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WORLD 8

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DJOKOVIC WINS HIS RECORD 370TH SLAM MATCH 11 SPORTS

SHOCK AND AWE 2024

BJP WINS THE POLL BATTLE ON POINTS...

...BUT THE CONGRESS DOESN'T LOSE



RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In a major disappointment to "brand Narendra Modi", the BJP aiming for 370 seats on its own and setting for the NDA a target of 'Ab ki baar 400 paar', fell short of majority magic number of 272. It is now at the mercy of Nitish Kumar-led Janata Dal (United), N Chandrababu Naidu-led Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and other allies to form the next Government at Centre. Reacting in the evening to the verdict at the BJP headquarters here, Modi described the NDA's expected majority in the Lok Sabha polls as a historic feat in India's history. He said people have placed their faith in the ruling alliance for a third

consecutive term. In a post on X, he said, "I bow to the 'Janata Janardan' for this affection and assure them that we will continue the good work done in the last decade to keep fulfilling the aspirations of people." He also lauded the alliance's workers for their hard work and said words will never do justice to their exceptional efforts. The BJP, which contested more seats this time than in 2019, garnered 36.91 per cent of the total votes polled, a drop of around 0.39 percentage points. On the other hand, the Congress' vote share increased by 2.22 percentage points to reach 21.68 per cent and it was also reflected in its seat tally. The party is set to

win 99 seats. Though the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) got an absolute majority of 291 seats as against 272 needed to form the Government. In the 2019 general election, the BJP had won 303 seats on its own. The NDA had won 353 seats. Modi won the Varanasi seat for the third consecutive term by defeating Congress candidate Ajay Rai. The victory margin of Modi this time is 1,52,513, which is less than his victory margins of 2019 and 2014. In 2019, Modi's victory margin was 4,79,505. He had defeated SP's Shalini Yadav that time while Rai was the runner up. BJP's stalwarts — Smriti Irani, Ajay Mishra, Arjun Munda, and Kailash

Choudhary, Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Maneka Gandhi, Sanjeev Baliyan, K Annamalai and Lallu Singh lost their seats. Despite all noise around Modi wave in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Haryana, the BJP apperant got derailed as development planks, making five trillion economy, consecration of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, Abrogation of Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir, making India a potential superpower and nationalism did not work in the Hindi belts where the BJP failed to retain the results of 2019. The BJP's losses, as expected, are being offset from Odisha, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and to an extent, Telangana. Notably, the BJP lost the Ayodhya seat to Samajwadi Party (SP) in UP, where Ram Mandir was built after 500 years. As the BJP failed to reach the majority mark on its own, parleys began on their front with TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu getting calls from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. Continued on Page 2



DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI Facing a host of adversities, including freezing of party accounts, a hostile Government probing agencies, hostile media, loads of mockery, robbed of the Lok Sabha membership and his decades old accommodation, Congress' Rahul Gandhi took the pitch of 'Daro Mat' to take on the mammoth posturing of world's largest, richest political party BJP-led by Narendra Modi and scored a century for the grand old party after struggling in two past general elections. Also mocked as 'Shehzada' and dismissed as a serial 'launch', Rahul may have just had the last laugh this Lok Sabha election. Tuesday's Lok Sabha results also proved that those who connected Rahul during his two Bharat Jodo Yatra reaped the benefits when the results were being declared particularly in States of Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Bihar and nonetheless Uttar Pradesh. A series of electoral losses could not prevent Rahul to catapult him from being



tagged as a reluctant politician to resurrect the political fortunes not only for the grand old party but also making the Congress relevant for a formidable and imposing Opposition. This remarkable achievement signals a potential shift in the Indian political landscape and suggests that Rahul's strategic overhaul of the party has resonated with voters across the nation. Needless to say, answering to the last minute hostility Rahul faced from the media and exit polls which predicted Congress as also ran, he called the exit polls as Modi Media Polls. He had confidently mentioned a 295 plus figure for the INDIA Bloc.

Though quite far from the tally as compared to ruling BJP, a confident INDIA Bloc will meet and decide on Wednesday whether to approach former partners such as the JD(U) and the TDP to attempt Government formation at the Centre. "We are going to have a meeting with our partners tomorrow. These questions will be raised and answered there," Rahul said at a Press conference when asked if a Congress and its allies will approach parties that are part of the NDA to try and form a Government. He was joined by his mother and longest serving Congress president Sonia Gandhi, sister and general secretary Priyanka Gandhi and party chief Mallikarjun Kharge.

Priyanka who too became the cynosure of all eyes expressed her great satisfaction on the Lok Sabha performance of Congress and particularly the party's resurgence in Uttar Pradesh. In the Press conference, Rahul reiterated his commitment to protect and safeguard the Indian Constitution and said this election results signal the fact that the Indian voters have rejected the politics of Narendra Modi. "The numbers show that the Indian voter has rejected Modi and the BJP. It is a defeat of the BJP," he said, while adding that on June 5, the INDIA Bloc partners will meet and discuss the way forward. Continued on Page 2



DELHI

RAJESH KUMAR SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

In a first, BJP created history by winning all the seven Lok Sabha seats in national Capital for the third consecutive time against the imposing combination of Congress and ruling party AAP in Delhi. Changing all but one of its Lok Sabha candidates seemed to have worked for the BJP, even as its vote share seems to have taken a slight hit while the rebellion within the Congress over alliance with AAP dented the INDIA Bloc. Riding high on the 'Modi factor' and a targeted campaign against the Aam Aadmi Party and over corruption allegations and Swati Maliwal controversy, the BJP emerged victorious on all seven seats in Delhi as it thwarted the challenge mounted by the INDIA Bloc. The loss of AAP and Congress in Delhi also puts a question mark on the effectiveness of the alliance experiment. BJP leader Manoj Tiwari defeated Congress leader Kanhaiya Kumar from North East Delhi by a margin of over one lakh votes. BJP leader Praveen Khandelwal defeated veteran Congress leader JP Aggarwal by a margin of over 89,000 votes from Chandni Chowk seat. South Delhi BJP candidate Ramvir Singh Bidhuri also won the seat, defeating AAP candidate Sahi Ram Pahalwan by a margin of around 1.24 lakh votes. Continued on Page 2

SPEED BREAKERS FOR BJP

UTTAR PRADESH

VIKENDRA NATH BHATTI ■ LUCKNOW

In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, 'UP Like Ladke' worked well for the Opposition INDIA Bloc while the 'labharthi' and Ram Temple failed to deliver for the Bharatiya Janata Party. Uttar Pradesh, which had accounted for a lion's share of the BJP's tally in Lok Sabha since 2014, proved to be a tough challenge in the 2024 election. According to the latest Election Commission of India figures, the INDIA Bloc won 43 out of the total 80 Lok Sabha seats in UP. The INDIA Bloc's Samajwadi Party won 37 seats and Congress six. The BJP-led NDA won 36 which includes BJP 33, Rashtriya Lok Dal 2, Apna Dal (S) 1. Chandrashekhar of the Azad

Samaj Party (Kanshiram) has won from Nagina (SC) constituency. Prime Minister Narendra Modi won the Varanasi Lok Sabha seat in Uttar Pradesh for a third time. He defeated Congress' Ajay Rai by over 1.5 lakh votes. Modi won the Varanasi seat for the third time in a row, defeating Congress contender Ajay Rai. Modi's victory margin this time is 1,52,513, which is less than in 2019 and 2014. The INDIA Bloc parties led by the Samajwadi Party won Muzaffarnagar, Rampur, Firozabad, Mainpuri, Aonla, Kheri, Dhaurahra, Pratapgarh, Jalaun, Kaushambi, Basti, Lalganj, (SC) Azamgarh, Chandauli, Kairana. Continued on Page 2

WEST BENGAL

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Tuesday's general elections results found the proverbial Mamata magic tearing through the Modi blitzkrieg with the Trinamool Congress in Bengal literally handing down a humiliating defeat to the challenger BJP which on Tuesday slipped down to 11 seats from its 2019 tally of 18. This, even as party general secretary Abhishek Banerjee recorded a victory with a margin of 7.74 lakh votes in Diamond Harbour constituency breaking the previous record of CPI(M) MP Anil Bose who had won from Arambag seat by a margin of 5.8 lakh votes. The counting was still on in several seats and if the TMC managed to continue with its show until the final results. Continued on Page 2

MAHARASHTRA

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray and NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar on Tuesday extracted a sweet revenge against the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies for splitting their parent parties during the last two years, as the Congress-led Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) outperformed the BJP-led MahaYuti by bagging as many as 28 out of 48 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra, as against 19 seats won by the ruling alliance. The Congress led the way by walking away with 12 LS seats, while the Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP) — riding an undercurrent of sympathy triggered by the manner in which the unified Shiv Sena and NCP were split in June 2022 and July 2023 respectively — won 10 seats and 7 seats respectively. Continued on Page 2

BJP assumes the mantle of Odia 'asmita'

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ BHUBANESWAR/NEW DELHI

The BJP made inroads in Odisha to form its first Government in the State by defeating longest serving Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik-led BJD Government as it also gained massively in the Lok Sabha elections held simultaneously. The BJP crossed the majority mark of 74 while the BJD was on 50 followed by Congress 14, and others in the 147 Assembly. Of the total of 21 Lok Sabha seats in the State, the BJP won 19 Lok Sabha seats followed by one each the BJD and the Congress. In 2019 the BJP had won 8 while the BJD

was the largest party with 12 Lok Sabha seats. Narendra Modi reacted to the BJP's win in Odisha and posted on social media thanking Odisha for a 'resounding victory for good governance'. 'BJP will leave no stone unturned in fulfilling the dreams of people and taking Odisha to new heights of progress,' wrote Modi while expressing pride and thanking 'all hardworking party Karyakartas' for their efforts. Union Minister and BJP candidate Dharmendra Pradhan was leading by over one lakh votes in the Sambalpur Lok Sabha seat while BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra was leading in the Puri Lok Sabha seat. Continued on Page 2

KERALA

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Notwithstanding the major setback suffered by the BJP in the north, the Hindutva outfit succeeded in opening its account in Kerala for the first time in the history of the party as well as that of the State. Suresh Gopi, film actor turned politician fielded by the BJP won Thrissur Lok Sabha seat with a comfortable margin. He defeated his nearest rival Sunil Kumar (CPI) by a margin of 75,000 votes. Rahul Gandhi of the Congress, the sitting MP from Wayanad retained his constituency by a margin of 3,64,422 votes. Gopi's victory is a landmark event in Kerala politics, according to many political observers. Continued on Page 2

Bloodbath on D-Street on vote counting day (Detailed report on page 5)

Patanjali advertisement for Dant Kanti and Kesh Kanti products. Text: Years of research and experience have led to the creation of best ever Patanjali Personal Care range! Give your teeth, hair and skin gifts of nature! Products shown include Dant Kanti toothpaste, Kesh Kanti hair oil, Beauty & Personal Care lotions, and Facewash. Dant Kanti is available at more than 35 lakh stores.

