the arrhythmia. • Implantable Devices: Pacemakers to regulate heart rate or im-

plantable cardioverter- defibrillators (ICDs) to monitor and correct abnormal heart rhythms. • Lifestyle Changes: Quitting smoking, reducing alcohol and caf-

feine intake, managing stress, and maintaining a healthy diet and weight can help control arrhythmias. Age Groups Affected:

Arrhythmias can affect individuals of all ages, from infants to the elderly. However, the risk of developing arrhythmias increases with age, as structural changes and other heart conditions become more common. Certain types of arrhythmias, such as atrial fibrillation, are more prevalent in older adults.

**Other Points to Consider:** 

1. Risk Factors: Factors that increase the risk of developing arrhythmias include high blood pressure, coronary artery disease, heart failure, diabetes, obesity, excessive alcohol or caffeine consumption, smoking, and certain medications or recreational drugs.

2. Complications: Untreated arrhythmias can lead to serious complications, including stroke, heart failure, and sudden cardiac arrest.

3. Diagnosis: Arrhythmias are diagnosed through a combination of medical history, physical examination, and diagnostic tests such as electrocardiogram (ECG), Holter monitor, event recorder, echocardiogram, and electrophysiology studies.

**4. Prevention:** Adopting a hearthealthy lifestyle, managing underlymedical conditions, and following treatment recommendations can help prevent or minimize the occurrence of arrhythmias.

In conclusion, electrophysiology plays a crucial role in understanding and managing arrhythmias, which are common heart rhythm disorders with various causes, symptoms, types, and treatment options. Early detection, accurate diagnosis, and appropriate management are essential for improving outcomes and quality of life for individuals with arrhythmias. (The author is a Padma Bhushan Awardee, a Chairman & HOD - BLK-Max Heart & Vascular Institute, Chairman Pan Max -Electrophysiology, BLK-Max Super Speciality Hospital, Delhi)

## 1. Palpitations (a feeling of flutter-Mid-life running works wonders for the knees, hips and spine

**By: Alister Hart** 

s someone who started marathon running in mid-life, I know how many aches and pains (and doubts) you can have if you take on the challenge to start running at an older age. But as an orthopaedic surgeon who has replaced thousands of worn-out hips and knees throughout my career, I also know just how much

exercise actually helps the joints. Hobbling around my orthopaedic hospital after my first marathon actually led me to do research on runners.

After conducting 1,000 MRI scans of the joints of mid-life exercisers (both runners and cyclists) and "couch potatoes", I now better understand just how beneficial mid-life running is for the knees, hips and spine.

The findings were very surprising to me, particularly in the knee study. The high-resolution MRI scans found most of the 115 middle-aged participants had abnormalities in their knees before starting marathon training. Half of these abnormalities would typically have required keyhole surgery in the past.

But none of the knee abnormalities stopped them from finishing the marathon. And, in the MRI scans conducted after the marathon, they had no signs of deterioration in their joints. This totally changes how we can advise would-be runners who are found to have an abnormality on MRI scan of their knee.

Astonishingly, we also found that the bones of some runners improved after the marathon. In 10 volunteers who had changes in their bone marrow that would normally have signalled pre-arthritis (which occurs before even other early signs of arthritis do), these signs vanished on the MRI after

A commonly held belief is that exercise damages joints and may lead to osteoarthritis (some-

times referred to as "wear-and-tear arthritis") later in life. But while osteoarthritis is more common after middle age, it may actually be a lack of activity that leads to osteoarthritis. The more a joint is used, the stronger it makes the bone and muscle around it.

Studies on inactivity have shown that for bones to remain healthy, our skeleton needs to be stimulated by mechanical load (physical stress) - such as the impact of walking or running. Both bed rest or zero gravity in outer space result in reduced quality and strength of bone (osteopenia and the more severe osteoporosis).

This is because our bones are alive, with cells constantly building and removing bone. Mechanical force is necessary to stimulate the cells that build bone and inhibit the cells that take away

Running provides a very good stimulus for the bone building cells. Having healthy bone underneath the joint surface is particularly important for avoiding osteoarthritis.

Inactivity also causes muscle wasting (sarcopenia), which affects how the joints move. Reduced muscle use, whether it is through inactivity or sarcopenia or both, also reduces the production of anti-inflammatory myokines from the muscles. These chemicals are released when we exercise,

and help reduce joint swelling and calm irritated joint linings. This effect is pronounced in runners because running uses some of the largest muscles in the body - such as the glutes, quadriceps and Another benefit of exercise is it improves the

sures any pressure is placed evenly on the joint's Strength and conditioning exercises (such as using resistance bands or doing reformer pilates can improve muscle function and therefore carti-

way our cartilage surfaces move over each other.

This keeps the joint stable when we move and en-

lage function even further – especially for the cartilage in our main limb joints. Where to begin

In general, the best way to support our joints in-

volves a combination of different exercises, including muscle resistance (such as strength training), bone impact (such as running) and stable joint movement (such as cycling). If you want to start running, the main message

is to ease into it to reduce the risk of injury. This should help reduce your risk of injury. One of the best ways to ease into running in mid-life is the NHS Couch to 5K running programme. It's a free guide that will help you gradually work up towards running 5km in just nine

weeks. It's also designed for everyone – including

absolute beginners. The plan involves three runs a week, with a day of rest in between, and a different schedule for each of the nine weeks. It also uses a mix of running and walking to build your fitness and stam-

ina. This helps avoid overdoing it and giving up. Of course, there are some instances where running may damage our joints. These are usually because of past injury - such as when there's a broken bone extending into the joint, causing uneven cartilage surface. Another example is when a ligament has rup-

tured, and the joint becomes unstable. An unstable

joint will move abnormally and may damage the

cartilage. An unstable joint may also be caused by abnormal muscles around the joint. If you've experienced any of these problems, you'll want to be careful when exercising to avoid further damage. It's best to speak with your doctor to come up with an exercise plan that works for

Running is a great way to keep bones and muscles healthy, helping prevent damage and even osteoarthritis. Just make sure to take it slow at first. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

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## Rise in UK knife attacks leads to a crackdown and stokes public anxiety

horror reached Pooja Kanda first on social media: There had been a sword attack in London. And then Kanda, who was home alone at the time, saw a detail she dreaded and knew all too well.

A man with a sword had killed a 14-year-old boy who was walking to school. Two years ago, her 16year-old son, Ronan, was killed by two sword-wielding schoolmates while walking to a neighbour's to borrow a PlayStation controller.

"It took me back," Kanda, who lives near Birmingham, said about Daniel Anjorin's April 30 killing in an attack in London's Hainault district that also wounded four people. "It's painful to see that this has happened all over again."

In parts of the world that ban or strictly regulate gun ownership, including Britain and much of the rest of Europe, knives and other types of blades are often the weapons of choice used in crimes. Many end up in the hands of children, as they can be cheap and easy to get. Although the number of fatal stabbings has mostly held steady in England and Wales over the past 10 years, headline-grabbing attacks and an overall rise in knife crime have stoked anxieties and led to calls for the government to do more.

"Knife-enabled" crime — in which knives were used to commit crimes or someone was caught illegally possessing one — rose 7

Duchess of Sussex,

called 'Ifeoma' in Nigeria

ABUJA (Nigeria), May 12:

Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex,

says it's been "humbling" to find

out through a genealogy test that

she is partly Nigerian as she met

with women in the West African

nation on Saturday. On her second

day in Nigeria, where she is visit-

ing for the first time with Prince

Harry to also promote mental

health for wounded soldiers and

young girls, Meghan acknowl-

She added: "It's been eye-open-

'Never in a million years would

ing to be able to know more about

I understand it as much as I do

now. And what has been echoed so

much in the past day is, 'Oh, we

are not so surprised when we found

out you are Nigerian'," she said at

the event on women in leadership

co-hosted by Ngozi Okonjo-

head of the World Trade Organisa

tion (WTO). "It is a compliment to

you because what they define as a

Nigerian woman is brave, resilient, courageous, beautiful," Meghan

The Duchess of Sussex had an-

Her first reaction after finding

out was to tell her mother, she said

at the event in Nigeria's capital,

Abuja. "Being African American,

part of it is really not knowing so

much about your lineage and back-

nounced on her podcast in October 2022 that she found out through the DNA-based test that she was

told the audience.

Meghan.

"43 per cent Nigerian".

Iweala, a Nigerian economist and

edged Nigeria as "my country".

my heritage.

per cent in England and Wales last year," the government said last month, noting some localities were not included

In London, such crimes jumped 20 per cent. The other two UK countries, Scotland and Northern Ireland, keep their own statistics.

With knives so readily available, there's only so much that can be done. Of the 244 fatal stabbings in England and Wales in the 12 months ending with March 2023 the most recent figures available — 101 were committed with kitchen knives, far surpassing any other type of blade, according to the Office of National Statistics.

But the uptick in knife crime and a steady drumbeat of shocking attacks, including those that killed Ronan Kanda, Daniel Anjorin and three people in Nottingham last year, has pushed the issue to the

"It seems like every day something like this is reported in the press," Sanjoy O'Malley-Kumar, whose 19-year-old daughter Grace O'Malley-Kumar was among the Nottingham victims, said on "Good Morning Britain" after the recent attack in London.

In last week's local elections, candidates debated policies such as stop-and-search.

Ēven movie star Idris Elba has weighed in. "I can pick up a phone right now, type in knives and I'll get inundated with adverts for



"The Wire" and "Luther" said during a protest in January

Guns are heavily restricted in the UK and there's not much debate about it. That's partly because the 1996 massacre of 16 elementary students in Dunblane, Scotland, led to a ban on owning handguns. Firearms used for hunting are tightly regulated.

Restricting knives is trickier, but the government is trying. It's already illegal to sell a knife to someone younger than 18 or to carry one in public without a good reason, such as for work or religious purposes.

And certain types of blades are already illegal, including switchblades and so-called zombie knives, which come in various sizes, have cutting and serrated edges, and feature text or images suggesting they should be used to the 2017 vehicle-and-knife attack

commit violence, according to the 2016 law banning them.

A new law will take effect in September banning the sale of machetes and closing a loophole that companies have exploited to get around the zombie knife ban. It remains to be seen whether the new law will have much effect, though, as machetes accounted for only 14 of of the 244 stabbing deaths in the 12 months that ended in March 2023 and zombie-style knives accounted for seven.

"Knives are harder than guns to regulate and there are already large numbers out there even if they were banned," said Tony Travers, a professor of government at the London School of Economics.

History and statistics point to an enduring problem in a country

Manaslu

and injured almost 50. Three extremists inspired by the Islamic State group drove into pedestrians on London Bridge and then stabbed people in nearby Borough

Homicides committed with sharp instruments, including knives, machetes and swords, have exceeded 200 since the 12 months that ended with March 2016, when 210 people were killed that way, according to the Office of National Statistics.

They reached a record high of 282 two years later and have held roughly steady ever since, dipping slightly during the pandemic lock-

Whereas guns are used in about 80 per cent of American homicides, according to US government figures, blades are used in most London killings. But brazen and seemingly random attacks like the one this month in east London are unusual.

"Sporadic acts of violence are a bit like shark attacks. They're actually very, very rare, but they get lots of traction," said Iain Overton, executive director of Action on Armed Violence, a London-based charity. "I don't think randomized public homicides are particularly commonplace in the UK."

The frequency of slashing attacks has amplified a sense of dread and distrust in cities, where

several expeditions. Besides the Everest, he has

also conquered Mt. K2, Cho Oyu, Lhotse, and

Meanwhile, a renowned British climber

According to base camp officials, Kenton

scaled the world's highest mountain for the 18th

time breaking his own record for the most Mt

Cool from Gloucestershire, South West Eng-

land, also broke his own British record for the

most summits of the world's highest peak, The

On Friday, ten mountain guides from Nepal

As the rope fixing job has been completed,

Mt. Everest is now open for mountaineers from

both Nepal and foreign countries to climb, said

Chun Bahadur Tamang, an official at the Moun-

taineering Section of the Department of

The rope-fixing work started Friday morning

successfully scaled the world's highest peak

after they fixed the ropes in the mountain clear-

Everest summits by any foreign climber.

Himalayan Times reported.

ing the route for other climbers.

## One police officer killed, over 100 injured in clashes during protest in Pok



ISLAMABAD, May 12: One police officer was killed and more than 100 people, mostly policemen, injured in violent clashes between security forces and protesters agitating against high prices of wheat flour and electricity in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, media reports said on Sunday.

The disputed region witnessed clashes on Saturday between the police and activists of a rights movement amid a wheel-jam and shutter-down strike across the territory, the Dawn newspaper reported.

Mirpur Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Kamran Ali told Dawn.com that sub-inspector Adnan Qureshi succumbed to a gunshot wound in the chest in the town of Islamgarh, where he was deployed along with other police personnel to stop a rally for Muzaffarabad via Kotli and Poonch districts under the banner of the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC).

The JAAC, which has traders at the forefront in most parts of the state, has been seeking the provision of electricity as per hydropower generation cost in the region, subsidised wheat flour and an end to the privileges of the elite class. The regional government has called in the Rangers and a heavy contingent of policemen to stop the massive protests.

Mobile phone and internet services were suspended in different parts of the PoK on Sunday including Bhimber and Bagh Towns, Geo News reported. In Mirpur, all the mobile networks and internet service have been suspended, it added.

Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari has called an emergency meeting related to the situation in the region at the President's House on Monday, said sources. They added that the president instructed stakeholders to

bring proposals to resolve the issue. On Wednesday and Thursday, around 70 JAAC activists were arrested by police during raids at their residences and those of their relatives in Muzaffarabad and Mirpur divisions, triggering serious clashes in Dadyal on Thursday. The committee had subsequently announced a shutter-down and wheel-jam strike on Friday, a day ahead of its planned long march towards Muzaffarabad Saturday.

Amid a crippling strike on Friday, violent clashes took place between police and protesters in different areas of Muzaffarabad, the capital of PoK. On Saturday, authorities placed mounds of earth on arteries leading to Muzaffarabad, apart from making more arrests, to prevent people from heading towards the state capital. Witnesses said that Muzaffarabad division and Poonch division observed complete strikes.

SSP Yasin Baig said at least one police officer and a young boy were injured as police resorted to teargas shelling and aerial firing in some neighbourhoods after stones and bottles were pelted by protesters.

Kotli SSP Mir Muhammad Abid said that at least 78 policemen were injured in the district in attacks of miscreants under the guise of protest. The SSP said 59 policemen, including Deputy Superintendent of Police Ilyas Janjua, and two revenue department officials were injured in Rehaan Galli while another 19 policemen were injured in Sehnsa Baroiyan.