Patanjali advertisement for Dant Kanti Fresh Active Gel. Text: New Dant Kanti Fresh Active Gel keeps the breath Full-Full Fresh. Features a woman and a man holding the product. Includes 'FREE 25% EXTRA' offer and 'With Cooling Mint Crystals'.



NDA's win for third time represents victory of 140 crore Indians: Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

After the announcement of the results of the Lok Sabha Elections 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the results has enabled NDA emerge victorious for the third time. He said that this is the victory of the idea of a 'Viksit Bharat' and to safeguard India's Constitution.

"NDA's victory for the 3rd time represents the victory of 140 crore Indians," Modi said at BJP headquarters in presence of BJP chief JP Nadra, Union Minister Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh.

Commending the efforts of the Election Commission of India, Modi said, "I would like to thank the ECI for carrying out the world's largest elections." He added that India's electoral process has reached new heights of credibility and efficiency. He made a special mention about the people of J&K and their record turnout for voting in the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections.

Speaking on the importance of



the Lok Sabha Elections 2024, PM Modi said, "It's for the first time post 1962 that an incumbent government has emerged victorious for the 3rd time." He added that this election has been special for the BJP as it has received a record mandate by the people of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Odisha. He said that the vote share of BJP has almost doubled in Telangana with us also winning a Lok Sabha seat in Kerala.

Expressing his emotions on the result of the Lok Sabha Elections 2024, Modi said, "These elections have been

Political leaders across country eye retaining seats multiple times

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Virendra Kumar, a Dalit leader, retained the Tikamgarh constituency in Madhya Pradesh for the eighth time while Pankaj Choudhary is heading for a seventh term in the Lok Sabha.

Among the candidates securing a hat-trick were Prime Minister Narendra Modi from Varanasi, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari from Nagpur, BJP leaders Jitendra Singh from Udhampur and Jugal Kishore from Jammu, Bhola Singh from Bulandshahr and Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde faction) leader Shrirang Barne from Maval in Mumbai.

Pankaj Choudhary, the Union minister of state for finance and an OBC face, was leading from Maharajganj in Uttar Pradesh by a margin of over 36,000 votes at 6 pm.

BJP candidates Inderjit Singh and Shivraj Chouhan, and Trinamool Congress' Sudip Bandhopadhyay are also set to win a sixth term in the Lok Sabha.

Union Minister Inderjit Singh,



a five-time parliamentarian with three of them from the Gurgaon seat, was leading by a margin of 50,000 votes at 4.30 pm.

Congress leader Shashi Tharoor retained the Thiruvananthapuram seat for the fourth consecutive time by a margin of 16,077 votes. JDU's Nalanda MP Kaushalendra Kumar was also heading for a fourth term with a lead of over 1,35,608 votes.

Union Minister Rajnath Singh from Lucknow is heading for a hat-trick and was leading by a margin of 1,02,769 votes. BJP's Mahesh Sharma from Gautam Buddha Nagar, Sakshi Maharaj from Unnao, Hema Malini from Mathura and Satish Kumar Gautam from Aligarh are also among the candidates heading for a hat-trick.

Crorepatis in the fray well ahead of opponents

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani, the TDP candidate from Guntur, is set to become the richest winner with assets valued at Rs 5,700 crore. Pemmasani is leading by over 3.3 lakh votes.

BJP's Konda Vishweshwar Reddy, who contested from the Chevella seat in neighbouring Telangana, holds the second highest assets worth Rs 4,568 crore and is also poised to win. Reddy is ahead with a comfortable margin of over 1.5 lakh votes.

Industrialist Naveen Jindal, the BJP candidate from Haryana's Kurukshetra Lok Sabha seat, declared assets worth Rs 1,241 crore and is leading with over 30,000 votes, potentially placing him among the richest members of the Lok Sabha.

TDP candidate from Nellore in Andhra Pradesh, Prabhakar Reddy Vemireddy, declared assets worth Rs 716



crore and is leading by over 2.3 lakh votes, making him another wealthy candidate.

Union Minister and BJP candidate from Guna in Madhya Pradesh, Jyotiraditya M Scindia, declared assets worth Rs 424 crore. Actor-turned-politician and BJP's Mathura candidate, Hema Malini, declared assets worth Rs 278 crore. Scindia won by a margin of over five lakh votes while Hema Malini is leading by 2.8 lakh votes. There are 2,572 crorepati candidates in the fray.

WEST BENGAL

From page 1

It could mark its second-best performance since 2014 when it won 34 seats. Only the Left Front had won more than 35 seats in 2004. Curiously, the Sandeshkhali issue that drew national headlines for alleged land grab and sexual exploitation of women too would not impact the TMC's good fortune. The party not only won the Basirhat seat but also got a huge lead from Sandeshkhali Assembly seat.

Apart from TMC's landslide win the other most landmark event around Tuesday's election result was the surprising defeat of 5-time Behrampore Congress MP and party's former leader of Lok Sabha Adhir Chowdhury who lost out to the much talked about TMC "intruder" and former India cricketer Yusuf Pathan. He was leading by more than 60,000 votes when reports last came in. Other than Pathan among the who's who that won the polls is TMC's Mohua Moitra who trounced her nearest rival Amrita Roy of BJP from Krishnagar.

The TMC was on its way to win 30 seats whereas the BJP managed to

win only 11. The Congress which had 2 seats in the previous Lok Sabha managed to win only Malda South seat losing Behrampore to the TMC.

Lok Sabha elections in Bengal were conducted in seven phases. Among the notable faces that lost in BJP was former State president Dilip Ghosh who was allegedly forced to contest against his wishes from Durgapur whereas his home seat Midnapore was left to Agnimitra Paul who too lost the seat. Among others who lost were BJP's SS Ahluwalia from Asansol, Arjun Singh from Barrackpore. CPI(M) stalwarts Md Salim and Sujana Chakrabarty too lost from Murshidabad and Dum Dum constituencies. While Salim was defeated by sitting TMC MP Abu Taher Khan Chakrabarty was defeated by veteran TMC leader Saugato Roy. BJP's leader and Union Minister Nisith Pramanik was trailing from Coochbehar when reports last came in.

Back in Kolkata, TMC's Sudip Bandopadhyay defeated BJP's Tapas Roy in Kolkata North seat whereas Mala Sinha defeated BJP's Debashri Chowdhury and CPI(M)'s Saira Shah Halim in Kolkata South.

Riding a combination of Muslim and Mahila support base the TMC had polled about 46 percent votes to

BJP's 35 percent whereas the Left and the Congress together polled a little more than 13 percent votes about 9 percent less than what they jointly polled in 2023 panchayat elections.

Dwelling on the reason for her thumping success, the Bengal Chief Minister on Tuesday said that the people had voted for her party's policies in great numbers. "I bow my head to the people of Bengal ... the mothers and sisters and the general people have voted the TMC to this place," she said.

When asked as to whether her populist schemes like Lakshmi Bhandar --- a Rs 1,000 monthly grant for women --- and Kanyashree etc led her party to success she said, "besides the people-friendly policies the Centre's arrogance ... like their stopping of State funds also infuriated the people which is why they chose to back us ... we were not arrogant ... but BJP was ... so we won."

Referring to the burning issues like corruption --- that saw several of her ministerial colleagues going to jail --- and Sandeshkhali, Mamata said, "the BJP tried to malign the Government and the party but has failed ... the people have given them a lesson ... they maligned us calling us corrupt but I won't spare them and bring libel suits against them."

BJP assumes the mantle of Odia 'asmita'

From page 1

BJD candidate Sarmistha Sethi was leading in the Jaipur Lok Sabha seat, while Congress nominee Saptagiri Ulaka was leading in the Koraput Lok Sabha constituency. It is hard to overstate the impact of the loss on the BJD and Patnaik, who has been the Chief Minister of the State since 2000 and was widely seen as remaining very popular, especially at the State level. Making the BJP's achievement bigger is the fact that it went into the elections without a Chief Ministerial candidate, banking largely on the popularity of Modi.

It is also a vindication of the party's decision to go alone in the State. Reports had suggested that Patnaik's party, which had supported the BJP in Parliament on several occasions despite not being in an alliance with it, was in talks for joining the NDA. Discussions had, however, eventually fallen through.

...BUT THE CONGRESS DOESN'T LOSE

From page 1

Rahul has been working to rejuvenate the Congress, focusing on issues of social justice and grassroots mobilisation through his two Bharat Jodo Yatras and also promising for caste census if the party was voted to power. As votes were counted for the Lok Sabha election on Tuesday, the former Congress president derided by so many through the campaign was one of the drivers of his party leading or winning close to 100 seats, almost double the 52 from 2019.

To connect with the masses he was also seen riding a truck and tempo, working on the fields and all positioning through Press conferences, and posting short videos and social media platforms.

Congress leaders on Tuesday credited Rahul for a campaign that focussed on people's issues and welfare measures, one of the reasons for the party's stunning fightback against the high-on-confidence BJP.

Some of his punch lines also caught on and trended on social media. Like his 'Khata khat khata khat paise aenge account mein' refrain while explaining the party's 'mahalakshmi' guarantee under which the party promised to give Rs 8,500 per month to one woman in every poor household if it comes to power.

He contested from Kerala's Wayanad and Uttar Pradesh's Rae Bareilly, winning the Southern seat by 3.64 lakh votes and winning the northern one by a margin of 3.9 lakh votes.

It would be interesting to see which one he retains, the one that sent him to Parliament last time or the family bastion. Rahul had made his poll debut from Amethi in 2004 and saw relatively smooth sailing in the first 10 years with the UPA being in power. But the last 10 years were challenging.

He won the 2014 polls against the BJP's Smriti Irani by over one lakh votes. She ran a spirited campaign and made inroads into the Congress citadel of Amethi, finally beating the Gandhi family scion by over 55,000 votes in 2019. He certainly was a key figure who turned the tide for the Congress and the INDIA Bloc in the polls and his stature as a politician has certainly gone up several notches with the good showing of his party.

DELHI

From page 1

BJP candidate Kamaljeet Sehrawat defeated AAP candidate and veteran politician Mahabal Mishra from West Delhi seat by a margin of 1.97 lakh votes. Bansuri Swaraj of BJP from New Delhi defeated AAP candidate Somnath Bharti by a margin of over 70,000 votes while Yogendra Chandoliya defeated Congress candidate Udit Raj from North West Delhi by a margin of over 2.90 lakh votes.

BJP's Harsh Malhotra also defeated AAP leader Kuldeep Kumar from East Delhi by a margin of over 88,000 votes. However, the victory margin of winners as compared to the 2019 polls reduced drastically in all seven parliamentary constituencies.

The BJP's campaign, focused on the issue of development and action against corruption, saw two rallies of PM Narendra Modi, alongside rallies, meetings and roadshows by scores of union ministers, chief ministers and its popular leaders from across the country two weeks before polls. The leaders at Delhi BJP credited the third clean sweep in a row by the party mainly to the 'Modi' factor and the party's sustained attack on the Kejriwal government over its alleged involvement in corruption cases. In 2019, the votes polled by the BJP were higher than

the joint tally of AAP and Congress candidates put together.