A press release from the District Headquarters Hospital Kotli said apart from the 59 wounded policemen, nine injured protesters were also brought for treatment. SSP Abid said some police officials were also reportedly injured in Doliya Jattan.

A total of 29 protesters were injured in the clashes, according to Geo News. JAAC spokesperson Hafeez Hamdani said that the action committee had nothing to do with violence. "It seems that such elements have been purposely planted in the ranks of protesters to bring a bad name to a struggle that aims nothing but the legitimate rights of the people, he

Addressing a press conference on Saturday, Finance Minister of Pak-Altogether 414 climbers from 41 expeditions istan-occupied Kashmir Abdul Majid Khan said that the government had have acquired permission to scale Everest in exercised maximum restraint and is ready for talks to peacefully address all contentious issues. (PTI)

## Nepal's mountaineer Kami Rita Sherpa climbs Mt Everest for 29th time, beats own record

KATHMANDU, May 12: Nepal's legendary mountaineer Kami Rita Sherpa made history on Sunday by breaking his record for the highest number of ascents of Mt. Everest as he scaled the world's highest peak for the 29th time.

The 54-year-old veteran climber reached the 3,849-metre peak at 7:25 am local time on Sunday, according to Rakesh Gurung, director at the Tourism Department in the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation.

The expedition was organised by the Seven Summit Treks and had 20 climbers. They scaled Everest on Sunday morning, said Thani Guragain, a senior staff at the Seven Summit Treks. "At least 20 climbers from Seven Summit Treks including Kami made a successful ascent of Mt. Everest Sunday morning," Seven Sum-

mit Treks said, issuing a statement. The climbing members were from countries including the USA, Canada and Kazakhstan besides thirteen climbers from Nepal.

Kami had climbed Everest for the first time

Last year, he made two successful attempts to scale Everest for the 27th and 28th times in

This way, he became the person who climbed



Everest for the highest number of times. Last year, Pasand Dawa Sherpa of Solukhumbu completed his 27th summit of Everest, but he remains uncertain about attempting the climb this season, according to Re-

publica newspaper. Kami, a senior mountain guide at Seven Summit Treks, was born on January 17, 1970. Kami's mountaineering journey began in 1992 when he joined an expedition to Everest

as a supporting staff. Since then, Kami has fearlessly embarked on

and concluded at night.

Tourism, issuing a notice Friday night.

## Thousands of civilians evacuated from northeast Ukraine as Russia presses renewed border assault

KYIV, May 12: Thousands more civilians have fled Russia's renewed ground offensive in Ukraine's northeast that has targeted towns and villages with a barrage of artillery and mortar fire, officials said Sunday.

ground ... and it was exciting for The intense battles have forced at least one Ukrainian unit to withboth of us," she said. draw in the Kharkiv region, capit-Mo Abudu, the anchor and chief ulating more land to Russian executive of EbonyLife media group, then asked the audience to forces across less defended settlements in the so-called contested suggest a Nigerian name for "gray zone" along the Russian bor-

"Ifeoma," someone shouted from the excited crowd, a name Meanwhile, a 10-story apartment block collapsed in the Russfrom Nigeria's Igbo tribe which means a treasured thing. "Omowale" ian city of Belgorod, near the another suggested, from the Yoruba border, with several deaths and intribe, which means the child has juries reported. Russian authorities

ing Ukrainian shelling. Ukraine has not commented on the incident.

> At least 4,000 civilians have fled the Kharkiv region since Friday, when Moscow's forces launched operation, Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said in a social media statement. Heavy fighting raged Sunday along the northeast front line, where Russian forces attacked 27 settlements in the past 24 hours,

Analysts say the Russian push is designed to exploit ammunition shortages before promised Western supplies can reach the front line. Ukrainian soldiers said the Kremlin is using the usual Russian tactic by launching a disproportionate said the building collapsed follow- amount of fire and infantry as-

saults to exhaust their troops and firepower.

It comes after Russia stepped up attacks in March targeting energy infrastructure and settlements, which analysts predicted were a concerted effort by Moscow to shape conditions for an offensive.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that disrupting Russia's offensive in the area was a priority, and that Kyiv's troops were continuing counteroffensive operations in seven villages around the Kharkiv region. "Disrupting the Russian offen-

sive intentions is our number one task now. Whether we succeed in that task depends on every soldier, every sergeant, every officer," Ze-

## As Israel pushes deeper into Rafah, Hamas regroups elsewhere in ungoverned Gaza

RAFAH, May 12: Israeli forces were battling Palestinian militants across the Gaza Strip on Sunday, including in parts of the devastated north that the military said it had cleared months ago, where Hamas has exploited a security vacuum to regroup. Israel has portrayed the southern Gaza city of Rafah

as Hamas' last stronghold, saying it must invade in order to succeed in its goals of dismantling the group and returning scores of hostages.

A limited operation there has expanded in recent days, forcing some 300,000 people to flee and drawing warnings from Egypt, where an official said it is putting the country's decades-old peace treaty with Israel at risk. But the rest of the war-ravaged territory seems to provide ample opportunities for Hamas. Israel has yet to offer a detailed plan for postwar governance in Gaza, saying only that it will maintain open-ended security control over the coastal enclave, which is home to some 2.3 million Palestinians. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has rejected

postwar plans proposed by the United States for the Palestinian Authority, which administers parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank, to govern Gaza with support from Arab and Muslim countries. Those plans depend on progress toward the creation of a Palestinian state, something to which Netanyahu's government is deeply opposed.

With the two close allies divided, Gaza has been left without a functioning government, leading to a breakdown in public order and allowing Hamas to reconstitute itself in even the hardest-hit areas.

The war began when Hamas and other militants attacked southern Israel on October 7, killing around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking another 250 hostage. They still hold about 100 captives and the remains of more than 30, and internationally mediated talks over a cease-fire and hostage release appear to be at a standstill. Israel's air, land and sea offensive has killed more than 35,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants in its figures. Israel says it has killed over 13,000 militants, without providing evidence.

Palestinians reported heavy Israeli bombardment overnight in the urban Jabaliya refugee camp and other areas in the northern Gaza Strip, which has suffered widespread devastation and been largely isolated by Israeli forces for months. UN officials say there is a full-blown famine there. Residents said Israeli warplanes and artillery struck

across the camp and the Zeitoun area east of Gaza City, where troops have been battling Palestinian militants for over a week. They have called on tens of thousands of people to relocate to nearby areas.



It was a very difficult night, said Abdel-Kareem Radwan, a 48-year-old Palestinian from Jabaliya. He said they could hear intense and constant bombing since midday Saturday. This is madness.

First responders with the Palestinian Civil Defence said they were unable to respond to multiple calls for help from both areas, as well as from Rafah.

Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the top Israeli military spokesman, said that in addition to Jabaliya and Zeitoun, forces were also operating in Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun. The two towns near Gaza's northern border with Israel were heavily bombed in the opening days of the war. The military is now going into Jabaliya for the second time and into Zeitoun for the third time, and it will continue to go in and out, columnist Ben Caspit wrote in Israel's Maariv daily, channelling the growing frustration felt by many Israelis more than seven months into the war.

Hamas' regime cannot be toppled without preparing an alternative to that regime, he wrote, drawing comparisons with the American wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The only people who can govern Gaza after the war are Gazans, with a lot of support and help from the outside. The United Nations' agency for Palestinian refugees, the main provider of aid in Gaza, said 300,000 people have fled Rafah since the operation began there. Most are heading to the heavily damaged nearby city of Khan Younis or Mawasi, a crowded tent camp on the coast where some 450,000 people are already living in squalid conditions.

Rafah was sheltering some 1.3 million Palestinians before the Israeli operation began, most of whom had fled fighting elsewhere in the territory. Israel has now evacuated the eastern third of Rafah, and Hagari said dozens of militants had been killed there as targeted operations continued. The United Nations has warned that a planned full-scale Rafah invasion would further cripple humanitarian operations and cause a surge in civilian deaths. (AP)

## With the shock of October 7 still raw, profound sadness and anger grip Israel on its Memorial Day

TEL AVIV (Israel), May 12: Ruby Chen's son, Itay, was killed in the Hamas attack on October 7. But unlike scores of other families of soldiers killed that day, Chen doesn't have a grave to visit because his son's remains are held captive in Gaza.

The absence of a final resting place is being felt acutely now, as Israel marks its Memorial Day for fallen soldiers, when cemeteries are brimming with relatives mourning over the

graves of their loved ones. "Where are we supposed to go?" Chen said.

"There is no burial site for us to go to." Memorial Day is always a somber occasion in Israel, a country that has suffered through repeated war and conflict throughout its 76-year history. But Chen's torment underscores how this year it has taken on a profound and raw sadness coupled with percolating anger over the failures of October 7 and the war it sparked.

Families of the fallen, along with broad segments of the public, are demanding accountability from political and military leaders over the blunders that led to the deaths of hundreds in the deadliest attack in the country's history.



"Too many people were killed on that day because of a colossal misjudgment," said Chen, who for months thought his son was still alive after he was snatched into Gaza, before receiving confirmation earlier this year that he was dead. "People who made the misjudgment need to pay, from the prime minister down.'

Israel marks its Memorial Day for fallen soldiers and victims of attacks beginning at sundown Sunday with an official ceremony and smaller events the following day at military cemeteries across the country. The solemnity is

then abruptly interrupted by the fanfare of Independence Day, which begins Monday evening.

Grouping the two days together is intentionally meant to highlight the link between the costly wars Israel has fought and the establishment and survival of the state, a contrast that this year will be hard to reconcile at a time when Israel is actively engaged in warfare and Israelis feel more insecure than ever.

With the trauma of October 7 looming large, each day is expected to feel dramatically different from previous years.

More than 600 Israeli soldiers have been killed since Hamas launched its surprise attack on October 7, when thousands of militants rampaged across southern Israeli military bases and sleepy communities on a Jewish holiday. Roughly 1,200 people were killed that day, about a quarter of them soldiers, and another 250 were taken captive into Gaza, according to Israeli authorities. The attack sparked the war, now in its eighth month, which has killed more than 34,700 Palestinians, most of them women and children, according to local health officials. (AP)

On May 4 last year, the school, its buildings, its legacy and its mission were burnt, destroyed and lost forever

## School poised for 25 years celebrations, now abandoned, out-of-bound for Kuki owners

PUR, May 12: Razed buildings and burnt furniture. These are what remain of the St. Peter's School in Manipur's Imphal after a year of violence in the state between Kuki and Meitei ethnic groups.

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"We were preparing to celebrate its silver jubilee year in 2023. But then the clashes broke out. They burnt everything," said principal Khupkhoman, a Kuki who has since moved to Churachandpur from the Meitei-dominated Imphal Valley region.

Now an abandoned structure, the Manipur Board-affiliated St. Peter's School had more than 800 students till Class 10 pre-May 3, 2023, the day reports of incidents of clashes started pouring in from many parts of the northeastern state, prompting the closure of educational institutions, offices and

"Its one day at a time for us. The situation remains unpredictable and we don't plan anymore. The crisis continues, and there is nothing to look forward to or look back upon," Khupkhoman, 62, who moved with her family to the hills of Churachandpur, said.

The school, built by Khupkhoman and her late husband over 25 years, also had her residence on its premises. She now lives with her family in a rented accommodation, displaced like more than ties. But Khupkhoman has not stopped calling families living around the school to take updates about her Meitei students, the Kuki's have moved out.

"They have joined other schools, some have dropped out," she told PTI. Recalling the preparations for the silver jubilee year celebrations, Khupkhoman said practice for dance and singing performances were underway. There was a lot of activity but then, within a night, it was all over, she said with tears in her eyes.

The institution was attacked in the early hours of May 4 by a mob. "The school was everything we

had, we had built it step by step, it was where we lived for years... Over 800 students had their hopes attached with our vision and within a night everything was gone. At first, I had thought that this will be over in a week's time and I was already making plans about what all needs to be done before we resume classes again," Khupkhoman said.

"Suddenly, I was left jobless, homeless, hopeless...lost everything," she said.

Unsure about the school's future, its management had moved the Supreme Court in November last year, seeking a direction to the Manipur government to compensate for the losses suffered and the state's failure to launch an investi-



gation to arrest the perpetrators. "On May 4 last year, the school, its buildings, its legacy and its mis-

sion were burnt, destroyed and lost forever. A day before, some families rushed to the school for safety when a violent mob began attacking churches, homes and other establishments of Kuki-Zo tribals," Khupkhoman's daughter-in-law Niangthianvung, 37, said.

"By midnight, about 34 people were inside the school complex (to seek shelter). To make matters worse, electricity to the school and its nearby areas was cut off...a mob then entered the school complex and burnt down classrooms, offices, hostels and residences. The school's football turf was also set ablaze," she added.

On May 5 last year, Niangthianvung, took a flight to Guwahati in Assam with her two sons while Khupkhoman stayed in a relief camp for a week. Her husband, a banker, was in Hyderabad for training then.

Later, they all travelled to Churachandpur using different routes, first living with relatives and then renting an accommodation for

This PTI reporter visited the school in the Imphal Valley and the family in the hills of Churachandpur earlier this month. The two regions since May 3 last year stand divided with Kukis residing in the hills and Meiteis in the valley. Clashes have claimed more than

no such information about students. We keep getting calls and that is how we know (about them)." "When we realised there is no going back, we called a few neighbours to request if they could keep some of our belongings. Many of them were afraid to be seen as being in touch with us while few who went (to the school) said there is nothing left," Niangthianvung said. Niangthianvung's sons, 7 and 5

years old, were students of St. Peter's School. Now they study in a school in Churachandpur.

"It does not feel the same, they often complain about the school, the house and everything, but they are too young to understand, and maybe by the time they grow up, they will have no memory about how their home once looked like," she said.

In their submission in the Supreme Court, the school's management has put the loss of movable and immovable properties at an estimated ₹ 14 crore. The amount includes loans and personal borrowing by the family to improve the school's infrastructure, including construction of a new library and a recreational room. Having experienced the "horrors of the carnage", the family has also demanded compensation for mental trauma. (PTI)

## NPCC echoes AICC stance on Pitroda's analogies



HT Correspondent

**DIMAPUR, May 12:** Echoing the stance of the AICC in rejecting the analogies given by Sam Pitroda to illustrate India's diversity, the Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee (NPCC) on Sunday said the unacceptable and unfortunate analogies were drawn by him in his personal capacity and has nothing to do with the Congress Party, as has been clearly communicated through appropriate party

channels 'We reaffirm our utmost respect for the rich diversity of India and our unwavering commitment in upholding the interests of all sections of society, irrespective of colour or creed," the NPCC in a release issued by its communication department said.

However, despite the Con- a few of the cases in point.

gress' clear stance, the BJP's attempts to politicise the issue are regrettable and an indicator of their utter desperation in the face of an impending electoral rout, the Pradesh Congress said.

"BJP's hypocrisy and the irony of the situation is not lost on the nation considering the several instances in the recent past where BJP leaders have been involved in comparatively worse cases without any proportionate official censure from the party," it said.

The NPCC added that racially loaded statements from Union minister Giriraj Singh in 2015, former BJP MP Tarun Vijay in 2017, and former national vice president of BJP's youth wing Santosh Ranjan Rai in 2021 are

#### Manipur Lok Adalat settles 177 cases worth ₹ 1.82 crore



GUWAHATI, May 12: The Manipur State Legal Services Authority (MASLSA), in collaboration with the High Court and District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs), successfully resolved 177 cases during the second National Lok Adalat of 2024 held on Saturday, May 11. These cases, encompassing civil matters, compoundable criminal

offenses, bank recoveries, motor accident claims, and more, resulted in a total settlement amount of ₹ 1,82,83,801. Around 2,000 pre-litigation and pending cases were listed for the state-wide Lok Adalat. Justice A Bimol Singh, Judge of the High Court

of Manipur and Executive Chairman of MASLSA, along with Justice Golmei Gaiphulshillu, Judge of the High Court, visited the Lok Adalat proceedings at Lamphel Court Complex.

Highlighting the benefits of Lok Adalat, Justice Singh informed the media that the next such events will be held on September 14th and December 14th, 2024.

He said that Lok Adalat decrees are equivalent to those of civil courts and are final, with no further appeals possible. This forum offers a faster and more cost-effective way to settle disputes through mutual

Justice Singh encouraged parties interested in resolving their cases through Lok Adalat to approach MASLSA or DLSAs for inclusion in uncoming hearings.

The three Lok Adalat benches at Lamphel Court were presided over by N Lanleima (Presiding Officer, MACT), Monalisa Maibam (Special Judge, ND&PS (FTC)), and Dr Laishram Rina Devi (Civil Judge (Sr

#### Drugs worth over ₹9 cr seized

AIZAWL, May 12: Drugs worth Rs 9.3 crore have been seized in Mizoram's Champhai district along the India-Myanmar border, Assam Rifles said in a statement.

Acting on a tip-off, security forces raided Zokhawthar village on Saturday and seized 3.1 kg of crystal methamphetamine concealed in tea packets, it said. The seized consignment was handed over to the state police, it added. (PTI)

Manipur police foil

kidnapping bid, nab 6

KCP-PWG cadres

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, May 12: A Manipur police

commandos and Imphal East district police in

a joint operation rescued two kidnapped youths

and apprehended six cadres of the outlawed

Kangleipak Communist Party, People's War

Acting on intelligence inputs, the joint team

The operation led to the safe rescue of Irom

The successful rescue came after complaints

were filed by Irom Kunjeshor and Ng Ibomcha,

fathers of the kidnapped youths, at Porompat

police station. Their sons were reportedly ab-

ducted by armed men from Thambaokhong

Sabal Leikai in the same district on Wednes-

The operation also resulted in the arrest of

Anand (24) and Ngangom Rohit Singh (24),

both residents of Kongpal under the Porompat

launched a targeted operation around 10 pm at

a suspected location in Kshetrigao

Yumkhaibam Leikai, Imphal East district.

Group (KCP-PWG) on Friday night.

police station.

## ZSUM expresses deep sorrow over demise of tribal leader

IMPHAL, May 12: The Zeliangrong Students' Union Manipur (ZSUM) has expressed deep sorrow over the demise of RK Ajin, s/o of Late. Lungsudinang from C. Centre Tamenglong ward No 7, Tamenglong district, Manipur, on Friday at Max Super specialty Hospital, Saket in New Delhi. He is survived by his beloved wife, two sons, two daughters and a granddaughter.

Ajin was a serving president of All Manipur Tribal Union (AMTU) "which organization had defended the rights of the tribal people tooth and nail and it had filed a litigation to the High Court of Manipur because the Meiteis are advanced community who have outgrowth the status of ST, therefore, their demand is both legally and constitutionally not



tenable," ZSUM said in a statement. On this day of mourning over the loss of "our great soul, we, the Zeliangrong Students' Union Manipur and former leaders have jointly shared this painful

moment together with the bereaved

family members, and prayed to God Almighty to grant him eternal rest in the heavenly abode" ZSUM also said it fondly remembers

his great contributions towards our Zeliangrong community, who had served in the Zeliangrong Students' Union Manipur (ZSUM), in the year 1987-1988. ZSUM further said Ajin's humility and "uncountable sacrifices" rendered during his tenure as a student leader will always remain as a remarkable example for "our younger generations in the days to come'

ZSUM further said RK Ajin's zeal to spread unity and brotherhood amongst "our community will never be forgotten even though he is no more with us here

#### Widow shot and injured by unidentified miscreants in Bishnupur

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, May 12: A 40-year-old widow was shot and injured by unknown miscreants at a place on the Phadibi road under Nambol police station in Manipur's Bishnupur district on Saturday night, officials said on

Moirangthem Baby, 40, wife of (late) M Biswaiit. a resident of Tentha Khunu village in Thoubal district was abducted from her rented house located at Lamphel in Imphal West district on Saturday at around 7:30 pm. She was later shot and injured in her left calf by the

miscreants in the Nambol area. Following a report, a team from the Nambol police station picked up the injured widow and was rushed to the Primary Health Centre at Nambol. Later she was shifted

to the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences, Imphal for

The motive behind the shooting is yet to be established. Nor does any outfit or individual claim responsibility for the action. Police, however, stated that a case has been registered in this regard.

#### Manipur CM calls for calm amidst deportation of 'illegal' Myanmar nationals

Brainstorming of ideas to develop tourism in NE in Delhi

cies, marketing and promotion ef-

forts for the development of

Attendees included officials

from the eight Northeastern states

of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh,

Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram,

The event also had representa-

Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura.

tourism in Northeastern states.

Biren Singh urged for understanding and restraint as relief efforts are extended to illegal Myanmar nationals seeking shelter within the state's borders on humanitarian grounds.

Emphasizing adherence to the nation's legal framework, the chief minister reiterated that illegal migrants would undergo due process and be deported in accordance with established laws.

Central to his address was the assurance of safeguarding the indigenous populace and curbing illegal migration, a pivotal concern amidst an estimated 12,000 illegal Myanmar nationals currently residing

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, May 12: The fifth

meeting of the Task Force for the

Development of Tourism in

Northeast states was convened at

Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi re-

In the meeting, the discussion

centred on different strategies for

capacity building, training poli-

Respite for Tripura as fuel train

arrives, easing supply woes

GUWAHATI, May 12: After nearly two weeks of grappling

with a fuel shortage, Tripura finally receives a sigh of relief as a freight train carrying crucial fuel supplies arrives in the

state. The train successfully navigated the critical Jatinga

Lumpur – New Harangajao section in Assam's Dima Hasao

District, overcoming challenges posed by a recent derailment.

North Eastern Frontier Railway, confirmed that a convoy of

49 Bogie Tank wagons for petroleum products (BTPN) de-

parted from Assam and safely navigated the challenging

(HSD) and 30 wagons of Motor Spirit/Petrol (MS), completed

its journey through the Jatinga Lumpur – New Harangajao

section at 10:41 am today. It has now reached Dharmanagar,

The train's arrival at the Dharmanagar depot offers a much-

Tripura's chief minister, Manik Saha, expressed his grati-

tude on a social media platform. "Today marks a significant

milestone. This is the first successful passage of a POL (Pe-

troleum, Oil, and Lubricants) train through the landslide-af-

fected stretch between Jatinga and Haranga since April 26th.

ister Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw for his prompt action, the dedi-

cated NFR officials and workers for their tireless efforts, and

the people of Tripura for their patience and cooperation. This

train will be a beacon of relief, effectively mitigating the fuel

"I express my sincere appreciation to Union Railway Min-

"The train, carrying 19 wagons of High-Speed Diesel

Jatinga Lumpur area.

Tripura," announced the official.

needed solution to the state's fuel shortage

crisis in our state," said the chief minister.

Sabyasachi Dey, the Chief Public Relations Officer of

Expressing dismay over recent assertions by the Inister underscored the organization's purported lack of comprehension regarding the ground realities in Ma-

Refuting claims of normalcy in the immigration scenario, he highlighted the existential threats posed to Manipur's demography, history, and identity, citing the imperilled status of its indigenous community.

Asserting the paramountcy of protecting indigenous interests, both at the central and state levels, Singh reaffirmed the commitment to continue deporting illegal immigrants. He also condemned the involvement of purported rights activists and social workers in fostering discord and hostility within the state.

Ministry of Civil Aviation, Min-

istry of Micro, Small & Medium

Enterprise, Ministry of Tourism,

Ministry of Culture, Ministry of

Information & Broadcasting, Con-

federation of Indian Industry (CII)

and other private partners. New

strategies were chalked out to in-

crease tourism in the northeast

#### BSF apprehends duo with B'deshi currency in Meghalaya

der Security Force (BSF) arrested two men from the international border in East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya with a huge amount of Bangladeshi currency notes.

As per officials, the two men were residents of Meghalaya and were found carrying a significant amount of Bangladeshi currency.

They were found with 3.40 lakh taka, which is roughly equivalent to Rs. 2.42 lakh.

The officials said that acting on a tip-off, the BSF conducted a special operation in the vicinity of the Nayabazar border outpost.

During the operation, BSF personnel spotted two Indian nationals behaving suspiciously near the border. Upon searching them, the BSF recovered a bag containing Bangladeshi taka notes in denominations of 500.

The two men were subsequently taken into custody. Preliminary questioning



vealed the identities of the individuals as Balanus Mawroh from Nongjri Wahsier and Enterness Khongsni from Nongjritluh.

According to a BSF press release issued today, the large sum of Bangladeshi currency was likely intended to be used for illegal activities across the border.

The apprehended individuals along with the seized Bangladeshi taka have been handed over to the Pynursla police station for further investigation and legal proceed-

Ceremony commenced with a poignant tribute to the gallant soldiers with wreath laying at the war memorial

# Sainik School Punglwa, Nagaland celebrates 17<sup>th</sup> founders' day

GUWAHATI, May 12: Sainik School, Punglwa Nagaland (SSPN) commemorated its 17th Founders' Day recently. A series of events were held to commemorate the event. Uniel Kichu, IPS, DIG (Range/NAP) Nagaland Police HQs, was the chief guest on the occasion.

The ceremony commenced with a poignant tribute to the gallant soldiers with wreath laying at the war memorial, followed by a Guard of Honour by the cadets. The programme unfolded with

the symbolic lighting of the Lamp and release of the Half Yearly Newsletter, 'Voice of the Young Worriors of Morung' (VYWOM). Principal of the School, extended a warm welcome to the distinguished gathering whereas the Vice-Principal presented the an-



nual report. The cultural extravaganza presented by the cadets showcased their multifaceted talents, encompassing cultural dances, group and solo performances, blending entertainment with education seamlessly.

Acknowledging the excellence, the felicitation ceremony recognized the outstanding cadets. Best Cadet in Academics and Sports was awarded to Cadet Mastufa

Ahmed and Cadet Sukhabo V Kiho respectively. The cadet adjudged best in Officer Like Qualities is cadet Rakesh Nalo. The coveted Cock House Trophy was awarded to Patkai House and Doyang House in Junior and Senior category respectively.

Expressing gratitude, the principal presented the school memento to the Chief Guest, followed by an enlightening address by the cheif

In his address the officer, an alumnus of Sainik School Imphal, shared his reminiscence of his life as a cadet thirty years ago and highlighted the importance of discipline, knowledge and purpose.

Tsonga, PGT English, extended a vote of thanks. The programme came to its conclusion with the resonant strains of the National An-

#### six KCP-PWG cadres identified as Chingkham Sanajaoba (23), Soibam Sital (24), Maibam Naresh (24), Ningthoujam Ajit (26), Chingsubam Thoungamba Meitei (30), and Wahegbam Premjit (40).

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**EASTERN LADAKH BORDER ROW** 

Hope there is resolution of remaining

issues: EAM Jaishankar

eastern Ladakh military standoff

entered its fifth year, External Af-

fairs Minister S Jaishankar said

India hopes for a resolution of the

remaining issues with China and as-

serted that a return to normal bilat-

eral ties hinges on peace and

Jaishankar said the remaining issues

mainly pertained to "patrolling

Specifically asked when a reso-

lution to the dragging row can be

expected in the backdrop of Prime

rights and patrolling abilities".

Minister Narendra Modi's

remarks to Newsweek

magazine last month,

Jaishankar said that

"big-picture"

"We would

hope that there

is a resolution of

the remaining is-

there." he said

sues out there.

These issues mainly

neighbours," he said.

pertain to patrolling

rights and patrolling abilities

"I would not link it to the prime

minister's interview per se. I think

the prime minister was giving a big-

picture viewpoint and his big-pic-

ture viewpoint was a very

reasonable viewpoint which is --

after all as neighbours, every coun-

try wants good relations with its

China are not normal because the

peace and tranquility in the border

areas has been disturbed. So he

(PM) was expressing the hope that

the Chinese side should realise that

the present situation is not in its

Modi had said that the border sit-

uation needs to be addressed ur-

gently and that stable and peaceful

important for not just the two coun-

tries but for the entire region and

world. Jaishankar said diplomacy is

a work of patience and India contin-

ues to discuss the issues with the

solve those issues if the relationship

is to come back to normal," he said

during the interview on Thursday.

The Indian and Chinese mili-

"I would say that we need to re-

ties between India and China are

own interest," Jaishankar said.

"But today, our relations with

he only provided

viewpoint

the matter.

In an exclusive interview to PTI,

tranquility at the border.

## Odisha to go to twin polls for 4 LS seats, 28 assembly segments today

'Voting will begin at 7 AM on Monday in 7,303 polling stations across the four Lok Sabha seats and their assembly segments and will continue till 6 pm'

BHUBANESWAR, May 12: The stage is set for simultaneous elections to four Lok Sabha constituencies and 28 assembly segments in Odisha on Monday. with the EC making elaborate arrangements to ensure free and fair polling, officials said.

Voting will be held in Berhampur, Koraput, Nabarangpur and Kalahandi Lok Sabha constituencies and 28 assembly segments under the jurisdiction of these parliamentary seats, Odisha's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) N B Dhal said. There are 37 candidates for the Lok Sabha polls, while 243 nominees are in the fray for the 28 assembly seats.

The BJD, Congress and the BJP are contesting in all the constituencies, while nominees of some small and regional parties along with independent candidates are in the fray.