The BJP's vote share declined from 56.7 per cent in 2019 to around 54.32 per cent this time. However, it is higher than the party's 2014 vote share of 46.6 per cent. AAP's vote share rose from 18.2 per cent in 2019 to around 24 per cent this time, while Congress' vote share of 22.6 per cent in 2019 declined to around 18 per cent this time. The AAP failed to better its 2014 vote share of 33.1 per cent. Congress had a vote share of 15.2 per cent in 2014.

Right from Prime Minister Modi to chief ministers of various states who campaigned for the BJP in Delhi, everyone trained their guns at the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) calling it "kattar beimaan" (hardcore corrupt) and mocking its "unholy" alliance with the Congress. On the other hand, the apparent lack of on-ground synergy between AAP and Congress workers and no joint rallies of the two parties ensured that voters were not too keen on supporting the alliance candidates, according to political observers.

The AAP had hoped to sway the election by banking on the alleged unfair treatment meted out to Kejriwal. While he was in jail, the party's slogan was 'Jail ka javab vote se'. When he was granted interim bail to campaign, Kejriwal sought votes to "keep him out of jail". Neither of the two narratives worked. The AAP-Congress combine can only draw solace from

the fact that the victory margins for the BJP were thinner this time. While AAP bettered its vote share from the 2019 polls, the Congress took a hit this time.

The AAP contested a total of 22 seats: 13 in Punjab, four in Delhi, two each in Gujarat (Bharuch and Bhavnagar) and Assam (Sonitpur and Dibrugarh) and one in Haryana (Kurukshetra). The party drew a blank in Gujarat, Delhi and Assam.

The election results also set the tone for the Assembly elections next year in Delhi as the BJP, despite stamping its authority in Lok Sabha polls, has failed to dent the AAP's prospects in the national capital. The AAP has registered landslide victories in Delhi in 2015 and 2020 winning 67 and 62 seats respectively out of 70 constituencies but has drawn a blank in Lok Sabha polls.

The results show that AAP, despite becoming a national party, still has a long way to go before it can pose a challenge to the BJP at the national level. For Congress, the dip in the vote share as well as the fact that its two candidates are trailing by over 1 lakh votes in North East Delhi and North West Delhi seems to indicate that the last-minute announcement of "outsider" candidates, which allegedly prompted former Delhi Congress chief Arvinder Lovely's departure to the BJP, were an important factor.

UTTAR PRADESH

From page 1

The other seats that the SP won are Sambhal, Etah, Budaun, Mohanlalganj, Sultanpur, Farrukhabad, Etawah, Kannauj, Hamirpur, Banda, Fatehpur, Faizabad, Ambedkar Nagar, Shravasti, Sant Kabir Nagar, Ghosi, Salempur, Jaunpur, Machhlishahr, Ghazipur, Robertson, The Congress won Allahabad, Barabanki, Saharanpur, Sitapur, Rai Bareilly, and Amethi. Lallu Singh, the incumbent Faizabad MP from the BJP conceded defeat to the Samajwadi Party candidate Awadhesh Prasad, saying "Hum apka samman nahi bacha paaye" (we could not save your respect). This is significant, as Faizabad constituency covers Ayodhya and the Ram temple was a major poll plank for the BJP.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi won the Rae Bareilly seat by a margin of 4 lakh votes defeating BJP candidate Dinesh Singh. Union Minister of state Ajay Mishra 'Teni' lost in the Kheri constituency in Uttar Pradesh by a margin of 25,494 votes. He was defeated by Samajwadi Party candidate Utkarsh Verma 'Madhur'.

Samajwadi Party Chief Akhilesh Yadav's wife Dimple Yadav won from the Mainpuri Lok Sabha constituency, retaining the traditional party bastion. She won by a margin of 1,99,175 votes, defeating Jaiveer Singh, a minister in the Yogi Adityanath-led UP Government. Uttar Pradesh, the BJP's big bastion in the past two general elections, witnessed epic neck-and-neck battle between the ruling NDA and the opposition INDIA bloc comprising

KERALA

From page 1

Interestingly, K Muraleedharan (Congress), the sitting MP from Vadakara who was shifted to Thrissur to neutralise the impact caused by the crossing over of Padmaja Venugopal, his sister and daughter of former Chief Minister K Karunakaran to the BJP, finished third behind the CPI candidate.

The ruling CPI(M) in the State had to contend with just one seat leaving the remaining 18 seats to the Congress-led UDF.

The Congress won 15 seats and the Muslim League walked away with two seats. The Joseph faction of the Kerala Congress, another constituent of the UDF, won the lone seat it contested which completed the tally.

The highlight of this election is the severe defeat suffered by the CPI(M) in the hustings. Except for K Radhakrishnan of the party, who is also the Kerala Minister for Temple Administration, won from Aalathur, defeating Ramya Haridas, the sitting Congress MP. Many party heavyweights fell by the wayside and this included M V Jayarajan, Elamaram Kareem and K K Shylaja.

MAHARASHTRA

From page 1

In fact, the MVA's effective winning strength has gone up to 30 seats, as the lone Independent in the poll fray - late Chief Minister and veteran leader Vasantdada Patil's grandson Vishal Prakashbapu Patil who won from Sangli constituency in western Maharashtra, will in likelihood support the Congress-led Opposition.

On the other hand, the ruling MahaYuti --- comprising the BJP, Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena and NCP (Ajit Pawar) won seven seats and one respectively. This was despite the fact that Prime Minister Narendra Modi --- who was the chief campaigner --- addressed as many as eight rallies and held one road show in various parts of the State.

It is a vindication of sorts for both Uddhav Thackeray and Sharad Pawar. By bagging

BJP WINS THE POLL BATTLE ON POINTS...

From page 1

In Chhattisgarh (10/11), Madhya Pradesh (29/29), Delhi (7/7), Uttarakhand (5/5) and Himachal Pradesh (4/4) and Gujarat (25/26), the BJP seems to set to either keep its dominance or even better its 2019 performance. It's worse performance this time in UP (32/80), Bihar (12/40), Jharkhand (8/14), Rajasthan (14/25) and

Maharashtra (10/48). In 2019, the BJP had won 176 of the 225 seats in the 10 States of the Hindi belt. The party had won Uttar Pradesh (62 seats) out of 80), Uttarakhand (5/5), Bihar (17/40), Jharkhand (11/14), Chhattisgarh (9/11), Madhya Pradesh (28/29), Delhi (7/7), Haryana (10/10), Himachal Pradesh (3/4) and Rajasthan (24/25).

The BJP was riding high on the victory of three Assembly elections in the recent months in the name of Modi.

Since the BJP campaign was all about Modi, his charm and charisma did not work as the entire election campaign evolved around his Modi brand.

Even BJP and his alliance candidates sought votes in Modi's name.

There is an acknowledgement even among the BJP leaders about several missteps the party made, from poor ticket selection by picking many candidates with little standing in their constituencies and

manufacturing coalitions and alliances by all means in a big State like Maharashtra. Modi attempted to pivot the poll around the Opposition's alleged Muslim appeasement but his choice of contentious phrases drew its share of critics. It was telling that the BJP's own manifesto aroused little interest while its own leaders kept the attack on the Congress over the Opposition party's manifesto.

The Prime Minister coined the "400 paar" slogan to deflate the Opposition by sending out the signal that the BJP juggernaut was on its way to another grand majority.

The election results show the BJP lost some ground to the Congress in direct contests in the Lok Sabha polls, for the first time in 10 years. It has also ceded ground to SP in UP, and TMC in West Bengal.

Uttar Pradesh proved to be an even bigger shocker for the BJP which singlehandedly powered the BJP to a majority in 2014 and 2019.

The 'shehzadas' have taken the town by surprise, as the BJP is all set to receive a grand drubbing. With a vote share of 41.40 per cent, BJP won 62 seats out of 80 in 2019 but this time it has been reduced to 36 as of now. SP has won 38,

seats, a loss of six seats this time.

The BJP's strategy to create divisions within Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena and Sharad Pawar's Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), as well as to seize their party names and symbols, has not achieved the desired results in Maharashtra.

In 2019, the BJP had won 23 seats in Maharashtra, while the Shiv Sena (undivided) won 18 seats.

This time the saffron party won 11 seats, while the Congress retained 12. Rajasthan is another State where BJP faced a setback. Currently, BJP won 14 seats, down from 24 seats that it won in 2019.

BJP celebrates winning all seven Capital seats

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Celebrations erupted at BJP headquarters in the national capital as party workers and supporters sounded 'shankha', rejoiced to 'dhol' beats and chanted Modi slogans as the BJP candidates won on all seven seats of Delhi. Saffron themed Kaju and pista barfi were distributed among all for securing a consecutive third term in the national capital. Beaming with joy, party supporters were seen offering veneration to a huge cut-out of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Clad in saffron attire and turban and carrying flags and posters bearing Lord

Ram's image, supporters danced to dhol beat in anticipation of good omens. Reacting to the news of winning all the seats, Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva said, "For the third consecutive time, NDA will form a government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The government is going to be formed and the country, especially Delhi, has voted on the development policies of the Modi government. The people of Delhi have created an unprecedented history by giving BJP 7-0 victory to BJP for the third consecutive time." Party workers burst crackers and waved party flags in a



euphoric celebration at the BJP Delhi office at Pandit Pant Marg. Claiming that people have rejected the INDIA alliance, he stated, "From 1952 till date, Delhi has never made the same party win in three consecutive Lok Sabha elections, but today Delhi has expressed confidence in the Modi government and made BJP win for the third time. The people of Delhi have completely rejected the corruption of Arvind Kejriwal and AAP in this election. Despite millions of efforts and spreading the illusion of the AAP, not only the people of Delhi but also the people of Punjab have completely rejected the Kejriwal

Party." Delhi State Lok Sabha Election Incharge Om Prakash Dhankar expressed his gratitude to the voters of Delhi. "The people of Delhi have once again expressed their faith in the strong leadership of Modi to strengthen the country. Congratulations to the party workers for working hard day and night. Congratulations to all," he said. Despite AAP and Congress fighting the Lok Sabha 2024 election together in an alliance in the national capital, with the former contesting on four seats and the latter fielding candidates from three seats, its candidate failed to secure a single seat.