Voting will begin at 7 AM on Monday in 7,303 polling stations across the four Lok Sabha seats and their assembly segments and will continue till 6 pm, the CEO

Cong and INDIA

bloc will come

to power and

govern country:

D K Shivakumar

BENGALURU, May 12: Kar-

nataka Deputy Chief Minister D K

Shivakumar on Sunday asserted

that his party along with the INDIA

bloc will come to power and gov-

ern the country in the days ahead,

after the ongoing Lok Sabha polls.

said that he and his party are not

bothered by the BJP-JD(S) alliance

continuing for the biennial election

to six seats (three each from grad-

uates' and teachers' constituencies)

of the Karnataka Legislative Coun-

"In my opinion, Congress party

and the INDI Alliance will come to

power. There is no chance for a

BJP person to become the prime

minister. This country will be gov-

erned under the leadership of the Congress party and the INDI Alliance hereon, we have that much

confidence," Shivakumar said after

He was responding to a question

on AAP chief and Delhi Chief

Minister Arvind Kejriwal's com-

ments asking the BJP as to who

will be its next prime minister as

Narendra Modi will have to retire

Meeting of party leaders and of-

fice bearers were held today re-

garding Legislative Council polls

to elect members from graduates

and teachers constituencies. Direc-

a party meeting here.

The state Congress chief also



said, adding that polling personnel reached their respective booths. Voting is scheduled to end at 4 PM and 5 PM in some remote places where Maoist activities are a factor, he said.

Altogether 62.87 lakh electors, including 31.89 lakh women, are eligible to exercise their franchise in the first round of the twin polls.

The number of women voters is more than 30.97 lakh men electors in the first phase of polls in the state, he said.

The four Lok Sabha seats are spread over six Maoist-affected police districts - Malkangiri, Koraput, Rayagada, Nabarangpur, Nuapada and Kalahandi - and three other police districts of Ganjam, Berhampur and Gajapati, Odisha DGP Arun Kumar Sarangi said.

Arrangements for webcasting have been made in 60 per cent of the 7,303 polling stations.

Over 1,264 polling stations, including all booths in Maoist-affected areas, have been identified as critical ones, the CEO said.

The voting process will involve 53,000 polling personnel, with 715 all-women booths and 39 booths to be run by persons with disability, he said.

Sitting MP Saptagiri Ulaka of Congress from Koraput seat, former MPs Pradeep Majhi of the BJD and Balabhdra Maji of the BJP in Nabarangpur, Pradeep Panigrahi of the BJP and BJD's Bhrugu Baxipatra in Berhampur are among prominent leaders who are contesting the Lok Sabha polls.

State ministers Jagannath Rajendra Dholkia,

Odisha Congress chief Sarat Patnaik, and Congress leader Bhakta Charan Das are in the fray in assembly polls.

Congress MLAs Taraprasad Bahinipati and Adhiraj Panigrahi, former chief secretary Bijay Patnaik, ex-minister DS Mishra, former leader of opposition Pradipta Naik, former MLA Ramesh Chandra Chayupattnaik are trying their luck in the assembly elections.

Odisha has witnessed Prime Minister Narendra Modi, union ministers Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh, BJP president JP Nadda, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Chhattisgarh CM Vishnu Dev Sai campaigning for BJP candidates in the first round of twin polls.

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and senior leader VK Pandian have also campaigned for the BJD. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has addressed a rally at Rayagada under the Koraput Lok Sabha seat through vir-

## Bihar: Five Lok Sabha seats to go to polls in fourth phase, two Union ministers in fray

PATNA, May 12: Five Lok Sabha seats in Bihar will go to polls on Monday, when 95 lakh voters will decide the electoral fate of 55 candidates, including two Union ministers. The seats going to polls are Begusarai, Ujiyarpur, Samastipur, Munger and Darb-

secutive term has been challenged by CPI's Awad-

union president Kanhaiya Kumar, who was a CPI candidate, by a margin of over 4 lakh votes in the

However, unlike last time, when it ploughed a lonely furrow, the CPI now has a truck with Congress and the mighty RJD, a combination that had paid rich dividends in assembly polls less than three years ago.

ers at 17.48 lakh but the maximum number of 13 candidates, Union Minister of State for Home, Nityanand Rai, is aiming at a hat-trick.

His main challenger is Alok Mehta, a senior RJD leader and former state minister who is the MLA from the eponymous assembly seat. Mehta has also been a former MP from Samastipur, the name by which the Lok Sabha seat was known before the 2019 delimitation. Samastipur is now the name of a reserved seat, previously known as Rosera, where the battle is primarily between two debutants, both children of senior JD (U) leaders and ministers in the Ni-

of his party representing a broader alliance, besides

Chirag Paswan, a close relative, for a ticket of his Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas). However, Paswan fielded Shambhavi Choudhary, daughter of Ashok Choudhary, another minister known to be very close to the Bihar chief minister.

Modi urged voters to support the LJP (R) candidate, whom he described as the "youngest" of all fielded by the BJP-led NDA.

A widower in his 60s, Mahto tied the knot with Anita two months ago, reportedly upon advice from RJD president Lalu Prasad. The muscle power that Mahto brings to the table seems to have caused some consternation in the NDA camp, though the PM had held a rally in the constituency.

A controversy was stoked with the release, on parole, of Anant Singh, a UAPA convict, whose wife Neelam Devi is the MLA from Mokama, falling under Munger Lok Sabha seat, and had crossed over from RJD to JD (U) when the NDA government in Bihar won a trust vote in February.

Since walking out of jail, Anant Singh has been holding court at his residence, predicting before supporters and media a massive win for Lalan, whom his wife had challenged in 2019 as the Congress can-

In Darbhanga, Gopal Jee Thakur feels confident of retaining the seat for BJP, his prospects having received a boost with a rally of the PM only last week. His main rival Lalit Kumar Yadav is the sitting RJD MLA from Darbhanga Rural and, hence, no

Besides, the RJD has received a shot in the arm with the return of former Union minister Ali Ashraf Fatmi, who had won the Darbhanga seat four times and is now trying his luck from the adjoining Madhubani, which goes to polls in the fifth phase. (PTI) NEW DELHI, May 12: As the taries have been locked in the standoff since May 2020 and a full resolution of the border row has not yet been achieved though the two sides have disengaged from a number of friction points. India has been consistently main-

taining that peace and tranquillity along the LAC were key for the normalisation of overall ties.

Asked why bilateral trade volume with China is going up when New Delhi has been insisting that the ties cannot be normal when the border situation is abnormal. Jaishankar suggested that such a scenario has arisen as adequate

> attention to the manufacturing sector was not given before 2014.

> > "I think it is common sense that if there is no peace and tranquility in the border, how can you have a normal relationship," he said.

"After all if somebody is at your front door in an unfriendly manner, you are not going to go out there and act as though everything is normal. That to me is a straightforward proposition," Jaishankar added. The ties between the two countries nosedived significantly following the fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the

two sides in decades. In the diplomatic and military talks with China, the Indian negotiators have been insisting on restoring the status quo ante of April 2020 along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh told PTI over a week back that the talks between the two sides are going on well and hoped for a resolution of the lingering row.

Following the Galwan Valley clashes, India has been majorly focusing on boosting its overall military capability along the frontier with China.

The Army has significantly bolstered the deployment of troops and weaponry along the nearly 3,500 km-long LAC, including in the Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh sectors following the clashes. (PTI)

#### In Begusarai Lok Sabha seat, which has the largest electorate of 22 lakh among the five constituencies, the fact that his father Maheshwar Hazari had won Union minister Giriraj Singh's bid for a second conthe seat for JD (U) in 2009.

In 2019, Singh had defeated former JNU students'

In Uiivarpur, which has the lowest number of vot-

"During elections, BJP and RSS people

"They ask them to repay the debt by giv-

ing their votes to the BJP," Mayawati al-

She stressed that the poor people should

not get misguided by this "as the free ra-

tion being provided is not coming from the

pockets of Prime Minister Narendra Modi

or BJP, but from the taxpayers' money".

getting free ration, that BJP or Modi is not

giving it out from their pockets, but from

the taxpayers' money you are getting free

ration," Mayawati said while addressing

the rally in support of her party's LS polls

BSP leader Inder Singh is contesting

She also stressed that the problems of

the poor people will end only by providing

them employment, and said that if given a

chance her party's government will pay at-

tended the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan

Anna Yojana scheme to provide 5 kg of

free food grains per month to 81.35 crore

Odisha ahead of Gujarat in various parameters: Pandian

In November last year, the Centre ex-

nominees from the state.

poor for another five years.

from Karnal LS seat.

tention to it.

"I want to tell those poor people who are

tish Kumar cabinet. Congress candidate Sunny Hazari has the benefit

The Hazaris had reportedly earlier approached

At a recent rally in Bihar, Prime Minister Narendra

Another seat with an intense contest is Munger. which former JD (U) president Rajiv Ranjan Singh 'Lalan' hopes to retain. His main challenger is RJD candidate Kumari Anita, who is seen as a proxy to her husband Ashok Mahto.

Mahto, a dreaded gangster, is known for political ambitions and a strident anti-upper caste stance. However, conviction in a criminal case has disqualified him from contesting polls.

## Sandeshkhali: TMC files complaint with EC against NCW chief, BJP leaders

Chinese side.

NEW DELHI, May 12: The TMC on Sunday filed a complaint with the Election Commission against National Commission for Women Chairperson Rekha Sharma and BJP leaders including Piyali Das, alleging that they committed "criminal conspiracy by exploiting" innocent women of West Bengal's Sandeshkhali for political gains. In a letter to the EC, the TMC said they are filing a complaint against Sharma and Das for "commission of serious offences of forgery, cheating, fraud, criminal intimidation and criminal conspiracy upon innocent women of Sandeshkhali and the entire electorate in general".

"This is to draw your urgent attention to a deeply distressing turn of events, wherein, BJP leaders along with member(s) of the NCW have criminally conspired against the entire electorate and hence, warrants your immediate intervention," the TMC said.

The complaint referred to an interview of a woman from Sandeshkhali which was shared on 'X' on May 10.

"It reveals that Sharma, Das have committed serious offences of forgery, cheating, fraud, criminal intimidation and criminal conspiracy by exploiting innocent women of Sandeshkhali for political gains. A link showcasing the said interview is provided herewith for your ready reference and in support of this complaint," the com-

The TMC said during the interview, a woman from Sandeshkhali alleged she was coerced through threats of violence by Sharma and Das, to sign a blank paper without knowing its purpose.

"Later, when the police issued her a notice, she learnt that she had been made a de-facto complainant in a rape case. She realised that her signature was used to file a false rape complaint without her consent," it said. "...such an act of obtaining a signature on blank paper through coercion to file a false rape complaint is not only an abuse of law and power, but also amounts to offences of forgery, cheating, fraud, criminal intimidation and criminal con spiracy. The exploitation of women for political gain is a reprehensible tactic that undermines their rights and dignity. Such manipulation not only violates the rights of these women but also damages the integrity of democratic institutions," the TMC said in the complaint. The TMC said the actions suggest a calculated effort by the BJP leaders to undermine the reputation of the Mamata Banerjee-led party and an attempt to manipulate their way to power in West Bengal through illicit means, thereby disregarding the prin-

The party also demanded the poll panel to issue directions to respective station house officers of competent police stations to initiate criminal proceedings against Sharma, Das and other unknown BJP leaders, and also to give directions restraining the BJP and its members from threatening the women of Sandeshkhali "who wish to withdraw false complaint".

The TMC also sought orders restraining the BJP and its leaders from making any further false allegations concerning the Sandeshkhali incident. (PTI)

#### visit every village and tell those poor peotions have been given to everyone ple who are getting this free ration that BJP to actively participate in this elecand the Narendra Modi government is protion without leaving it on the candidates, and responsibilities have viding them free ration," she said addressbeen fixed, Shivakumar said. ing an election rally in Haryana's Karnal. Instructions have been given to

hold the MLC polls too unitedly, like it was done in the case of Assembly and Parliament polls, he Asked about the JD(S) and BJP

alliance continuing in the MLC polls too, the KPCC chief said, 'Let them be together permanently, we don't have any objections. Let them do anything, we are not bothered.'

The party today announced former MLC Marithibbe Gowda, who quit JD(S) recently, as the party's candidate from the South Teachers' Constituency.

The Congress had already announced candidates to other five segments: Ramoji Gowda (Bengaluru Graduates'), Chandrashekara B Patil (North East Graduates'), Ayanur Manjunath (South-West Graduates'), K K Manjunath (South West Teachers'), and D T Srinivas (South East

Attacking her political opponents, the CHANDIGARH, May 12: Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Sunday BSP president alleged that like the Consaid the Centre was not giving free ration gress, the BJP too has politicised the cento the underprivileged from its pocket and tral probe agencies.

BJP, PM Modi not giving free ration from

their pockets, says Mayawati in Haryana

asked poor people not to feel obliged to Calling the voters to stop supporting the vote for the BJP because of this. Congress, BJP and their allies, she said She said for the past some time, the BJPthat these parties will try every means to led Centre has been providing small come to power. amounts of ration to the poor families.

She alleged that opponents are using media, opinion polls and surveys for it and said the same is the case of election manifesto with hollow promises which are mostly not implemented fully by these parties after polls.

"BJP has become a party of the wealthy but has done nothing for the poor, Dalits and backward classes," Mayawati said.

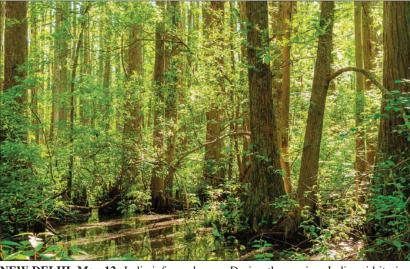
"BJP has given hollow guarantees and it would be difficult for it to retain power at the Centre if the elections are held in a free and fair manner...," she added.

The BSP supremo also claimed that in the country, quota in government jobs for Dalits, tribals and other backward classes has not been filled and that quota in promotions for SCs and STs has almost been made ineffective.

Mayawati, a four-time former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, claimed that the majority of work is being "handed over to the private sector", and given there is no provision of reservation in the private sector, very little benefit of quotas is reaching these sections in the country.

Seeking support for her party in the elections, she said if BSP gets a chance to form its government at the centre, "unlike the governments of rival parties, we will not do hollow work or push papers but solid work on the ground like what was done when BSP was in power in Uttar

## Forest conservation, management in country saw advancement over last 15 years: India informs UNFF



NEW DELHI, May 12: India informed the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) that it has made significant advancements in forest conservation and management, leading to a consistent increase in forest cover over the past 15

The country participated in the 19th Session of the UNFF held at the UN headquarters in New York from May 6 to

Globally, India ranks third in the net gain in average annual forest area between 2010 and 2020.