Winner Loser

New Delhi



Bansuri Swaraj



Somnath B Harti

Chandni Chowk



Parveen Khandelwal



J P Aggarwal

North East Delhi



Manoj Tiwari



Kanhaiya Kumar

East Delhi



Harsh Malhotra



Kuldeep Kumar

West Delhi



Kamaljeet Sehrawat



Mahabal Mishra

South Delhi



Ramvir Singh Bidhuri



Sahiram Pehelwan

North West Delhi



Yogendra Chandolia



Udit Raj

BJP's Kamaljeet secures West Delhi seat

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

BJP's West Delhi candidate Kamaljeet Sehrawat defeated the AAP candidate and veteran politician Mahabal Mishra by a margin of 196573 votes. Sehrawat secured a total votes of 838332 while Mishra got 641759. BSP's Vishaka got only 7899 votes. The former General Secretary of Delhi BJP is the first female candidate and MP from the constituency. With Sehrawat and former Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj's daughter Bansuri Swaraj winning in their constituencies, the national capital will send two female candidates to the Lok Sabha with Delhi sending just nine female candidates to the Parliament till now. It is noteworthy that the party relayed the maximum number of star campaigners for election campaigning to the West Delhi Lok Sabha seat in a bid to make



Sehrawat win against the Mishra, who has represented the same seat earlier from Congress' ticket. Reacting to the win, Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva claimed,

"The development done by Prime Minister Modi's government in Delhi has won and the people of Delhi have completely rejected the corruption of Arvind Kejriwal and the opportunism of Congress." Sehrawat, former Mayor of the South Delhi Municipal Corp has replaced Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma, who won the seat in 2019, for the BJP. Sehrawat comes from the Jat community and is expected to draw Jat voters who form a sizable chunk of the electorate often playing the role of kingmakers. About 24 candidates were in the fray to win the constituency with seven candidates contesting independently. More than 8,500 voters pressed the NOTA button in the EVM. Sharing her developmental plans for the area, she said, "I will focus on developing parks in my area, which are missing in many neighbourhoods, particularly in and around villages. Water supply too is a problem. We need to stop the growth of unauthorised colonies and ensure planned housing for all."

AAP registers six per cent increase in vote share compared to 2019 polls

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a consolation to the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) that failed to win even a single Lok Sabha seat in Delhi, its vote share registered an impressive increase of nearly six per cent as compared to 2019 polls while the winner BJP lost its polled votes by nearly two per cent as compared to 2019 polls, according to results announced on Tuesday. The Congress that failed to win any seat out of three contested by it in Delhi, lost its vote share by over three per cent as compared to 2019 Lok Sabha elections. The vote share figures of the three parties were likely to change marginally with the final data yet to be released by the Election Commission. The BJP's vote share of 54.33

per cent yielded it a clean sweep of all the seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi for the third time in a row. Its vote shares in 2019 and 2014 polls were 56.7 per cent and 46.6 per cent, respectively. The turnout of May 25 Lok Sabha polls for seven parliamentary constituencies in Delhi was 58.69 per cent. Around 89.21 lakh voters exercised their franchise out of total 1.52 eligible electors. The AAP that contested East Delhi, West Delhi, New Delhi and South Delhi seats could not win any seat. Its vote share, however, was 24.14 per cent as compared to 18.2 per cent in 2019 polls. The AAP's vote share was 33.1 per cent in 2014 general elections but it lost all seven seats that it contested.

BJP's Bansuri Swaraj secures victory from New Delhi LS seat

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP's Bansuri Swaraj, daughter of late veteran leader Sushma Swaraj and Oxford educated lawyer, defeated AAP's Somnath Bharti to win the New Delhi Lok Sabha seat by a margin of 78,370 votes. Swaraj, a first-timer, was fielded by the BJP in place of outgoing MP and Union Minister Meenakshi Lekhi. The BJP won all seven seats in Delhi in the 2014 and the 2019 general elections, and is set to repeat the feat for the third time. During her campaign, Swaraj focused on the development works executed by the Modi government in Delhi. New Delhi Parliamentary seat is considered one of the high profile seat, which had been represented by Lal Krishna Advani, Rajesh Khanna, Making her debut in the electoral politics, Swaraj, who is a Supreme Court lawyer, secured a victory with over 4.50 lakhs votes from the prestigious New Delhi seat, which has been earlier represented by stalwart leaders of BJP, including former Deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani and former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. It is noteworthy that with Swaraj and West Delhi's Kamaljeet Sehrawat winning in their constituencies, the national capital will send two female candidates to the Lok Sabha with Delhi sending just nine female candidates to the Parliament till now. Following her victory, Swaraj celebrated with the party workers and supporters for securing the seat. BJP distributed lotus shaped sweets in the Delhi state office to celebrate the victory of all its seven candidates in the national capital. Swaraj sought blessings in the Birla temple for



the much awaited results earlier in the day while stating, "I am completely confident that today the people of India will choose the public welfare policies of BJP, and will choose the development policies of our Prime Minister Narendra Modi. I know Teesri Baar Phir Modi Sarkar." Bansuri, a newcomer in politics, has led a fiery campaign against AAP and is a vocal critic of Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal. On the other hand, Bharti is a veteran politician who has been a three time MLA from Malviya Nagar - a constituency that falls under the New Delhi Lok Sabha seat. A total of 17 candidates contested from the New Delhi seat, with four contesting independently. About 5,000 voters chose to press the None of the Above (NOTA) button in the seat. Dropping two-time MP and party veteran Meenakshi Lekhi, the BJP fielded debutant Bansuri Swaraj in her place. Lekhi, won the 2019 and the 2014 elections in the New Delhi constituency by defeating the then Congress chief Ajay Maken by garnering over 55 per cent of the votes polled in 2019 and 46.75 per cent of the votes polled in 2014.

BJP's Khandelwal defeats INDIA Bloc candidate by 90,000 votes

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP candidate Praveen Khandelwal from Chandni Chowk has avenged the defeat of his uncle by defeating the joint Congress and INDIA alliance candidate JP Agarwal from the Chandni Chowk seat on Tuesday with a margin of about 90,000 votes. The founder and General Secretary of Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), claiming to represent around eight crore small business owners in the country, secured a win by over 5.16 lakhs votes against the five time Congress MP. While in the early trends, the poll debutante seemed to trail behind the Congress' veteran, he defeated the two time MP from Chandni Chowk, taking revenge of his uncle Satish Khandelwal's defeat in 1989. Khandelwal replaced the two time MP and Union Minister Harsh Vardhan from the seat and claimed a victory for the party. The businessman collected his certificate of win at around 7 pm in the evening by the election commission. Celebrations broke out after he secured his winning certificate, with the party workers and supporters dancing and



showing flower petals on Khandelwal. His supporters rejoiced and celebrated the victory amid dhol's beating. "The people of Delhi have shown that the heart of the nation beats for PM Modi and that they do not trust Kejriwal's manipulative politics and false promises and no trust worthy Congress. All seven seats in Delhi have gone to the BJP, indicating that people have once again reposed their faith in Modi's guarantee of development," said Khandelwal. A total of 25 candidates fought from the seat known for its historic buildings and trader's markets. A total of four candidates fought independently on the seat and over 5,000 votes were cast by the voters to None of the above (NOTA) button on the polling day on May 25.

LoP Bidhuri secures win from South Delhi LS seat

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Tuesday secured a comfortable win on the South Delhi Lok Sabha seat against the joint AAP and INDIA alliance Sahiram Pahalwan with a margin of over 1.24 lakh votes. BSP's Abdul Basid received 9861 votes. Bidhuri replaced the two time MP Ramesh Bidhuri following his controversy in the Parliament with the former BSP MP Danish Ali. The BJP's Badarpur MLA has claimed the victory by securing more than 6.92 lakhs votes. On the other hand, his primary opponent managed to secure 5.68 lakhs votes. Taking to X (formerly Twitter), Bidhuri expressed his happiness with the clean sweep in Delhi for a consecutive third time and said, "Modi in the heart of Delhi. Hearty congratulations and best wishes to all the BJP candidates on their victory in all seven seats in Delhi. Special thanks to the voters of Delhi, who gave their blessings to the BJP candidates to make Narendra Modi the Prime Minister for the third time."

BJP's Tiwari secures third time win against INDIA Bloc's Kanhaiya

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

In a prestige battle for the hot seat of Northeast Delhi, the two time BJP MP Manoj Tiwari secured a third term by defeating the joint Congress and INDIA alliance candidate and former JNU student union president Kanhaiya Kumar by a margin of over one lakh votes on Tuesday. Kumar was considered an outsider in the Congress who could get support from local leaders during the campaign. The area, which boasts a considerable Muslim population, elected the bhojpuri actor and singer turned politician as its MP with more than eight lakh votes in the Lok Sabha 2024 election. Thanking all voters of his constituency for making him emerge victorious, he stated, "It is a very good feeling that the party has shown trust in us and the people of our area gave a lot of confidence, especially in the situation when I was attacked by the candidate, and AAP leader and Delhi Chief



Minister Arvind Kejriwal saying that they need to defeat Rinkiya's father, they were saying to defeat the father of a daughter. All these things are in my mind, but my character is different." The student leader turned politician is facing a successive loss in the general elections, with Kumar contesting unsuccessfully from Bihar's Begusarai, on the CPI's ticket, in 2019 against BJP's Giriraj Singh. Kumar secured about seven lakhs votes in his debut in the national capital with the

BJP poll debutant Chandolia beats opponent by three lakh votes

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

BJP poll debutante Yogendra Chandolia from the reserved seat of Northwest Delhi won with the biggest margin of about three lakhs votes on Tuesday, defeating joint Congress and INDIA alliance Udit Raj. Considered a grass root level leader, which was one of the reasons why he was given a ticket replacing acclaimed singer Hans Raj Hans, and elected as the Municipal Councillor several times, the leader secured a thumping win with over 8.65 lakhs votes. While on the other hand, Raj, the North West Delhi's former BJP MP who later joined the Congress, trailed behind by securing over 5.65 lakh votes in the elections. The BSP's candidate Vijay Baudh came third, however trailing behind with a big margin, securing over 10,000 votes. While Chandolia contested yet lost the Delhi Assembly



elections in 2015 and 2020 from the Karol Bagh constituency to the AAP's Vishesh Ravi in both the elections, he is winning the parliamentary seat with a big margin. A total of 26 candidates fought from the reserved seat with eight candidates contesting independently. During his election campaigning, Chandolia promised his voters to support the construction of a

BJP's Harshdeep Malhotra trumps INDIA Bloc candidate by 1.24 lakh votes

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

BJP candidate Harshdeep Malhotra on Tuesday secured a win on the East Delhi Lok Sabha seat against the joint AAP and INDIA alliance Kuldeep Kumar with a margin of over 1.24 lakh votes in the Lok Sabha 2024 elections. Malhotra replaced the two time MP Gautam Gambhir from the seat following the cricketer's decision to not contest the elections anymore. The BJP's former General Secretary has claimed the victory by securing

more than 6.63 lakhs votes. On the other hand, AAP's Kondli MLA managed to secure 5.70 lakh votes. The BSP candidate Mohd. Waqar Choudhary came at the third position with about 10,000 votes. About 20 candidates were in the fray to win the constituency with eight candidates contesting independently. More than 5,000 voters pressed the NOTA button. BJP supporters and workers celebrated the historic third term to the saffron party in Delhi by distributing saffron themed sweets in the Delhi party office.

INDIA Bloc makes comeback in Hindi heartland

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The INDIA alliance made a major comeback in several politically-crucial Hindi heartland states with the latest trend in counting of votes on Tuesday showing it ahead in 42 seats out of 80 in Uttar Pradesh and registering steady headway in Rajasthan, Bihar, Haryana and Jharkhand. The most unexpected performance put up by the INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance) was in politically-crucial Uttar Pradesh where Samajwadi Party was marching ahead in 35 seats and Congress in seven, according to the trends. The BJP is leading in 34 seats, its ally Rashtriya Lok Dal in two constituencies and Apna Dal (Soneylal) and Aazad Samaj Party (Kanshi Ram) in one each. The opposition bloc's performance in Uttar Pradesh is



being seen as a big surprise for the BJP that had almost swept the polls in 2014 with a stunning performance of coming out victorious in 71 seats and held its ground in 2019 by winning 62. In 2019, the Samajwadi Party won in five seats, Congress in one and Bahujan Samaj Party in 10. The Indian alliance also made

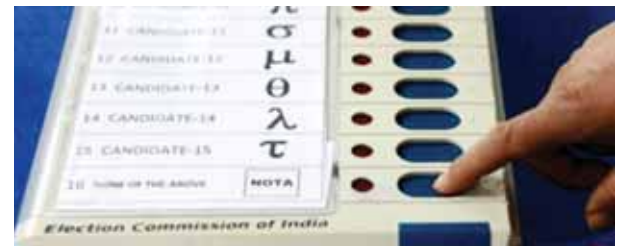
significant gains in Rajasthan, Haryana, Bihar and Jharkhand but could not spring a surprise in Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh. In Rajasthan, BJP was ahead in 14, while Congress was leading in eight while CPI(M), Rashtriya Loktantrik Party and Bharat Adivasi Party were ahead in one seat each. The BJP had won all the 25 seats in the

2019 polls. The INDIA alliance also made inroads into Bihar with Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) being ahead in four seats, Congress in two seats, CPI(M) in two seats. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is leading in 31 seats with BJP ahead in 12, JD(U) in 14 and Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) in five seats. In 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the NDA won 39 out of 40 seats in Bihar with BJP coming out victorious in 17 seats, JD(U) in 16 and Lok Janshakti Party in six. In Haryana, both Congress and BJP are ahead in five seats each, according to the latest rounds of vote count. The BJP had won all 10 seats in 2019 Lok Sabha polls. In Jharkhand too, INDIA alliance's Congress and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) are ahead in three and two seats respectively while BJP is leading in eight seats. BJP's ally AJSU Party is ahead in one seat.

The BJP won 11 seats in 2019 polls while its ally All Jharkhand Students Union came out victorious in one seat. The JMM and Congress won one seat each. The NDA continued its dominance in Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi and Chhattisgarh. The BJP is ahead in all 29 seats in Madhya Pradesh, all four seats in Himachal Pradesh, all seven in Delhi and all five in Uttarakhand. In Chhattisgarh, the BJP is leading in 10 seats while Congress is ahead in one, according to the trends. In 2019, BJP won 28 seats in Madhya Pradesh while Congress won one. In that year, the BJP had won all four seats in Himachal Pradesh, all five in Uttarakhand, all seven in Delhi and nine out of 11 seats in Chhattisgarh. Congress won two seats in Chhattisgarh in 2019. In total, the Hindi heartland states comprise 225 Lok Sabha seats.

NOTA creates record in MP's Indore seat

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI



In the midst of the electoral buzz in Madhya Pradesh's Indore, on Tuesday as Lok Sabha polls 2024 results were declared, NOTA or "None of the Above," emerged as a significant contender. It surpassed previous records set in Gopalganj, Bihar in 2019. Nearly, 2 lakh voters had opted for this unconventional choice. In 2013, the Election Commission of India had introduced NOTA option on Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) following a Supreme Court decision aiming to offer electorates a distinct avenue to express dissatisfaction with the available political choices. In Indore, which enjoys the tag of country's 'cleanest city', BJP's Shankar Lalwani secured a victory in the Indore Lok Sabha seat with 12,26,751 votes, followed by NOTA, which received 2,18,674 votes.

The constituency had registered at least 61.75% voting. However, at least 1.7 lakh voters pressed the NOTA button. According to political experts, NOTA played a key role in the constituency after the Congress party urged voters to use NOTA as a means to convey their disapproval after its candidate Akshay Kanti Bam withdrew his nomination and subsequently joined the BJP just before the polling days. Over the years, NOTA has been emerging as a potent tool for voters to assert their dissatisfaction and demand better

governance. In the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, Nilgiris in Tamil Nadu recorded 46,559 votes for NOTA, which was then around 5 per cent of the total votes polled in the constituency. After its candidate switched to the other side, the Congress has been out of the poll race in Indore for the first time in this Lok Sabha seat's 72-year history. Voting in Indore took place on May 13, with 61.75 per cent of the 25.27 lakh electors exercising their franchise, as per the Election Commission's data.

Popular celebrities win in LS polls by huge margins

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Actor Kangana Ranaut is on the way to become a parliamentarian as the BJP candidate from Himachal Pradesh's Mandi is leading by a margin of over 75,000 votes, according to Election Commission trends. Ranaut, the four-time National Award-winning actor, has been fielded against Vikramaditya Singh of the Congress. BJP's Arun Govil-- Lord Ram of the hugely popular television serial "Ramayan" -- is currently leading from the Meerut Lok Sabha seat in Uttar Pradesh, according to the latest Election Commission trends.

Govil, who was trailing earlier in the day against Samajwadi Party candidate Sunita Verma, is now ahead by more than 9,000 votes. While the actor-turned-politician has so far got 5,34,118 votes, Verma has received 5,24,608 votes. Veteran actor Hema Malini, seeking a third term in Lok Sabha from Mathura, is ahead by over 2 lakh votes. Her nearest rival is Mukesh Dhangar of the Congress. Another BJP candidate, actor Suresh Gopi from Thrissur, Kerala, is leading by over 73,000 votes. Veteran actor Shatrughan Sinha, who has been given a ticket by the Trinamool Congress, is also leading in his bid to get elected from Asansol, West Bengal.

He has a lead of over 47,000 votes over BJP's Surendrajiet Singh Ahluwalia, according to trends available on the Election Commission website. Other notable celebrity candidates in the electoral fray include BJP's Manoj Tiwari and Ravi Kishan from Northeast Delhi and Gorakhpur, respectively. Tiwari is leading by 1 lakh votes over Kanhaiya Kumar (Congress), while Kishan is ahead by over 41,000 in his constituency. Kishan is pitted against Samajwadi Party's Kajal Nishad. BJP's Locket Chatterjee is trailing in her constituency Hooghly in West Bengal with TMC's Rachna Banerjee leading from the seat by over 34,000 votes.

Four BJP leaders set record of highest victory margin

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

At least five political leaders, including four from the BJP, crushed the previous record of the highest victory margin in the Lok Sabha polls, with Indore's incumbent MP Shankar Lalwani topping the chart with a winning margin of more than 11.72 lakh votes. Home Minister Amit Shah, former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and BJP's Gujarat leader C R Patil were also leading with more than seven lakh votes each from their respective constituencies at the last count. Congress's Rakibul Hussain is also leading from Dhubri in Assam by a margin of more than 7.36 lakh votes. Before their record-crushing spree, the record for the highest winning margin was held by Pritam Munde, also from



the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), who had won a bypoll in October 2014 from Beed in Maharashtra by more than 6.96 lakh votes. Patil, a three-term MP from Navsari, held the record for the second-highest margin after he won the poll contest

by 6.89 lakh votes in 2019. He has now broken his own record and was leading by 7.67 lakh votes at 4:30 pm. Chouhan was ahead from Vidisha by more than 7.96 lakh votes. Shah was leading the poll race in Gandhinagar by a margin of more than 7.37

lakh votes while Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia was ahead from Guna in Madhya Pradesh by more than 5.4 lakh votes. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has bettered Sonia Gandhi's 2019 victory margin from the Rae Bareilly constituency in Uttar Pradesh and was leading by more than 3.88 lakh votes against his nearest rival Dinesh Pratap Singh of the BJP. Rahul Gandhi was also leading from Wayanad in Kerala by a margin of more than 3.64 lakh votes. Former Tripura chief minister Biplab Kumar Deb of the BJP was leading from Tripura West by a margin of more than six lakh votes while Kirti Dev Debbarmar of the saffron party has won the Tripura East constituency by a margin of more than 4.86 lakh votes. BJP's Hemang Joshi was also leading by more than 5.82

lakh votes from Vadodra. Congress's Amasahayam Raghuram Reddy was winning from Khammam by a margin of more than 4.59 lakh votes. BJP's Eatala Rajender was leading by 3.81 lakh votes from Malkangiri while Ajay Bhatt from the Nainital-Udhamsingh Nagar constituency was leading by a margin of more than 3.26 lakh votes. BJP's Brijmohan Agrawal was leading by a margin of more than 4.43 lakh votes from Raipur. Hema Malini of the BJP, who is seeking a hat-trick from Mathura, was leading by 2.61 lakh votes while Mahesh Sharma was leading by 5.57 lakh votes from Noida. In Haryana, Congress's Kumari Selja and Deepender Singh Hooda are ahead from Sirsa and Rohtak by 2.67 lakh votes and 3.01 lakh votes respectively.

Descendants of royal families perform fairly well in polls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Descendants of royal families, who are contesting the 2024 Lok Sabha elections on BJP tickets, have performed fairly well with a majority of them leading with a huge margin on their respective seats. Jyotiraditya Scindia, the scion of the erstwhile royal family of Gwalior who severed his 18-year-long ties with the Congress in 2020 and joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), is leading with over 5 lakh votes from the Guna parliamentary constituency in Madhya Pradesh. The Union civil aviation minister is pitted against the Congress' Rao Yadendra Singh. This is the first time in his political career that Scindia (53) is contesting as a BJP candidate from Guna, which was earlier represented by his late father Madhavrao Scindia and late grandmother Vijayaraje Scindia. The BJP is having a clean sweep in Madhya Pradesh by securing huge vote margins on all 29 seats.



Another royal candidate Dushyant Singh, Prince of Dholpur state in Rajasthan, who has been elected four times in the past, is also leading from Jhalawar-Baran with over 3.5 lakh votes against his rival Urmila Jain of the Congress. Mahima Kumari Mewar, the wife of Vishvaraj Singh Mewar who is a descendant of Maharana Pratap, is also leading from Rajsamand Lok Sabha

seat in Rajasthan with around 4 lakh votes against her nearest rival Dr Damodar Gurjar of the Congress. In Rajasthan, the BJP has won one seat and is leading on 13 out of 25 parliamentary constituencies. In the south, Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamarajwari Wadiyar, 31-year-old US-educated who was crowned as the titular head of the erstwhile Mysuru royal family in 2015 making him the 27th 'King' of

the Wadiyar dynasty, is a BJP candidate for the Mysuru Lok Sabha seat. Yaduveer is leading with over 1.3 lakh votes against Congress' candidates M Lakshmana from this seat. As per the latest trend, the BJP has won one seat and leading on 15 seats out of 28 parliamentary seats in Karnataka. The Congress is leading on 10 seats. In Odisha, while contesting as a BJP candidate, Malvika Devi, wife of former MP Arka Keshari Deo, a member of the royal family of Kalahandi district, is leading with about one lakh votes against her nearest rival Lambodar Nial of Biju Janata Dal (BJD). The BJP has put up a significant performance in Odisha as its candidates are leading on 19 out of 21 seats. Among the Northeastern states, Kriti Singh Debbarmar, a member of the Tripura's erstwhile royal family, who is a joint candidate of the regional party Tipra Motha and the BJP, is leading with over 5.5 lakh votes on Tripura East seat from her nearest rival Rajendra

Reang of the Communist Party of India (CPI). Tripura has two parliamentary constituencies and the BJP is leading on both of them. Among the losing royal challengers of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections is Vikramaditya Singh, who is contesting from the Congress from the Mandi Lok Sabha seat. Singh, the heir of the Rampur royal family and son of the late Virbhadra Singh, a six-time chief minister of Himachal Pradesh, is trailing as his rival, actress-turned-politician Kangna Ranaut of the BJP, is ahead of him with over 70,000 votes. Another royal candidate is Rajmata Amrita Roy from the Krishnanagar seat in West Bengal, who is also trailing by over 50,000 votes against Trinamool Congress' (TMC) Mahua Moitra. Roy, married to the family of Maharaja Krishnachandra Roy, is revered as the "Rani Maa" or Queen Mother by the constituency, carrying a legacy rich in tradition and aristocracy.