During the session, India said it gives high priority to biodiversity and wildlife conservation, having expanded the network of protected areas to over a thousand wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, tiger reserves, biosphere reserves, and other wildlife habitats.

The recent celebrations marking 50 years of 'Project Tiger' and 30 years of 'Project Elephant' underscore India's commitment to species conservation and habitat protection, the environment ministry said in a statement.

India also highlighted the creation of

the International Big Cat Alliance, a global initiative aimed at protecting and conserving the seven big cat species worldwide through collaborative efforts.

The country also informed the UNFF about the introduction of the 'Green Credit Program', a market-based mechanism rewarding voluntary environmental actions by individuals, communities, and the private sector.

Previously, in October 2023, India hosted the Country Led Initiative under UNFF in Dehradun, attended by representatives from 40 countries and 20 international organisations, focusing on forest fire management and forest certification. The recommendations from this initiative were presented during UNFF 19.

The ministry also organised a side event on 'Principles and Strategies for Landscape Integrated Fire Management through Collaborative Governance', in partnership with the Agency for Integrated Rural Fire Management, Portugal, Korea Forest Service, and International Tropical Timber Organization at UNFF

UNFF 19 culminated in a declaration to take urgent and accelerated actions to halt deforestation and forest degradation and to prevent land degradation, including the implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests and the achievement of the Global Forest Goals. (PTI)

#### Sunday claimed that Odisha is "much ahead" of Gujarat in various parameters, in a rebuttal to Prime Minister Narendra

Modi's promise that the BJP would make the eastern state "number one" in the country if voted to power after the as-Pandian, a bureaucrat-turned-politician, shared statistics,

BHUBANESWAR, May 12: BJD leader V K Pandian on

comparing various indices of Gujarat and Odisha, with a comment, "Look who wants to make Odisha number one."

"It is ironic that even after two-and-half decades of BJP rule in Gujarat, the situation as compared to Odisha is quite dismal. In terms of malnutrition (children under 5 years who are underweight), the rate is 30 per cent in Odisha whereas it is 40 per cent in Gujarat," he said in a statement.

Quoting NHFS-5 (National Health Family Survey) data, Pandian said the prevalence of anaemia among women was 65 per cent in Odisha, while it was 69 per cent in Gujarat, whereas 64 per cent of children in Odisha were anaemic, but the percentage was 80 in Gujarat.

The BJD leader said Odisha fared much better than Gujarat in terms of immunisation, with 90 per cent of children having been vaccinated, compared to only 76.3 per cent in the western state. More than 86 per cent of women in Odisha have bank accounts, compared to only 70 per cent in Gujarat, he said, adding that over 50 per cent of women in the eastern state have mobile phones whereas only 48.8 per cent of women in Gujarat have the device.

Pandian said that per capita debt in Gujarat was Rs 60,000, almost thrice than that of Odisha's Rs 22,000.

As per RBI handbook, primary enrolment ratio in schools was almost 98 per cent in Odisha, compared to just 90 per cent in Gujarat, he said. The BJD leader said Gujarat lagged behind Odisha despite

Modi heading the western state for three terms before becom-

ing the prime minister. Pandian shared the statistics a day after the PM, while addressing election rallies in Odisha on Saturday, assured people that the saffron party would develop the eastern state and make it number one in the country within five years if voted

to power after the assembly polls. Simultaneous Lok Sabha and assembly elections will commence in Odisha from the fourth phase on Monday. (PTI)

## Use of walkie-talkies to request washroom breaks

embarrassing, unsafe: Female train drivers

train drivers have opposed the "embarrassing and unsafe" practice of using walkie-talkies to request a washroom break while on

MONDAY, MAY 13, 2024

"If we have to answer the nature's call, we have to tell the male loco pilot who informs the station master, who further conveys it to the control department which manages the running of trains," a female loco pilot said on Sunday.

"All these conversations happen through walkie-talkies accessible to dozens of other officials in the range. The message spreads everywhere at the station that a woman driver is in the engine and she wants to go to the loo," she said.

The female drivers said this current practice, adopted informally, is embarrassing and compromises their safety. According to them, of the over 1700 female train drivers employed with the Indian Railways, 90 per cent are assistant loco pilots who work as an assistant to male loco pilots of passenger or freight trains.

Another female loco pilot said, "I went through the ordeal once when I was on duty with a male driver on a freight train. In a passenger train, one can go to the washroom in one of the coaches but in case of a freight train, you have to step out at the station

She claimed that when she stepped out of the engine and came to the station, some of the officers.



who knew in advance through the walkie-talkie messages, were staring at her and she felt very awk-

The female loco pilots said that it is also unsafe for them to step out of the engines to use washrooms of smaller stations, which are usually located in deserted areas.

"In the past couple of years, hundreds of new girls have come into the profession of train driving and since they were unaware of these challenges, they are under stress," Ashok Sharma, Assistant General Secretary, National Federation of Indian Railwaymen

"Many of them avoid drinking water before the start of their duties and even during duty hours, they refrain from consuming any liquid food items. This causes dehydration and leads to several

other lifestyle diseases among

them. Their condition is extremely

miserable," Sharma said.

Many female loco pilots said that since this summer, a couple of incidents have occurred in which female frontline workers, such as lady guards and drivers, fainted during duty hours or felt uneasy in trains and have requested to be relieved early because they have to work under extreme temperatures

"We feel lucky if we are allowed

to go to the washroom on first request as we are often told to hold it till the next few stations because of important trains coming from behind. In fact, to save time, loco pilots often ask us to relieve ourselves along the track behind some other stationary wagons," a female loco pilot from the Jhansi Division

"Indian Railways has never defined any norm for its running staff to take a break for lunch or go to the washroom while driving trains," Sanjay Pandhi, the working president of the Indian Railway Loco Runningmen Organisation (IRLRO), said.

After several years of efforts of the IRLRO, the Ministry of Labour recently, for the first time, constituted a high-powered committee to work out the modalities "to provide defined time intervals for food and attending calls of nature while on duty for the Loco Running Staff"

"I hope some modalities will be worked out in the interest of all running staff of the Indian Railways," Pandhi said.

In April, various railway unions representing female drivers had intensified their demand for a one-time option to change job category after a lady guard of a freight train was attacked near Madurai Railway Station in Tamil Nadu. (PTI)

## New video claims 70 women received money to take part in Sandeshkhali protest



KOLKATA, May 12: In a purported video that surfaced from Sandeshkhali, a local BJP leader was heard saying that over 70 women had received ₹ 2,000 each for taking part in protests against local TMC satrap Shahjahan Sheikh and his aides who were accused of sexual assault and land grab.

In the video, lasting over 45 minutes, a man resembling Sandeshkhali mandal president Gangadhar Kayal told this to the questioner. It was Kayal who had earlier said in another purported clip, the first in a series in the past week, that the rape allegations were "staged".

PTI did not independently verify the authenticity of the videos.

In the latest tape that surfaced on Saturday night, Kayal was heard saying that 70 women got ₹ 2,000 each for taking part in protests

against Sheikh who was arrested and later suspended by the police.

"We will need ₹ 2.5 lakh in cash for 50 booths where 30 per cent of protesters would be women. We have to keep the SC, ST and OBC people here in good humour by paying them satisfactorily. In any situation, women will form the front row confronting the police," he said in

Kayal could not be contacted, but the BJP has dubbed the videos as

TMC spokesperson Riju Dutta said,"The truth of the BJP's fake narrative on Sandeshkhali is tumbling out of the closet."

Multiple purported videos of Sandeshkhali women have surfaced and shared by the TMC in the past

In the first such videotape that

saying that the "staged" protests were lodged at the behest of Leader of the Opposition, Suvendu Adhikari, who was behind the "whole conspiracy".

The second video was about women, who had earlier filed rape complaints, claiming that they were made to sign a blank paper by the BJP leaders and coerced to go to the police station.

In another clip, BJP candidate from Basirhat constituency and Sandeshkhali protestor Rekha Patra claimed that she "doesn't know the rape survivors who were taken to Delhi to meet the President.'

The TMC has already moved the Election Commission against National Commission for Women chairperson Rekha Sharma accusing her that she had misused her official position by allegedly telling some of the women in Sandeshkhali to lodge rape complaints against TMC leaders in the area.

"The TMC is using fake videos to change the narrative ahead of the polls. The TMC has the least regard for NCW or the dignity of the women of Sandeshkhali. All the videos released are fake and doctored," BJP state spokesperson Samik Bhattacharya said.

The riverine Sandeshkhali area situated on the borders of the Sundarbans, about 100 kilometres from Kolkata — had been on the boil in February with protests over allegations of sexual abuse and land grab against now arrested TMC leader Shajahan Sheikh and his support-

## MHA directs CAPFs to adopt BSF's 'beehives on border fence' model across the country

NEW DELHI, May 12: The Union home ministry has directed all central paramilitary and allied forces to replicate a 'beehives on border fence' beekeeping model initiated by a BSF unit in West Bengal to boost employment opportunities for the locals and create a goodwill with them for strengthening security.

Official sources told PTI that the decision was made during a meeting on "scientific beekeeping and honey mission" that was chaired by Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla at his office at North Block here in April.

The model devised and implemented by the 32nd battalion of the Border Security Force (BSF) deployed to guard the India-Bangladesh international border in West Bengal's Nadia district was "lauded" during the meeting and a direction was issued to all the central armed police forces (CAPFs) to adopt it in their respective areas of responsibility, a senior CAPF officer said.

The other border guarding forces, such as the Sashastra Seema Bal (Nepal and Bhutan borders) and the Indo Tibetan Border Police (China LAC), CAPFs like the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and other forces like Assam Rifles, the National Security Guard (NSG) and the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) do not have fences to guard but the model can be utilised by them as per their nature of duties, the officer said.

These forces, about 12 lakh in combined strength, are deployed for a variety of internal security tasks like guarding India's international borders, anti-Naxal operacounter-terrorism and counter-insurgency duties.

The aim of replicating the BSF West Bengal beekeeping model is to generate employment in remote locations, making friends and earn-



ing goodwill of the locals, who act as the "eyes and ears" in these areas from the security point of view, a senior BSF officer said.

Launched in November last year, the BSF unit in Nadia has installed close to 200 beehives on the India-Bangaldesh alloy-made border fence till now, with a multipronged aim of stopping border crimes like cattle, gold and narcotics smuggling, fence cutting and engaging the population in productive remuneration-based

Commandant Sujeet Kumar, the commanding officer (CO) of this BSF battalion, earlier spoke to PTI and explained that the initiative was launched after it was analysed that trans-border crimes were directly linked to scanty livelihood opportunities in the region leading to allurement of locals into criminal activities.

The 'beehives on fence' initiative is aimed to engage the locals in producing honey for sale, planting flowering and fruit-bearing plants for the honeybees and also for the purpose of trade and shallow water pisciculture through the

> fresh ditches being made in this border area to store water, he had said.

The BSF has engaged the Ayush ministry for procuring herbal and aromatic plants to run this initiative, which has also become part of the Union government's vibrant village programme (VVP) that aims to engage local border population in productive

programmes thereby stopping migration from the frontier areas that ave strategic and vital importance vis-a-vis internal security.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has been running the "scientific beekeeping and honey mission" for sometime but it has now been desired that the BSF West Bengal model should be adopted to boost this ongoing programme for achieving enhanced results for the locals and the forces concerned, the CAPF officer quoted above

More than 1 lakh saplings have been planted with the engagement of BSF personnel, Ayush ministry and hundreds of local people in the border area of Nadia since the 'beehives on border fence' model was launched late last year, he

## Normal to below normal temperatures likely in regions going to polls today

NEW DELHI, May 12: Normal to below normal temperatures are likely in areas going to polls on Monday, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). Voting will be held in 96 constituencies spread across 10 states and union territories in the fourth phase of Lok Sabha elections.

While the usual hours of voting are from 7 am to 6 pm, they are curtailed keeping in mind the terrain, time of sunset and security situation.

In view of the hot weather conditions and people's reluctance to step out in the afternoon, the Election Commission has increased the poll timing in some Telangana seats.

The voter turnout in the first three phases of the Lok Sabha elections was 66.14 per cent, 66.71 per cent and 65.68 per cent, respectively.

The EC believes that the heatwave conditions are one of the reasons for lower voter turnout in the last three phases as compared to the 2019 parliamentary polls. Citing the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecast, the poll authority said on Sunday that

"there is no significant concern regarding hot weather conditions for the polling in phase 4".

The weather forecast indicates that the parliamentary constituencies going for polls "are likely to experience normal to below normal temperatures ( ±2 degrees) and there will be no heatwave-like conditions in these areas on polling day", it said.

In the last three phases, polling has been concluded in 283 seats out of 543.

For Monday, over 19 lakh polling officials have been deployed at 1.92 lakh polling stations for over 17.70 crore eligible voters, including 8.73 crore

Polling will be held on Monday in all 17 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana, all 25 seats in Andhra Pradesh, 13 in Uttar Pradesh, five in Bihar, four in Jharkhand, eight in Madhya Pradesh, 11 in Maharashtra, four in Odisha, eight in West Bengal and one in Jammu and Kashmir. As many as 175 assembly seats of Andhra Pradesh and 28 assembly seats of Odisha are also going to polls in this phase. (*PTI*)

## Indian space industry offers tremendous opportunity for private players: ISRO Chief

KOCHI, May 12: ISRO Chairman S Somanath has said the Indian space industry is offering a tremendous opportunity to the private sector in the country as a new area of growth and development.

He said the union government envisages the space sector in the country to become a 9 to 10 billion dollar industry in the next 5-10 years from the current levels of 2 billion dollars. Somanath was speaking after unveiling the carbon reduction initiative of SFO Technologies, the flagship company of the NeST Group, in a function here on Saturday, a company release said. He also said that 400 private sector companies have benefited from the technology developed by ISRO for its various missions. Companies like SFO Technolo-

gies are well positioned to take further advantage of the new policy initiatives in the space sector by the government of India "The Indian space industry is of-

fering a tremendous opportunity for the private sector in the country as a new area of growth and development," the ISRO chief added. Besides planting a sapling at the

NeST Hitek Park to mark the occasion. Somanath also unveiled a replica of Chandrayaan at the campus highlighting the cooperation of SFO Technologies and ISRO.

He interacted with the NeST engineers and management team later. The Carbon Reduction initiative of

the NeST Group is in tune with the United Nations' objective of achieving a 50 percent reduction by 2035 and zero emissions by 2040, the release said.