Registration counters for newly elected MPs operational

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Registration counters for newly-elected MPs will become operational from 2 PM on Tuesday at the Parliament House complex, the Lok Sabha Secretariat said as the counting of votes progressed. It also said the registration counters will remain operational from 10 am to 8 pm from June 5 to June 14. Seeking to reduce paper work and making formalities for members seamless, the registration process will be done through an online integrated software application. Members would not be required to sign multiple physical forms with various branches, a move that would help save a substantial amount of time. Earlier, the registration of newly-elected members used to take place in the old Parliament House building (now Samvidhan Sadan). This time, the secretariat has made such

arrangements in the Parliament House Annexe. A team has been assigned the task to keep close tab on Election Commission website on Tuesday and to enter the contact details of successful candidates in near real time. The team using a software application would be able to check whether the successful candidate is a new MP or re-elected. The same information would be shared with liaison officers. An endeavour has

been made to deploy liaison from the same region and similar language skills to facilitate members and ensure faster communication. Transit accommodation in the Western Court Annexe, or state Bhavans are being provided to newly-elected members who are not already in possession of government accommodation in the national capital till they are provided regular accommodation by the House Committee, Lok Sabha.

Next generation candidates have good outing in polls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Next generation of political families mostly had a good outing in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections with the likes of Bansuri Swaraj and Anil Antony on course to winning their respective seats while Karan Bhushan Singh has won. However, some are also trailing in their constituencies and are unlikely to emerge victorious. According to the latest data from Election Commission (EC), BJP's Karan Bhushan Singh, son of former Wrestling Federation of India chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, won having secured over 5,71,263 votes from Kaiserganj in Uttar Pradesh. Swaraj, daughter of late BJP stalwart Sushma Swaraj is leading with 4,19,071 votes from the New Delhi constituency. Shrikant Shinde, son of Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde from the Shiv Sena, is maintaining a lead from the Kalyan seat by a mar-



gin of over 2.5 lakh votes. Suspended JD(S) leader Prajwal Revanna, grandson of former prime minister H D Deve Gowda, who is accused of sexual harassment, was trailing by a margin of over 42,000 votes from the Hassan Lok Sabha seat in Karnataka. Meanwhile, Congress president M Mallikarjun Kharge's son-in-law Radhakrishna Doddamani won the Gulbarga Lok Sabha seat in Karnataka with a margin of 27,205 votes. BJP's Anil Antony, son of senior

Congress leader A K Antony, is maintaining a lead having secured over 3.67 lakh votes from Pathanamthitta Lok Sabha constituency in Kerala, according to the trends from EC website at 6 pm. Besides, Soumendro Adhikari, younger brother of BJP's Suwendu Adhikari, representing the BJP from Kanthi in West Bengal, was leading by a margin of 11,000 votes. Two of RJD supreme Lalu Prasad's daughters had contrasting fortunes, with Misa

Bharti leading from Patliputra constituency, while Rohini Acharya was trailing in Saran against Rajiv Pratap Rudy of the BJP. Son of Abu Hasem Khan Choudhury, Isha Khan Choudhury from the Congress, is currently in the lead with 5,61,330 votes from Maldaha Dakshin in West Bengal. CPI(M) candidate Saira Shah Halim is trailing from Kolkata Dakshin. Saira's physician husband Fuad Halim was fielded by the CPI(M) from the Ballygunge seat in the 2021 assembly elections. Fuad's father and Saira's father-in-law, late Hashim Abdul Halim, was the longest-serving speaker in any of the state assemblies. Congress' Isha Khan Choudhury, son of Abu Hasem Khan Choudhury, former Union minister of state for health and family welfare, is leading by a margin of 1,19,058 votes. His cousin Mausam Noor (daughter of Ghani Khan Choudhury's sister) is a member of Parliament.

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

As the world's largest democracy unfolded its fate on Tuesday, the Lok Sabha 2024 results became a virtual battleground of wit and humor on social media: From Bihar's political maneuvers to the surprising twists in Uttar Pradesh, netizens spared no one, including veteran politicians and even fictional characters, in their creative commentary. For instance, Nitish Kumar's JDU returning to the BJP-led NDA just months before the elections sparked a wave of memes. One particularly notable one featured an old banner of Nitish with the text "Nitish sabke hain (Nitish belongs to everyone)", poking fun at his political flip-flopping. Many X-users termed him as "Paltu Ram" (the political turncoat), with one user even suggesting that his allegiance shifts were a cause for concern for the BJP. Likewise, with the INDIA bloc making significant strides

LS poll results virtual battleground for memes on social media



against the NDA in Uttar Pradesh, memes highlighted key battles like Congress' Kishori Lal Sharma leading in Amethi against BJP's Smriti Irani. They also commented "UP walo ne dokha de diya" ("UP people cheated"). The BSP's exclusion from the INDIA bloc and the removal of Mayawati's nephew Akash Anand as the party's general coordinator became meme material, reflecting the internal dynamics of political parties.

Even NRIs were depicted in memes, with a humorous take on them gathering at a South Indian restaurant in the US to track election results in Andhra Pradesh, alongside the Lok Sabha vote counting. The meme frenzy didn't spare the stock market's tumble following unexpected election trends. Memes from films like "Chup Chup Ke" and "Gangs of Wasseypur" hilariously captured investors' reactions and mocked the accuracy of exit

polls. Some netizens took aim at TV news channels' coverage of exit polls too, with references to popular shows and films like "Panchayat" and "Gangs of Wasseypur", highlighting the disconnect between predictions and reality. As the initial trends belied the exit poll results, the Indian stock market tumbled, with both Sensex and Nifty taking a massive hit. People found solace in sharing memes apt for the situation. While one X user RJDixita shared two chubby panda cubs tumbling down a grassy slope with a caption that read "Nifty-Sensex today!", another posted a screengrab from Shahid Kapoor-starrer "Chup Chup Ke", with a caption "Investors seeing their portfolio today be like". Memes also reflected on the scattered mandates in states like Maharashtra, where multiple parties competed for seats, leading to humorous commentary on the political landscape.

Bloodbath on D-Street on vote counting day

Sensex suffers worst single-day retreat in four years

PTI ■ MUMBAI

In the biggest single-day fall in four years, benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty plunged by nearly 6 per cent on Tuesday as vote counting trends showed the BJP may not have a clear majority in the Lok Sabha polls.

Reversing its Monday's sharp gains of over 3 per cent, the 30-share BSE Sensex nosedived 4,389.73 points or 5.74 per cent to close at a more than two-month low of 72,079.05. In the day trade, the barometer tanked 6,234.35 points or 8.15 per cent to hit a nearly five-month low level of 70,234.43.

The NSE Nifty tumbled 1,982.45 points or 8.52 per cent to 21,281.45 during the day. Later, it ended at 21,884.50, a sharp decline of 1,379.40 points or 5.93 per cent. Sensex and Nifty had previously declined by around 13 per cent on March 23, 2020 when lockdown was imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Heavy profit booking in PSUs, public banks, power, utilities, energy, oil and gas, and capital goods shares dragged the markets into the deep negative.

"The unexpected outcome of the general election sparked a wave of fear selling in the domestic market, reversing the recent substantial rally. Despite this, the market maintains its expectation of stability within the coalition, led by BJP as the major election winner, thereby mitigating substantial downside in the medium term. "This is likely to lead to a major shift in political policy with a focus on social economics, which will have a positive effect on the rural economy," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

Vote counting trends showed that the BJP was poised to be the single largest party but could be well short of an absolute majority, leaving it dependent on its NDA partners to form government.

When the Narendra Modi government came to power on May 16, 2014, Sensex



had rallied 261.14 points or 0.90 per cent to settle at 24,121.74, and Nifty jumped 79.85 points or 1.12 per cent to 7,203. The BSE benchmark had hit the 25,000-mark in intra-day trade on that day.

On May 23, 2019, the Sensex declined 298.82 points or 0.76 per cent to settle at 38,811.39, while the Nifty ended 80.85 points or 0.69 per cent lower at 11,657.05. The BSE benchmark had hit the 40,000-mark for the first time ever, while the Nifty breached the 12,000-level on that day.

Among the 30 Sensex companies, NTPC plunged over 15 per cent, while State Bank of India tanked more than 14 per cent, Larsen & Toubro tumbled over 12 per cent and Power Grid dived more than 12 per cent. Tata Steel, IndusInd Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank, Reliance Industries and JSW Steel were the other big

partners, markets look jittery about the prospects of strong decision making.

"Markets believe that the reformist approach, which was a hallmark of the previous two terms, might take a backseat in the third term. However, our sense is that it is still early to jump to conclusions and should ideally wait for a clearer picture," said Manish Chowdhury, Head of Research, StoxBox.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge tanked 8.07 per cent and smallcap index plunged 6.79 per cent.

Among the indices, utilities dived 14.40 per cent, power tumbled 14.25 per cent, oil and gas by 13.07 per cent, services by 12.65 per cent, capital goods by 12.06 per cent, energy by 11.62 per cent and metal by 9.65 per cent. As many as 3,349 stocks declined while 488 advanced and 97 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Also, 292 stocks hit their 52-week low, while 139 reached their one-year peak.

On the NSE, 2,438 stocks declined while 242 advanced and 70 were unchanged.

The number of stocks to hit a 52-week high stood at 83 while 271 stocks fell to their 52-week low. In Asian markets, Seoul and Tokyo settled lower while Shanghai and Hong Kong ended with gains. European markets were trading lower. US markets ended on a mixed note on Monday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 1.88 per cent to USD 76.89 a barrel.

Meanwhile, the rupee declined by 37 paise to 83.51 against the US dollar on foreign fund outflows.

Markets jumped sharply on Monday after exit polls predicted a massive win for the BJP-led NDA in the Lok Sabha polls. The BSE benchmark soared by 2,507.47 points or 3.39 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 76,468.78 on Monday, marking its biggest single-day gain in three years. The NSE Nifty climbed 733.20 points or 3.25 per cent to finish at 23,263.90.

Naidu overcomes electoral defeat



PTI ■ AMARAVATI

Five years after suffering a humiliating defeat at the hands of a much younger Jagan Mohan Reddy, TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday was on course to lead his party towards a landslide victory in the Andhra Pradesh assembly polls, with allies BJP and Janasena Party (JNP) in tow.

Naidu's latest electoral triumph, where his Telugu Desam Party was ahead in 130 of the 175 seats as per latest figures, comes months after his arrest in an alleged corruption case. In the outgoing House, TDP has 23 members.

TDP put up a good show in the Lok Sabha polls as well, leading in 16 of the total 25 seats, with allies BJP and JNP ahead in three and two segments, respectively.

Born on April 20, 1950 at Naravaripalli in undivided Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh, Nara Chandrababu Naidu started his more than four-decade long political career on the student politics platform at Sri Venkateswara

University in Tirupati.

Following that solid foundation, Naidu (74) joined the Congress party and went on to become a cabinet minister.

However, he later jumped ship to the TDP founded by his late father-in-law and legendary actor N T Rama Rao.

Naidu first ascended the chief minister's chair in 1995 and went on to become a three-time CM.

His first two terms as CM came during the era of united Andhra Pradesh, beginning from 1995 and ending in 2004, nine years at a stretch while the third term came post bifurcation of the united state. Telangana was carved out of Andhra Pradesh 10 years ago. As the CM of erstwhile undivided state, he emerged as the chief architect of modern Hyderabad, playing a key role in developing the hi-tech city and turning it into a major hub.

During the late 90s, Naidu played a key role in forming the Central Government of that time and the first NDA government formed by Atal

Bihari Vajpayee was supported from outside by the TDP.

In 2014, Naidu emerged as the first chief minister of the residuary state of Andhra Pradesh and served it until 2019.

In his third-term as CM, he championed Amaravati to be the capital city of the southern state but losing power left his brainchild as an unfulfilled promise, especially after his successor and YSRCP supremo Jagan Mohan Reddy dealt a debilitating blow to Amaravati.

Moreover, Naidu's arrest in 2023 under the Skill Development Corporation Scam case by the YSRCP government was the lowest point in his career.

After a pre-dawn arrest on September 9, Naidu spent nearly two months in the Rajamahendravaram central jail.

However, an interim bail on October 31, which was made absolute on November 20 set Naidu free to prepare for the 2024 polls, enabling him to join the NDA alliance of TDP, BJP and Janasena.

The story of victorious Kiren Rijiju's tenacity and commitment

PTI ■ ITANAGAR

The political career of Kiren Rijiju, the Union minister and BJP candidate who won the Arunachal West Lok Sabha seat, is a riveting story of tenacity, commitment and leadership.

Born on November 19, 1971, in Nakhu Village of West Kameng district in Arunachal Pradesh, Rijiju has gone a long way from modest beginnings to a prominent player in Indian politics.

His career encompasses

multiple significant responsibilities that demonstrate his persistent dedication to public service, as well as the advancement of his home state and the country.

After completing his undergraduate studies at Hanraj College under Delhi University, he went on to the varsity's Faculty of Law campus to obtain his law degree (LLB). Along with developing his academic abilities, his time in school helped him develop his physical abilities, and he still enjoys playing football and



badminton in particular. Rijiju first entered politics in 2004 and won a seat in the 14th Lok Sabha, representing the Arunachal West constituency. During his term, he showed a strong attention to the interests of his citizens and a

commitment to enhancing government and infrastructure.

His perseverance was evident when he joined the Congress and acted as an advisor to former chief minister Dorjee Khandu, despite a setback in the 2009 Lok Sabha elections.

With his comeback to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Rijiju's career entered a new phase. Re-elected to the Lok Sabha in 2014, he profited from the strategic northeast focus of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and emerged

as a key player in the 'Look East' policy. His role as an important representative for Arunachal Pradesh was further cemented by his re-election in 2019. Rijiju has held a number of important government roles during his career. In his capacity as the state minister for Home Affairs

from 2014 to 2019, he played a pivotal role in tackling domestic security issues and advocating for development projects in the northeast.

His subsequent appointments to the positions of Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Youth Affairs and Sports, and Minister of State (Minority

Affairs) had shown his adaptability and dedication to a variety of responsibilities.

During his stint as Law Minister (2021-2023), Rijiju was well-known for his candid opinions about the judiciary and the collegium system, which generated a great deal of discussion and controversy.



Om Birla becomes first LS speaker in 20 years to be re-elected as MP

SDF supremo Pawan congratulates Tamang for SKM landslide win

PTI ■ GANGTOK

Finally breaking his silence, the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) president Pawan Kumar Chamling on Tuesday congratulated the Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang for leading the SKM to landslide victory in the assembly elections by winning 31 out of 32 seats.

In the recently concluded elections held in Sikkim, the people have given their mandate in favour of the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) led by Chief Minister Tamang, he said in a statement.

The SKM returned to power in the Himalayan state for the second consecutive term.

"I, on behalf of the SDF, would like to extend our congratulations to the SKM for their success and look forward to the fulfilment of the assurances by the government in the interest of the Sikkimese people and for the overall development of the state," Chamling said.

The opposition party chief who was the chief minister of Sikkim for 25 years, till 2019,

did not react on the results for two days. Votes for the state assembly elections were counted on Sunday.

"Simultaneously, I extend my gratitude to the Election Commission of India, the chief electoral officer and his officials and all law enforcing agencies in Sikkim for the successful conduct of the assembly and parliamentary polls simultaneously.

The five-term former chief minister also expressed gratitude towards the people of Sikkim for participating in the democratic process to elect their government.

The SDF received its worst drubbing in 30 years winning just one assembly seat under Chamling's leadership with the former chief minister himself losing from both Namcheyung and Poklok-Kamrang constituencies.

It will be the first time in 40 years that the 73-year-old SDF stalwart and eight-term MLA will not be setting foot in the Sikkim legislative assembly precincts when the 11th assembly convenes in due course.



Mumbai North Central constituency to Congress leader Eknath Gaikwad.

In 2004, CPI(M) member Somnath Chatterjee, who won the Bolpur seat, was elected as the Lok Sabha Speaker. However, Chatterjee retired from politics before the 2009 Lok Sabha polls following differences with his party.

In 2009, Congress member Meira Kumar won the Sasaram parliamentary seat in Bihar and was elected as the speaker of the 15th Lok Sabha. However, Kumar lost the elections in 2014 and 2019.

In 2014, BJP member from Indore Sumitra Mahajan was elected as the Lok Sabha speaker. Mahajan was not fielded by the BJP in the 2019 Lok Sabha election.

In 2019, BJP's Birla, the Lok Sabha member from Kota, was elected as the speaker.

In 2024, Birla defeated Congress's Prahlad Gunjal to retain the Kota parliamentary seat.

RAILWAY ELECTRIFICATION WORK

E-tender Notice No. TRD-LMG-07 of 2024-25 dated: 31-05-2024. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: **Tender No. EL-TRD-LMG-OHE-MOD-19R. Name of Work:** Railway Electrification work for design, supply, erection, testing and commissioning of 25kV, 50 Hz, single phase electrification works (OHE, TSS, SCADA and Electric General works) in Electric Loco Trip shed, Guwahati. (0.00RKM/3.00 TKM).

Tender value: ₹3,24,36,121.47/- Earnest Money: ₹3,12,200/- Date & time of closing of tender: 15.00 hrs. on 24-06-2024. For details please visit www.irebs.gov.in

Sr. DEE/TRD&GS/Lumding

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CHANGE OF NAME

I, Rajesh Kumar yadav S/O Suresh yadav R/O H.No. Flat no 118, 1st floor, Pocket 6-1, Sector-2, Rohini, Delhi-110085, have changed the name of my minor daughter TANYA YADAV aged 13 years and she shall hereafter be known as RADHIKA YADAV, and my permanent address is Village kehunia, post pakri babu, distt. Deoria, Uttar Pradesh-274702.

PD(497)C

I, Virender Shah S/O, Ramsewak Shah R/O, 9/4951, Gali No. 6, Kaushik Puri, Gandhi Nagar, Delhi 110031 Have Changed The Name Of My Minor Son Chandan Aged 15 Years And He Shall Hereafter Be Known As Chandan Shah.

PD(498)C

PUBLIC NOTICE

My client Sh. Mahender Singh S/O Late Sh. Hari Singh the owner property bearing no- 177F-2/2, ward no. 2, area measuring 450 sq. yards, in kharsa no. 1151/3 min. (old no. 1668), situated in abadi of Lal Dora of village Mehrauli, Tehsil Hazrat Nizamuddin, New Delhi, through registered relinquishment deed dated 29/04/2024 executed by Smt. Darshina W/o Late Sh. Ran Singh & Sh. Satish Kumar S/O Late Sh. Ran Singh in favour of Sh. Mahender Singh S/O Late Sh. Hari Singh vide reg. no. 2024/77/3973 at SH-54 Delhi the above-mentioned property is going to be mortgage with Fed bank financial services limited. If any person/bank/financial institution having any claim/right/lien, any objection whatsoever in regard to the above property, should notify to the undersigned/adv. Vishal Mehan, E-713, Karakoram Court, Delhi-110092 along with documentary evidence under address through registered within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice failing which any claim, lien or objection shall be deemed to have been waived. Adv. Vishal Mehan, E-713, Karakoram Court, Delhi-110092; Mobile No. 9811215181

PUBLIC NOTICE

Mamta Batra W/o Sh. Chander Mohan Batra is the owner of Kharsa No. 060, New No. W-12-B/37, Sanki Farms, Neth Sarai, New Delhi-110068 measuring 650 sq. yards is the owner of the above mentioned property/plot. Any person or persons having any rights title or interest by way of inheritance or claim against the said plot should send their claims in writing to the undersigned alongwith the documentary evidence in support of the said claim, therefore within 15 days of publication on the said notice, failing which claims if any shall be deemed to have been waived.

Mamta Batra (981183287)

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known to all that I, Kamlesh Kumar Sinha S/O Late Sharda Nand Sinha R/O- Flat No. 146, Pocket-7, Sector-2, Rohini, Delhi-110085, am the legal owner of Flat No. 146, Pocket-7, Sector-2, Rohini, Delhi-110085. FILE NO.15 (297)/89/LIG/NP. ORIGINAL POSSESSION LETTER- NDC FOR WATER & ELECTRICITY CONNECTION & SITE POSSESSION SLIP of the above Flat has been lost. An FIR/NCR to this effect has been lodged in P.S. Crime Branch, Delhi vide LR No. 2787/132/2024, Dated 03-06-2024. Any person(s) claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above address/phone No. 9973582022 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. Any person claiming any right, interest, or having any objections with respect to this property can also personally inform/contact me.