SFO Technologies has close association with ISRO for many vears, it said adding that the two have worked in multiple programmes such as the RF sub-systems for Chandrayaan and Aditya Missions, manufacturing of Antenna Systems, and Cryogenic Engine Control Systems for launch vehicles. NeST Group Chairman N Jehangir said discussions are on with ISRO for various projects including the ambitious 'Gaganyaan' mission, aiming to carry human beings to the space for the first time. (PTI)

### Harinder Sikka pens new novel 'Gobind'

NEW DELHI, May 12: Author Harinder Sikka, whose "Calling Sehmat" was adapted into the 2018 film "Raazi" starring Alia Bhatt, delves into the depths of human emotion and resilience in his new novel "Gobind"

Set against the backdrop of Bihar's poverty and the valorous spirit of the Indian Navy, Sikka weaves a narrative that resonates with themes of love, loyalty and re-

For the author, the book is "more than just a tale to me: it's a very personal literary voyage that veaves together themes of love, selflessness, and unwavering determination".

"Gobind" introduces readers to its titular character, a man born into the harsh realities of an impoverished Sikh family in Bihar. Content with his lot in life, Gobind's perspective takes a profound turn when his father's words ignite a fire within him, propelling him to aspire for a life beyond the constraints of poverty.

A soldier by nature, Gobind embarks on a journey that leads him to the Indian Navy, where he emerges as a shining star poised for greatness.

An assignment to Russia introduces him to someone who rekindles the flames of his heart - a woman whose beauty captivates him, yet whose presence threatens the very vows he swore to uphold.

Despite his heroic deeds and unwavering loyalty to his comrades, Gobind finds himself torn between duty and desire, grappling with the complexities of love and sac-

## Man held for hurling acid on son

KASARAGOD (KERALA), May 12: A man has been arrested for accidently throwing acid at his son in this district, police said on Sunday.

According to police, the man had attempted to throw acid at his estranged wife, but she managed to run away and it landed on their son, who suffered burn injuries. The incident happened under Chittarikkalil police station limit here on May 9.

The accused Surendranath (50) went absconding soon after the incident and was arrested on Saturday, police said.

"There had been issues between the man and his wife for some time. He tried to hurl the acid-filled ball at the woman. She somehow managed to run away but it fell upon the son," a police officer said.

The son was admitted to a hospital with burn injuries and he is recovering, the police added.

The accused has been booked under IPC Section 326 A (voluntarily causing grievous hurt by use of acid, etc), police said.

NEW DELHI, May 12: Food labels on packaged items can be misleading, apex health research body ICMR has said stressing that consumers should read the information carefully to make informed and healthy choices.

It also pointed out that sugar-free foods maybe loaded with fats, while packed fruit juices may contain only 10 per cent fruit

In its recently issued dietary guidelines, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said health claims on packaged food are designed to catch the consumer attention and convince them that the product is healthy.

"Though the Food Safety and Standard Authority of India (FSSAI) has strict norms, the information presented in labels could be misleading," the dietary guidelines for Indians issued by the Hyderabad based National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) under the apex health research body said on Wednesday.

Giving some examples, the NIN said a food product can be called 'natural' if it doesn't have added colours and flavours or artificial substances and goes through minimal processing.

"This term is often used rather loosely. It is often used by manufacturers to identify one or two natural ingredients in the mix and this can be misleading," it said, urging people to read the label, specifically the ingredients and other information carefully to cross-check the claims.



The NIN presented some examples of statements on labels that could be mislead-

For the claim 'real fruit or fruit juice'. the NIN said that according to the FSSAI regulation, any food item with even a small amount, for example, fruit juices containing only 10 or less percent of fruit added to a product is allowed to state that the product is made with real fruit pulp or

But the product claiming to have real fruit may have added sugar and other additives with only 10 per cent actual fruit

As for 'Made with whole grain', it said these words could be misinterpreted. Such a statement does not necessarily imply that the food items are not tertiary or ultra

Label claims on packaged food could be misleading: ICMR

When a food label says 'organic', it may simply mean that it is free of all artificial preservatives, flavours and colours and that the food ingredients are free from pesticides and chemical fertilizers.

If both the above are met, then the label can state 100 per cent organic and have the 'Jaivik Bharat' logo approved by the

Further, it said that people often associate sugar-free foods with lower calories and perceive these to be beneficial for diabetics and weight watchers.

"Sugar-free foods may be loaded with fats, refined cereals (white flour, starch) and even hidden sugars (maltitol, fructose, corn syrup, molasses). These would imply high glycemic index and high calories in the food item," the NIN stated.

Although nutrition and health claims are regulated by FSSAI, consumers are advised to exercise caution by cross-checking the claims with ingredients and nutrition information on the label, the guidelines recommended.

According to the guidelines, manufacturers also use labels to make incorrect and incomplete claims about their food prod-

There is a general misconception that 'nutrition facts' and 'nutrition/nutrient claims' are the same.

Nutrition claims refers to any statement which suggests or implies that a food has particular nutritional properties.

Claims like 'low calorie', 'high fibre', 'low fat' or 'low sodium' is not complete information. These have to be substantiated by providing the actual values or nutritional facts about the product.

The guidelines also recommended the 'date of manufacture' and 'use-by date' indicates that the product's quality and safety could deteriorate and consumption

beyond that date would increase the risk of food poisoning.

In the label, under the words 'nutrition facts, there is a statement on the 'serving size'. This is one of the most important pieces of information on the label because all of the nutrition information shown is based on the referred serving size, the guidelines stated.

The serving size could be described in a few different ways in the label and depends on the food item being referred to. The most common measures are grams, cups, scoops and pieces. Grams tend to be listed most of the time even when the serving size may also be listed in a different

The guidelines also asked people to check the net weight of the packet. This is the total amount of product contained in the packet. The nutrition facts label information is generally based on one serving per 100g/100ml, but many packages may contain more than one serving or more

than 100g or 100ml. "Check how many servings per ml/g is being used against the number of serving unit used for presenting nutrition facts. According to the amount of food item being used, assess calories and other nutrients in

the portion being used," it said. The Dietary Guidelines for Indians (DGIs) has been drafted by a multi-disciplinary committee of experts led by Dr Hemalatha R, Director, ICMR-NIN and has undergone several scientific reviews. (PTI)

## Frank Grillo To Portray Rick Flag Sr In 'Peacemaker 2'



LOS ANGELES, May 12: Actor Frank Grillo has joined the upcoming season two of the DC series "Peacemaker", creator James Gunn has announced.

In the HBO Max show, Grillo will portray the role of Rick Flag Sr, the father of Suicide Squad member Rick Flag Jr. (Joel Kinnaman). He will also voice the character in the animated series "Creature Commandos"

Gunn confirmed the news in a post on Threads on Friday

"Pleased to announce the great Frank Grillo will be reprising the role of Rick Flag, Sr — the role he'll first play in animated form in 'Creature Commandos' — throughout season 2 of 'Peacemaker'. Christopher Smith and Rick Sr have a little unfinished business to take care of," the filmmaker captioned a series of pictures.

"Peacemaker" is a spin-off to Gunn's 2021 movie "The Suicide Squad", in which John Cena played the title role. The series is fronted by Cena, who will reprise his role of the jingoistic mercenary Christopher Smith aka Peacemaker.

The production for the upcoming season of "Peacemaker" began last month, with Gunn directing some of the episodes alongside other three directors.

The first season released in 2022 and also starred Jennifer Holland, Alison Araya, Danielle Brooks and Lochlyn Munro. (PTI)

# Feel like an actor on film sets, not heroine: Madhoo

MUMBAI, May 12: Actor Madhoo says she has moved on from the age-old thought process of being a heroine on film sets and embraced her role as a collaborator in the process of filmmaking. Known for hit 1990s films such as "Roja", "Phool Aur Kaante", "Yodha" and "Gentleman", the actor recently starred in the ZEE5 series "Fireflies: Parth Aur Jugnu" and "Sweet Kaaram Coffee", a Prime Video show.

This is an amazing time to be an actor, said Madhoo, who will next be seen in psychological thriller film "Kartam Bhugtam".

"Back in the day, I was a part of a culture where it was like 'I'm the hero, I'm the heroine'. But now, it doesn't feel like that... "I have moved on from that thought process and that's something the (OTT) content has done for me. It feels like I'm an actor on the movie set... You just feel that we are all collaborative and making one story..." she told PTI.

The 55-year-old actor said, unlike the '90s, she no longer cares about being typecast in a certain role as she believes it's difficult to be stereotyped in the era of content boom

"I used to think I would be typecast. But now I don't care because there is so much content. So, how many times will you cast me as a mother or grandmother of one type? Back in the day, when actors played the role of a mother, it used to be a (big deal) thing. (PTI)



# Vicky wraps shooting of 'Chhava', calls working on film a 'dramatic journey'

MUMBAI, May 12: Actor Vicky Kaushal announced the wrap of the shoot on his upcoming film "Chhava", directed by Laxman Utekar of "Mimi" fame.

"Chhava" is reportedly a periodic drama based on the life of Maratha warrior Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj and is produced by Dinesh Vijan of Maddock Films.

Kaushal, who headlines the film alongside Rashmika Mandanna, shared the movie update on his Instagram Stories on Saturday.

In his post, the National Award winner described working on the movie as an "incredibly passionate and dramatic journey".

"... 'Chhava' couldn't have ended without some drama. The rain Gods really put up a show today immediately after we rolled our final shot," he captioned a video of the film set as it

"There's so much I wish to say, there's so little I'm able to convey about this journey right now... May be in a few days when it all sinks in. All I can say now with a heart full of gratitude, love and contentment is that. It's a wrap," he added.

"Chhava" marks the second project for Kaushal and Utekar, who previously collaborated on 2023's hit family comedy "Zara Hatke Zara Bachke". Mandanna' Mandanna's upcoming films include "Pushpa: The Rule" and "The Girlfriend". (PTI)

# Never imagined life would flower into this phase: Manisha Koirala on cancer recovery, turning 50



MUMBAI, May 12: Actor Manisha Koirala says she was still recovering from cancer when she was about to start shooting for Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar, in which she plays one of the lead characters, an opportunity seldom offered to female artistes in their 50s.

The 53-year-old actor is receiving good reviews for her role as the mercurial matriarch Mallikajaan in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's debut web series Heeramandi, currently streaming on Netflix.

In a lengthy note on Instagram, Koirala on Sunday chronicled her journey of resuming work after battling ovarian cancer, portraying an important character in the lavish period drama, and getting her due as a female actor thanks to streamers and evolving taste of the audience.

"I could never have imagined that after cancer and turning 50, my life would flower into this other phase," she wrote, as she went on to enumerate the two reasons.

Calling Heeramandi a significant milestone, Koirala said: "As a 53-year-old actor who has bagged an important role in a high- profile web series, I am over-joyed that I'm not stuck playing insignificant peripheral roles, thanks to OTT platforms and changing audience profiles."

"Finally, female actors, technicians, and other professionals have started getting the long overdue and well-deserved good quality of work and respect in a professional environment. I am fortunate to be a part of this evolving era," she

Secondly, she recalled feeling plagued with "doubts and anxiety" ahead of beginning shooting for the series amid recovery from cancer. She was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 2012 and was deemed 'cancer-free' in 2014.

Since her return, the actor has starred in films such as Dear Maya (2017),

Sanju, Lust Stories (both 2018), and last year's Shehzada.

"Would my body be strong enough to deal with the intense shooting schedules, heavy costumes, and jewelry, and perform a role requiring so much nuance and effortless effort?" she wrote.

Koirala said a key scene in Heeramandi, which required her to be immersed in a water fountain for over 12 hours, tested her resilience.

"The fountain sequence proved the most physically challenging... Even though Sanjay had thoughtfully ensured that the water was warm and clean, over the hours, the water turned muddy, (because my team members, the cinematographer, and the art director's team were getting into the water to work around the scene.)" Every single pore of her body was soaked in muddy water, she wrote.

"Even though I was beyond exhaustion by the end of the shoot, I felt a deep happiness within my heart. My body had taken the stress and remained resilient. I knew I had passed a critical physical test," she said. (PTI)

## Took inspiration from Amitabh, Shatrughan Sinha for 'Bhaiyya Ji': Manoj Bajpayee

MUMBAI, May 12: Actor Manoj Bajpayee says he drew inspiration from the mega star Amitabh Bachchan as well as his contemporaries Shatrughan Sinha and Vinod Khanna to play a massy hero in his upcoming film "Bhaiyya Ji".

The revenge action film is directed by Apoorva Singh Karki, who earlier directed the actor in the critically-acclaimed movie "Sirf Ek Banda Kaafi Hai". In the movie, the actor is playing the titular role, a man out to avenge his brother's death.

"I grew up watching commercial films and all the big stars of that time, they were all my inspiration, be it Shatru ji (Shatrughan Sinha), Vinod Khanna ji, Amit ji (Amitabh Bachchan) or Jeetendra Sahab and all of them. It happened subconsciously. I knew that I had to do certain things to make him look attractive on screen. So that

everyone would like to be a figure like Bhaiyya Ji. "He is an inspirational force. The audience should look up to him. So that is why I got all of those mannerisms in playing Bhaiyya ji," Bajpayee told PTI in an interview.

As a child, the actor said, whenever he watched a mainstream action film, he used to feel like a hero. "This is what a commercial film does to the audience. The adrenaline rush, the excitement, the energy flow. Everyone starts feeling like a hero when they come out (of a theatre). This is the purpose of a good commercial film," he said.

When it comes to labels like superstar or action star, Bajpayee said he considers himself a "desi actor". "I am definitely a desi actor... I desire our culture, villages and the story of our soil should come in the mainstream cinema. Our heroes should look like us, not from some western country. We need to make good films with good stories and that need to be rooted in our culture," he added. Bajpayee said he has done majority of the action sequences and credited action choreographer Fefsi Vijayan for pushing him as an artiste.

"It has been a very difficult film to shoot because most of the action scenes are done by me. Fefsi Vijayan, who is such a legend from the Tamil industry, is the one who was a tough taskmaster. He wanted Manoj Bajpayee to do all the actions and he was not ready to compromise at all... I'm so happy that he pushed me hard because everything is looking so amazing on the screen."

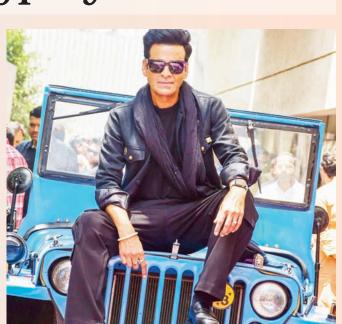
"Bhaiyya Ji" is the 100th film of Bajpayee's career, which is filled with some of the most critically-acclaimed movies of the last two decades --"Satya", "Shool", "Raajneeti", "Gangs of Wasseypur", "Aligarh", "Gali Guleiyan", "Bhonsle", "Sonchiriya" and "Joram". An "item song" is often considered an important ingredient of a commercial movie but Karki was against the idea of having one in

"Bhaiyya Ji", the actor revealed.

"We don't have any item songs. There are many stereotypes that we are breaking. Most of the commercial films and mainstream films, women don't have much to contribute. The women of this film are as strong as Bhaiyya ji. They are not your usual heroes and heroines. And the mothers on the screen, they are very different," he added.

Reaching the 100 film milestone is nothing short of a miracle for Bajpayee, the 55-year-old actor said.

"I never counted as I don't believe in it. But somehow Apoorva found out and the producers tried to make it an occasion. 30 years and 100 films, that too in the lead roles or as second lead, it has been quite a feat for me. (PTI)





## Rory McIlroy pulls within shot of Xander Schauffele in Wells Fargo Championship

CAROLINA), May 12: Xander Schauffele has gone 38 tournaments without a win on the PGA Tour

Rory McIlroy is doing his best to make sure Schauffele's painful drought continues.

McIlroy shot a bogey-free 4under 67 on Saturday on fast greens to pull within a stroke of Schauffele with 18 holes remaining in the Wells Fargo Championship.

Schauffele, who entered the day four shots ahead of McIlroy and Jason Day, scraped and clawed his way to a 70 to get to 12-under 201 as he looks to avenge last year's runner-up finish here at Ouail Hollow.

tomorrow," Schauffele said. "I've got Rory breathing down my neck. I'll look at the leaderboard here shortly, but yeah, I think if I strike the ball they way I did today off the tee and just a little more focus coming into the greens, picking the spots and then going through my process a little better,

should be in a good shape.' He will be again paired with the steady McIlroy, who has shot 67-68-67.

Sungjae Im was four shots strokes back after holing out from bunker on No. 18 to save par and shot 69. Sepp Straka matched McIlroy's low round of 67 for the day and was alone

was fifth at 5 under — making five bogeys in a 73.

McIlroy birdied Nos. 9 and 10 to pull within two shots, then got to one when Schauffele bogeyed the 12th.

The crowd began chanting "Rory! Rory!" as the star from Northern Ireland stepped to the 13th tee.

Seizing the momentum, McIlroy rolled in another birdie putt on No. 14 to move into a tie, but Schauffele matched that with a long birdie putt of his own moments later. Schauffele fought off McIlroy the rest of the way to maintain the lead despite finding the sand eight times in the third round. He had



McIlroy caught a break on the difficult par-4 18th when his tee shot somehow avoided the creek on the left side of the fairway and came to rest sitting up in the tall grass. With a good lie, he found the edge of the green and two-putted for par to become the only player to not have a bogey Saturday.

'Two straight bogey-free rounds, this is what it must feel like to be Scottie Scheffler,' McIlroy joked of the world's No. 1 player and recent Masters champion, who is not playing

Schauffele maintained the lead on the 18th when he got up-and-down from a bunker.

"Some sleepy wedges in there unfortunately, some really good up-and-downs, kind of a mixed bag," Schauffele said. "Definitely made it harder on myself is what it felt like from being in some good spots in the fairway.McIlroy averaged 338 yards off the tee on Saturday, outdriving Schauffele' by an average of 23 yards.

"The driving is more just me committing to most of the time hitting that little cut that I've been hitting off the tee, and then having the freedom to just, every time I hit a good tee shot, the more confidence I get and then the more I want to just keep hitting it," McIlroy said.

## Praggnanandhaa beats Carlsen but remains third in Superbet chess

WARSAW, May 12: India's R. Praggnanandhaa scored yet another victory over world number one Magnus Carlsen of Norway to keep himself afloat even as Wei Yi of China stretched his lead to a massive 2.5 points in the Superbet rapid and blitz chess tournament, a part of the Grand Chess Tour.

With nine rounds still to come in the blitz event, Wei Yi has amassed 20.5 points with seven wins on the first day of blitz. Ending the day with 7.5 out of a possible nine, Yi, seems like a man possessed and unless a hurricane hits him, is poised to win the first leg of the Grand Chess Tour. Carlsen, on 18, is a distant second at this point and the main reason behind that is Praggnanandhaa, who has been beating the world number one often these days in the faster version of the game.

Praggnanandhaa, however is far behind the leaders with 14.5 points which makes it literally a two-horse race for the title.

In fourth spot is Arjun Erigaisi on 14 points while Duda Jan-Krzysztof of Poland is right behind him on 13. Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan stands sixth on 12.5, a full point clear of Vincent Keymer of Germany



Kirill Shevchenko of Romania with

Anish Giri of Holland imand the eighth spot is now taken proved a little to be ninth on spot with 9.5 points in the USD lapsed following his second-

10.5 while the blitz remained a cause for worry for world championship challenger D. Gukesh who is languishing at the last

1,75,000 prize money tourna-

Carlsen notably mentioned that his nervous system had colround loss against Prag-gnanandhaa. The world number one ended with six points out of nine, which is by all standards a decent result but following his loss to the Indian he blundered again and went down to Abdusattorov from a winning posi-

Wei Yi started the day with a loss against Gukesh but recovered in quick time to only concede a draw to Carlsen while winning the rest of the seven

For Gukesh, it was a tough day despite a great start against the tournament leader as the Indian could only score 2.5 points

With victories over Praggnanandhaa and Gukesh, Arjun ensured he remained in contention for a podium finish.

Losing to Wei Yi and Carlsen, Arjun scored five wins and two draws in his other games and will be optimistic on the final day of the event.

Final results rapid: 1. Wei Yi 20.5; 2. Magnus Carlsen 18; 3. R. Praggnanandhaa 14.5; 4. Arjun Erigaisi 14; 5. Duda Jan-Krzysztof 13; 6. Nodirbek Abdusattorov 12.5; 7. Vincent Keymer 11.5; 8. Kirill Shevchenko 11; 9. Anish Giri 10.5; 10. D.Gukesh 9.5. (PTI)

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## Downs scores late to keep Cologne up and defer Bundesliga relegation decisions to final day



BERLIN, May 12: Damion headed the winner in the third Downs scored in injury time to keep alive Cologne's Bundesliga survival hopes Saturday with a 3-2 home win over Union Berlin, which dropped into the relegation zone with one round remaining.

Cologne had to win to have any hope of escaping the drop, and the team came from two goals down to defer its fate until next weekend.

It was the first time Union ever lost a Bundesliga game after enjoying a two-goal lead. And it came despite the club firing Nenad Bjelica as coach on Monday and reappointing Marco Grote as interim coach.

"The path hasn't changed. It's clear that it hasn't gotten any easier because we lost," Grote said.

Mainz capitalized on Union's defeat by beating Borussia Dortmund 3-0 in the

late game to leave the relegation playoff spot. Dortmund started with 10 changes to the team that defeated Paris Saint-Germain in their Champions League semi-

were able to make their case to play in the final against Real Madrid on June 1. Mainz raced into a threegoal lead and could have scored more. Dortmund coach

final on Tuesday, and few

Edin Terzic made three changes at the break. In contrast to Mainz, Union was unable to build on its early dominance. Steffen Tigges equalized in the 87th minute minute of stoppage time.

"The three points are super important, and now we have a final on the last day," said Cologne's Timo Hübers, whose team faces promoted Heidenheim away next week-

Union was just three points above Cologne, in the relegation-promotion playoff spot, while Mainz moved two points clear after its eighth straight game without defeat. Union hasn't won any of its last

"We have to look ahead. It only works together." Union captain Christopher Trimmel

Also, Freiburg drew with Heidenheim 1-1 in Christian Streich's last home game in charge after more than 12 years as the Freiburg coach.

"Congratulations to Heidenheim for the draw," Streich said. "If again we can't win a game at home, my favorite for it to happen against is Heiden-

Streich is the Bundesliga's longest-serving coach but he said in March he will step down at the end of the season. His final game is at Union Berlin next weekend.

Leipzig drew with Werder Bremen 1-1, as did Borussia Mönchengladbach and Eintracht Frankfurt.

Holstein Kiel clinched its first ever promotion to the Bundesliga after drawing at home with Fortuna Düsseldorf

## Zimbabwe win final T20 by eight wickets to avoid series sweep against B'desh



DHAKA, May 12: Zimbabwe avoided a series clean sweep by beating Bangladesh by eight wickets in the fifth and final Twenty20 match on Sunday.

After being put in to bat, Bangladesh made 157-6 but Brian Bennett's 70 off 49 balls, with five fours and as many sixes, set the platform of Zimbabwe's victory with nine balls to spare. Skipper Sikandar Raza finished with 72 off 46 balls and combined with Bennett for a 75run stand for the second wicket after Shakib Al Hasan struck early to dismiss Tadiwanashe Marumani for 1.

Unlike the past four matches, Zimbabwe was able to resist a top order collapse as Raza and Bennett dealt with Bangladesh's bowling with a good balance of

caution and attack. Bennett raised his maiden fifty off 36 balls, nudging Mustafizur Rahman to long-on

Pacer Mohammad Saifuddin had him caught by Rishad Hossain at long-on with a short ball to lift the hosts past 150. (AP)

in the 16th over but Zimbabwe were well already in control at 113-2.

Raza, who hit six fours and four sixes for his 14th T20 fifty, then expertly led the tourists to victory and deny Bangladesh its first five-match series clean

Put into bat first, Bangladesh rode on Mahmudullah's 44 ball-54 after a top order collapse had left them at 15-3.

Fast bowler Blessing Muzarabani (2-22), claimed the in form Taznid Hasan Tamim's wicket for two with a short ball in the second over.

Offspinner Bennett (2-20) then struck twice to remove Soumya for 7 and Towhid Hridoy for 1 as the hosts slipped

Mahmudullah and Najmul Hossain Shanto (36) combined for a 69-run partnership to bring Bangladesh back into the game and after Wellington Masakadza removed Shanto, Mahmudullah added 39-run with Shakib (21)

## Deeksha sets new Indian record in athletics meet in LA

NEW DELHI, May 12: Indian track athlete K M Deeksha set a new national record in the women's 1500m while Avinash Sable finished second in men's 5000m event at the Sound Run-

ning Track Fest in Los Angeles. The 25-year-old Deeksha finished third in the final on Saturday after running the distance in 4:04.78, bettering the previous record of 4:05.39 set by Harmilan Bains in 2021 at the Na-Open Athletics Championships in Warangal.

Deeksha's previous personal best was a 4:06.07 set in the final of the National Inter-State Athletics Championships at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar in 2023, where she upstaged Bains to win gold.

Deeksha who is from Am- 13:20.37 and not his pet 3000m roha, UP has been part of the MP Athletics academy for the last five years training under a 13:31.95. coach S K Prasad.

Parul Chaudhary 15:10.69s in the women's 5000m finish fifth. Parul narrowly missed out on improving her na-

tional record while compatriot Ankita ended

10th with a time of 15:28.88. Sable finished second in the

Sable's 5000m national record

clocked 28:07.66s. This is a World Athletics Continental Tour bronze level event.

## Messi plays through a scare, Inter Miami rallies past Montreal 3-2 for fifth straight win

MONTREAL, May 12: Lionel Messi played the entire game despite a first-half injury scare, Benjamin Cremaschi broke a tie in the 59th minute and Inter Miami overcame an early two-goal deficit to beat Montreal 3-2 on Saturday night for its fifth consecutive Major League Soccer victory.

Luis Suarez got his 11th goal of the season for Inter Miami, and Matías Rojas scored off a free kick. Jules-Anthony Vilsaint and Bryce Duke scored for Montreal (3-5-3).

Inter Miami (8-2-3) extended its unbeaten streak to seven matches (5-0-2) despite Messi being held without a goal or an assist for the first time in his nine MLS appearances this season. Inter Miami is 7-0-2 in those nine games; one of its George Campbell. The eight-



losses came against Montreal in March, a game where Messi didn't play.

Playing in Canada for the first time, Messi briefly left late in the first half after some sort of issue with his left knee after being fouled by defender

time Ballon d'Or winner as the world's best player went down immediately, holding his knee and writhing in pain.

Inter Miami's medical staff went onto the field to treat Messi, who got up after about two minutes and walked to the Miami sideline. He was not open space and Cremaschi ran tended the match. (AP)

subbed out, which allowed him it down — then made a second later. And for whatever reason, the match changed in that moment. Inter Miami was down 2- two chances in the final minutes 0 when Messi got hurt; it was 2-1 when he returned and tied moments after he got back onto the field. Rojas scored off a free kick — one that Messi would have ordinarily taken — to get Inter Miami on the board, and Suarez tapped in a goal off a corner kick late in first-half stoppage time.

Suarez became the third player in MLS history to score 11 goals in his first 800 minutes of a season, joining Mamadou Diallo (11 in 2000) and Ola Kamara (11 in 2021).

a chance to return moments effort to nudge the ball just clear of two defenders and into the net for a 3-2 lead. Messi had to extend the lead, both narrowly missing.

Hundreds of fans greeted Inter Miami when the team arrived at its hotel Friday night and Montreal, in part because of Messi joining Major League Soccer last summer, sold out its 15,000 season tickets for the first time since the club joined MLS in 2012. Messi has scored in 31 countries.

An announced sellout crowd of 19,619 spectators — including one dressed in a Messi tracksuit and wearing a goat The go-ahead goal came mask in a nod to Messi ass the when Rojas sent a ball into Greatest of All Time — at-

## **CSK** humble RR by 5 wickets to brighten play-offs prospects

CHENNAI, May 12: Chennai Super Kings stayed in contention for a place in the IPL play-offs with a five-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals after pacer Simarjeet Singh exemplified the home team's discipline with the ball with career-best figures of 3/26 here on Sunday. In a low-scoring match which had its share of drama with Ravindra Jadeja being given out for obstructing the field, CSK chased down a target of 142 with 10 balls to spare on a tricky surface.

Skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad was the star for CSK with the bat, remaining unbeaten on a 41-ball 42.

Rachin Ravindra (27 off 18 balls) and Gaikwad managed a 32-run stand before the former was dismissed by Ravichandran Ashwin in the fourth over.

However, that did not have any impact on Gaikwad and Daryl Mitchell (22 off 13 balls) as they maintained a run rate of over nine and ended the powerplay at 56 for one.

Pacer Sandeep Sharma was the most expensive bowler for the visitors during this phase and was hammered for 23 runs. Mitchell appeared to be the man on a mission, but his stay was cut short by spinner Yuzvendra Chahal, who trapped him leg-before wicket in the eighth over to end a 35-run partnership with Gaikwad.

Moeen Ali (10 off 13 balls) came in next, but he holed out to Nandre Burger



With the score reading 92 for three in the 13th over, Shivam Dube decided to have a go at Ashwin in his final over.

While Dube hammered Ashwin for a six and two fours in the over, the veteran had the last laugh, which also turned out to be his 50th IPL wicket at this venue. Also, Jadeia (5 off 6 balls) survived a

scare in the subsequent over after Jos Buttler dropped him off Chahal at long-

on. Rookie Sameer Rizvi then hit an eight-ball 15 not out with three fours to end the game in a jiffy after Jadeja became the third batter in IPL history to be adjudged out for obstructing the field after miscommunication with Gaikwad, who refused to go for a second run even as the all-rounder was halfway down the

The third man hurled it to Sanju Samson, who aimed the ball at the bowler's end but the throw hit Jadeja. RR appealed, and the third umpire was convinced that Jadeja knew in which direction the ball was heading.

CSK needed 21 off the final four overs, and the duo of Gaikwad and Rizvi got the job done. The win took CSK to the third spot on the points table, while RR suffered their third straight defeat but remained in second position.

Earlier, Simarjeet dished out his best performance in the IPL while helping CSK restrict RR to a modest total.

For the visitors, the in-form Riyan Parag top-scored with a 35-ball unbeaten 47 on a slow wicket.

Opting to bat, the RR openers were off to a cautious start. After RR ended the powerplay at 42 for no loss, the 26year-old Simarjeet made the first breakthrough in the seventh over, getting rid of Jaiswal (24 runs off 21 balls).

Simarjeet came up with the second breakthrough in the ninth over, with Jos Buttler (21 off 25 balls) departing.

Samson failed to get going, and it was Simarjeet again who grabbed the prized wicket of the RR skipper, ending his 42run partnership with Parag.

Deshpande, bowling the final over, got rid of Jurel and Shubham Dubey (0 off 1 ball) in consecutive deliveries. Eventually, the visitors didn't get a big enough total on the board. (PTI)

## **GT** face formidable KKR in must-win IPL game



AHMEDABAD, May 12: Shubman Gill's return to form will provide a big boost to Gujarat Titans as they square off against table-toppers Kolkata Knight Riders in their must-win IPL game here on

Gill roared back into form with his fourth IPL hundred to keep GT's slim playoff hopes alive with a comfortable win against Chennai Super Kings at home in their last outing.

Gill and Sai Sudharsan's twin centuries were the cornerstone of the hosts' huge total and their role will be crucial once again as they face KKR, which has become the first team to qualify for the playoffs. As many as seven teams are still in the race for the playoffs. While Rajasthan Royals (16) and Sunrisers Hyderabad (14) are well-placed at second and third position, three teams -- CSK, Delhi Capitals and Lucknow Super Giants -- are at 12 points each

GT and Royal Challengers Bengaluru are at 10 points and can reach a maximum of 14 points.

With a negative net run-rate, GT's chance are the least and it will take a miracle for the former champions to sneak into the top four.

However, one thing is clear, GT will once again have to play out of their skin and register big wins to keep their mathematical chances alive.

GT's bowling has lacked teeth this sea-

son with the pacers inconsistent and spinners leaking runs. But the bowlers did manage to snap three CSK wickets in the first three overs in their last outing. Mohit Sharma's variations and knuckle balls were effective and Rashid Khan's

guile also stood out and they would hope for another good outing. But it will again boil down to the toporder batting, which has failed to fire in the last few games before Gill and Sud-

route a record 210 opening stand. KKR, on the other hand, need just one win in their remaining two games to seal a top-two finish after they qualified for the playoffs with an 18-run win over

harsan came up with sensational tons en

Mumbai Indians in a rain-hit game last night. Sunil Narine (461 runs & 15 wickets) has carried the team with his allround brilliance, while fellow West Indian Andre Russell has been another impactful player with 222 runs and 15 wickets this

Leg spinner Varun Chakravarthy with 18 wickets in his kitty has been in a good rhythm. Phil Salt too has given the team sensational starts but has been off the boil a bit in the last three innings.

Others such as Angkrish Raghuvanshi and Ramandeep Singh have also stepped up when needed as the two-time champions emerged as the most consistent team this season.

The venue has proved to be batterfriendly and has witnessed some highscoring games.

GT has beaten KKR twice in the last three meetings but the hosts can't lower their guard as it was here where Rinku Singh had given them a nightmare when he slammed Yash Dayal for five successive sixes in the final over last year.

Teams (from):

Kolkata Knight Riders: Shreyas Iyer (c), KS Bharat (wk), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Rinku Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Sherfane Rutherford, Manish Pandey, Andre Russell, Nitish Rana, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Ramandeep Singh, Varun Chakravarthy, Sunil Narine, Vaibhav Arora, Chetan Sakariya, Harshit Rana, Suyash Sharma, Mitchell Starc, Dushmantha Chameera, Sakib Hussain, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Gus Atkinson, Allah Ghazanfar and Phil Salt.

Gujarat Titans: Shubman Gill (c), David Miller, Matthew Wade, Wriddhiman Saha, Kane Williamson, Abhinav Manohar, B. Sai Sudharsan, Darshan Nalkande, Vijay Shankar, Jayant Yadav, Rahul Tewatia, Noor Ahmad, Sai Kishore, Rashid Khan, Joshua Little, Mohit Sharma, Azmatullah Omarzai, Umesh Yadav, Shahrukh Khan, Sushant Mishra, Kartik Tyagi, Manav Suthar, Spencer Johnson, Sandeep Warrier and BR

Match starts: 7.30pm. (PTI)

## We win together, we lose together: Rana reveals KKR's winning mantra



KOLKATA, May 12: The key to Kolkata Knight Riders' success this season lies in their players' newfound ability to support each other through highs and lows, something that was "missing" over the past two years, feels the team's vice-captain Nitish Rana.

The two-time former champions became the first team to seal the playoff berth with a facile 18-run win over Mumbai Indians in a 16-over rain-interrupted IPL match at Eden Gardens on Saturday. This was the first time since 2021 that KKR made the last four stages. "We win together and we lose together; that's the

dressing room environment we have. It's very important to place hands on each other's shoulders, and I feel it was missing for the last one to two years," Rana said in the post-match media interaction here. With this win, they have consolidated their position

atop the standings with 18 points. With two games to go, KKR are now well-placed for a top-two finish. The big reality check for KKR had come against Punjab Kings who smashed South Africa's record of the highest successful run-chase by gunning down

262 with eight balls to spare in an IPL fixture at Eden Gardens on April 26.

dressing room, only three-four ate dinner that night,' he recalled.

pitch.

Rana, who led the side the previous season in regular skipper Shreyas Iyer's absence, made a comeback from a finger injury after missing their last 10 matches. Having scored a crucial 23-ball 33 on his return, the lefthander said he had anxiety pangs and had a sleepless night.

"To be honest I was not able to touch the bat for 20-22 days because of the injury. Then slowly it started falling into place. I used to play innings in my mind. "I couldn't sleep the whole night yesterday. It seemed I'm playing the first IPL match of my life. I slept only around 7.30-8 am such was the anxiety.

"It seemed I was playing my first match, you have to increase your hunger to do well. Luckily I had that thing in me," he said. For Mumbai Indians, who are already out of the

playoff race, this was their ninth loss as they end their forgettable season facing Lucknow Super Giants on May 17. Veteran leg-spinner Piyush Chawla blamed it on their lack of momentum this season. "T20 is about momentum, and we didn't get that momentum right from the beginning. Some days we

times our batters did well, but the bowlers ended up leaking runs," Chawla said. "As a unit, we have failed in a few games, and we have to accept that as a team. We have a brilliant

bowled well, but our batting didn't click, and some-

"Today also, we started off brilliantly, but that spell of (Sunil) Narine and Varun (Chakravarthy) actually made the difference. You have to give credit to their bowlers," he added

lineup, but things didn't fall into place.

The 35-year-old, who has played 191 matches in the IPL in four different franchises including KKR, 'We felt really bad that day. I was witness to the feels it's not over for him yet. (PTI)

## with strong finish in Korea

**Pranavi finishes tied 7th** 



SEOUL, May 12: Pranavi Urs produced a strong finish with three birdies in a four-hole stretch on the back nine for a top-10 finish at the Aramco Team Series Korea.

Pranavi shot rounds of 69-77-69 for a 1-under 215 and was tied-seventh at the end of the competition. This was the second top-10 finish in six starts this season for the Mysuru girl, who has been an 'Order of Merit' winner in the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour, before earning a status on the Ladies European Tour. The other two Indians, the Olympic-bound Diksha Dagar (79-72-71) shot 6-over to finish tied 37th while Vani Kapoor (77-74-77) had a below-par 12-over and tied 60th rank. Korea's Hyo-Joo Kim lived up to her billing as the home favourite to win by three shots in Seoul.

Leading by two shots heading into the final round, the Major winner held off Charley Hull's Sunday surge carding a round of 68 (-4) to end the week on 10-under par. Pranavi had a sedate front nine with a birdie on the sixth and a bogey on the ninth. She birdied three times on 14th, 16th and the 17th with no bogeys for a 69. Diksha trying to force things had five birdies along with four bogeys for a 71. (PTI)

Mawlai SC winner of the Shillong Premier League title by defeating Rangdajied United FC 1-0 in the final of SPL 2023 at SSA Statium Shillong on Sunday. UB photos

#### KOLKATA, May 12: Varun this season behind MI's Jasprit Bumhas struck two half centuries this searah and PBKS's Harshal Patel, both Chakaravarthy's ability to be conson and came close to striking a third sistently among wickets for of whom are on 20 wickets. "He before he was dismissed on 42 (21 Kolkata Knight Riders drew praise bowled beautifully. He made efforts balls) as he emerged the highest

KKR's Varun Chakaravarthy made

things difficult for MI batters: Brett Lee

from former Australian tearaway bowler Brett Lee, who said he made life difficult for Mumbai Indians batters in a rain-shortened low-scoring game. Chakaravarthy bowled miserly and took two wickets for 17 runs as KKR won by 18 runs to become the first team to seal an IPL playoff berth on Saturday. Chakarayarthy (18 scalps) is the third-highest wicket-taker so far

to pick the hard length, he banged the ball short in the wicket which did not allow the batsmen to get underneath the ball and made the cross-bat shots difficult," Lee told JioCinema on Sunday. Former Royal Challengers Bengaluru highperformance director Mike Hesson said KKR batter Venkatesh Iver seems to be relishing punishing the Mumbai Indians bowlers. Venkatesh

run-getter on both sides at the Eden Gardens on Saturday. "He seems to love playing against Mumbai Indians. He got hit on the knee earlier but that did not seem to stop him. He timed everything beautifully, batted with a strike rate of over 200 and when everybody else was struggling because of the seaming ball, he played a match-winning hand," said Hesson. (PTI)

#### Sai Sudharsan feels better game awareness and execution has led to remarkable consistency **NEW DELHI, May 12:** His talent has always been unquestionable but what has stood out for young Gujarat Titans southpaw Sai Sudharsan in this IPL is his impressive game awareness and decision

maiden India stint in South Africa last The 22-year-old, who proved his worth at the highest level with two ODIs fifties in his debut series in South Africa last December, has shown remarkable

consistency for Titans in the top-order.

making, traits he picked up during his

With 527 in 12 games at a decent strike rate of 141.28, the Tamil Nadu batter finds himself among the top-five run getters at this stage of the competition. He season was going solid but it took a special hundred on Friday night for the cricketing world to take notice of his T20

The joint highest 210-run opening stand between Sudharsan and Shubman Gill kept Titans alive in the tournament.

The southpaw was picked by Titans for his base price of his Rs 20 lakh ahead of the team's debut season in 2022 but came of age the following year. He has now taken his game to the next level. "There's not much change in my batting (compared to last season), but yes the decision making, the game awareness or knowledge of the game has improved. So that is helping me a bit to (stay consistent)," Sudharsan told PTI in an exclusive interview on Sunday.

Power hitting is a pre-requisite in the modern T20 game but Sudharsan relies on his timing to get the job done. Compared to last year, he is being able to put himself in better positions against world

"My batting is all about timing and (stable body) position. I've tried to hold on to both. So, I feel that execution part has got better because I got so much insights and knowledge from last year. "

"I was finding it difficult to dominate each and every bowler (last year) so that gave me an opportunity to get better in my batting. Back to back fifties in his debut series

for India and that too in South Africa also gave him tons of confidence. He is not part of India's T20 plans at the moment but could be an integral part of the ODI squad going forward.

"It was very special for me, playing for the country against South Africa and it became a memorable game as well. So



yes, it has given me like knowledge about how international cricket works and where you have to improve as a batter, otherwise you cannot sustain yourself," he said.

In a season, where power hitting has been redefined with the likes of Travis Head, Abhishek Sharma and Sunil Narine striking in the 200 range, Sudharsan is comfortable in his skin.

"The way the game is going strike rate is definitely important but what I believe is we have had 160 (total) games, we have had 140 (total) games, we have had 170 (total) games. So I think the main goal is to cross that line.

"If we are chasing 240 or 250, the requirement is more. Reacting well to the situation is key. If we think about the strike rate in advance, we won't be able to play the situation well," felt Sud-

Sudharsan also revealed that a chat with superstar Virat Kohli on the sidelines of Titan versus RCB game also provided him clarity.

"I had a conversation with Virat Kohli and Mahi Bhai (Dhoni) after the last game. With Virat, it was not so intricate. spoke about the Power play with him How to take on the bowler with minimal risk. "With Mahi bhai, I spoke about how to manage when we don't score runs and when we score runs, how to be the same."

During his sublime ton against CSK on Sunday, the lofted extra cover drive off Shardul Thakur on bent knee stood out. "I really enjoyed that shot over extra cover. But what I enjoyed the most was that intensity and the intent in which me and Shubman played," said Sudharsan whose hundred celebration was rather subdued compared to Shubman's with the skipper having a point to prove after being left out of the T20 World Cup

How was it like to be part of a record partnership that night?

"I've been playing with Shubman for the past three years now, so we've been had many partnerships, we've been having many conversations off the field about cricket as well. He is a very, smart

and skillful cricketer. "The last game against CSK he was something else. He had that fire in his eyes. I could see the difference from ball one where he wanted to prove a point."

Sudharsan was part of Surrey's Championship winning side last season and he is looking forward to another season in the UK post the IPL.

"They've (Surrey) asked me for my availability. If we don't have anything in that bracket (schedule in India), I will definitely go for the same county team this year as well.

"It was a great experience to be honest because it was a new set-up, new conditions, different wickets, different balls. It was my second time in the UK but first time for red ball also. I had conversations with batters there on how we can play the red ball better when it's swinging," Sudharsan concluded. (PTI)

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