PUBLIC NOTICE

To be known to all that I, SOM NATH DANG S/O LATE NHA CHAND DANG R/O 66, Antarksha Co-operative Group Housing Society Ltd. (known as Antarksha Apartments), Plot No. 21, Block-H3, Vikasपुरी, New Delhi-110018, allottee of flat No. 66, Antarksha Co-operative Group Housing Society Ltd. (known as Antarksha Apartments), Plot No. 21, Block-H3, Vikasपुरी, New Delhi-110018, have applied for conversion of the said flat from leasehold to freehold in my favour, vide application dated 15/02/2024. In DDA, the original Allotment Letter issued by The Antarksha CGHS Ltd. in respect of the above said flat has been misplaced/lost. An FIR to this effect has been lodged in the Police Station Crime Branch, New Delhi vide LR No. 1449327/2024 dated 15/02/2024.

Any person(s) claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of the above said original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above address/phone No. 9873400745 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objections with respect to this property can personally inform or write to the Dy. Director, (GH) or Director (RL), Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi

Som Nath Dang.

PUBLIC NOTICE

GENERAL PUBLIC IS HEREBY INFORMED THAT MY CLIENTS SH. JATENDER KUMAR AGGARWAL S/O LATE SH. ROSHAN LAL AGGARWAL & SMT. ARUNA AGGARWAL W/O SH. JATENDER KUMAR AGGARWAL BOTH R/O 153A, POCCKET-C, SIDHARTHIA EXTENSION NEW DELHI-110014, DO HEREBY DISOWN/DEBAR THEIR SON RAJIV KUMAR AGGARWAL FROM ALL THEIR MOVABLE AND IMMMOVABLE PROPERTIES AND HAVE SEVERED THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM AS HE IS NOT IN CONTROL OF OUR CLIENTS AND ANY BODY DEALING WITH HIM WILL DO AT THEIR OWN COST AND RISK. OUR CLIENTS SHALL NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY OF HIS ACT(S).

AMITESH GIROTI (Advocate) Dh. No. 426, Block 'S' Delhi High Court, New Delhi-110003

PUBLIC NOTICE

GENERAL PUBLIC IS HEREBY INFORMED THAT MY CLIENTS SH. JATENDER KUMAR AGGARWAL S/O LATE SH. ROSHAN LAL AGGARWAL & SMT. ARUNA AGGARWAL W/O SH. JATENDER KUMAR AGGARWAL BOTH R/O 153A, POCCKET-C, SIDHARTHIA EXTENSION NEW DELHI-110014, DO HEREBY DISOWN/DEBAR THEIR SON ASHMIT KUMAR AGGARWAL FROM ALL THEIR MOVABLE AND IMMMOVABLE PROPERTIES AND HAVE SEVERED THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM AS HE IS NOT IN CONTROL OF OUR CLIENTS AND ANY BODY DEALING WITH HIM WILL DO AT THEIR OWN COST AND RISK. OUR CLIENTS SHALL NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY OF HIS ACT(S).

AMITESH GIROTI (Advocate) Dh. No. 426, Block 'S' Delhi High Court, New Delhi-110003

PUBLIC NOTICE

To be known to all that I, RAVI SUMBALY S/O S.H. B.N. SUMBALY R/O 119, Antarksha Co-operative Group Housing Society Ltd. (known as Antarksha Apartments), Plot No. 21, Block-H3 Vikasपुरी, New Delhi-110018, allottee of flat No. 119, Antarksha Co-operative Group Housing Society Ltd. (known as Antarksha Apartments), Plot No. 21, Block-H3, Vikasपुरी, New Delhi-110018, have applied for conversion of the said flat from leasehold to freehold in my favour vide application dated 13/05/2014 in DDA. The original share certificate issued by The Antarksha CGHS Ltd. in my name has been misplaced/lost. An FIR to this effect has been lodged in the Police Station Crime Branch, New Delhi vide LR No. 1721522/2024 dated 13/05/2024.

Any person(s) claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of the above said original document, may write/contact with above named person at above address/phone No. 9350019410 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objections with respect to this property can personally inform or write to the Dy. Director, (GH) or Director (RL), Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi

Ravi Sumbaly.

PUBLIC NOTICE

To be known to all that We, HARSH GUPTA S/O SH. R. A. GUPTA AND PARUL GUPTA W/O SH. HARSH GUPTA both R/O 147, Antarksha Co-operative Group Housing Society Ltd. (known as Antarksha Apartments), Plot No. 21, Block-H3, Vikasपुरी, New Delhi-110018, have applied for conversion of the said flat from leasehold to freehold in our favour, vide application No. LB3/596/GH/CON dated 17/01/2024, in DDA. The original Allotment and Possession Letter issued by Antarksha CGHS Ltd. in respect of the above said flat has been misplaced/lost. An FIR to this effect has been lodged in the Police Station Crime Branch, New Delhi vide LR No. 1345353/2024 dated 15/01/2024. Any person(s) claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of the above said original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above address/phone No. 9654299915 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objections with respect to this property can personally inform or write to the Dy. Director, (GH) or Director (RL), Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi.

Harsh Gupta & Parul Gupta.

PUBLIC NOTICE

To be known to all that We, VIJAY BHATIA S/O SH. DALIP CHAND BHATIA AND SMT. SUNITA BHATIA W/O SH. VIJAY BHATIA, both R/O 123-B, DDA LIC Flat, First floor, Rajouri Garden, New Delhi, purchasers of flat No. 123-B, category DDA Built-up LIC Flat, situated on the First floor in Rajouri Garden, New Delhi, have applied for conversion of the aforesaid flat from leasehold to freehold vide application No. DDHCA/09559899 dated 13/02/2024 in DDA. Site possession Slip of the above flat has been lost. An FIR to this effect has been lodged in the Police Station Crime Branch, New Delhi, vide LR No. 1717935/2002 dated 09/05/2024.

Any person(s) claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of the aforesaid original Possession Slip, may write/contact with above named person at above address/phone No. 9625513190 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objections with respect to this property can personally inform or write to the Dy. Director, (L&H) or Director(I), D-Block, 3rd Floor, Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi.

(Vijay Bhatia & Sunita Bhatia)

PUBLIC NOTICE

To be known to all that I, RAVI SUMBALY S/O S.H. B.N. SUMBALY R/O 119, Antarksha Co-operative Group Housing Society Ltd. (known as Antarksha Apartments), Plot No. 21, Block-H3 Vikasपुरी, New Delhi-110018, allottee of flat No. 119, Antarksha Co-operative Group Housing Society Ltd. (known as Antarksha Apartments), Plot No. 21, Block-H3, Vikasपुरी, New Delhi-110018, have applied for conversion of the said flat from leasehold to freehold in my favour vide application dated 13/05/2014 in DDA. The original share certificate issued by The Antarksha CGHS Ltd. in my name has been misplaced/lost. An FIR to this effect has been lodged in the Police Station Crime Branch, New Delhi vide LR No. 1721522/2024 dated 13/05/2024.

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Ravi Sumbaly.

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Harsh Gupta & Parul Gupta.

PUBLIC NOTICE

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(Vijay Bhatia & Sunita Bhatia)



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Nation wins

A smooth power transition demonstrates the strength of democratic values in the country, and people's will

The Lok Sabha elections 2024 have concluded, and all eyes are now on the formation of a new Government. It is often said that India is the world's largest democracy, and it is not a cliché. With a population exceeding 1.4 billion and an electorate of over 900 million, the nation's democratic processes are a colossal undertaking. But more significant are the democratic ideals that provide a rock-solid foundation for democracy. For over 75 years, we have not had a single instance when the transition of power was not smooth or when the parties fought after the announcement of results. Despite the immense diversity and complexity involved, India's democracy thrives, exemplifying how smooth elections facilitate the change of Government, ensuring that people's will prevails. It is made possible by several institutions and frameworks that provide India with a robust democratic setup. The Election Commission of India (ECI), for instance, plays a pivotal role in ensuring free and fair elections. Through meticulous

planning and the deployment of technology, the poll panel ensures transparency and efficiency, minimising electoral fraud and ensuring compliance with the model code of conduct. Though it is not above controversy by and large it does a decent job election after election.

Though the voter turnout this time was marginally lower than in the previous elections, the general level of voters' participation is high. Citizens from diverse backgrounds, including urban centres and remote villages, exercise their franchise with enthusiasm. This mass participation underscores the faith of Indian populace in the democratic process and their belief in the power



of their vote to effect change. However, the biggest credit for the wellbeing of democracy in India must go to the political parties. Despite ideological differences, they have generally displayed a commendable level of maturity in accepting poll results. This acceptance is crucial for maintaining political stability and public trust. The peaceful transition of power, whether from one party to another or within a coalition, highlights the commitment of political institutions in upholding democratic values. If one institution stands out as the vanguard of the Constitution without bowing to the powers that be, it would be the Supreme Court of India. The Indian judiciary acts as a guardian of the Constitution, ensuring that electoral laws are adhered to and disputes resolved impartially. Landmark judgments and interventions by the Supreme Court have often strengthened electoral integrity and reinforced democratic norms. While India's democratic machinery functions effectively, it is not without challenges. Issues such as electoral violence, money power and misinformation campaigns occasionally taint the electoral process. India's democracy flourishes due to the strength of its institutions, the active participation of its citizens and the maturity of its political parties. It is both fragile and resilient, and its survival depends on our collective consciousness.

PICTALK



A man protects himself and his son from scorching heat at the Taj Mahal in Agra

Modi's grand claims fall short

Despite Modi's bold predictions of a sweeping majority, the results reveal a different story. The BJP is poised to form the Government with a simple majority along with its NDA allies



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

Even as I write this column, TV news channels are airing the news that the BJP led by Narendra Modi has crossed the halfway mark of the 543 seats in the Lok Sabha but is fighting a see-saw battle with the rejuvenated Congress to establish a safe lead. Narendra Modi is likely to form a government with a simple majority with the support of BJP's other allies in the NDA. But the result indicates that Modi's claim of 400+ seats for the NDA and 370+ for the BJP has come a cropper. What has happened in the 2024 Lok Sabha election is a political tsunami. The BJP which had hoped to make a clean sweep in Uttar Pradesh fell by the wayside. The Hindutva party's dream of winning Maharashtra too failed. These are signalling the harsh reality that the electorate in Maharashtra and UP were taken aback by the BJP's decision to align with the breakaway faction of the NCP and the RLD led by Jayanath Choudhry. The BJP forgot history and how Choudhry Charan Singh topped the Morarji Desai-led Janata Party Government in his bid to become the Prime Minister. Ajit Singh, Choudhry Saheb's son too stabbed V P Singh, Chandrasekhar and A B Vajpayee from the back.

What made the BJP align with RLD at this juncture remains a mystery. Equally strange is the BJP's decision to bring on board Ajit Pawar and Praful Patel, which the former had described as embodiments of corruption. The eagerness of a leader from Maharashtra to occupy the Prime Minister's chair is being seen as a faux pas by the BJP. The same leader had shocked the nation immediately after the last assembly election by swearing in as chief minister Ajit Pawar, only to submit his resignation in an ignominious manner.

Usually, politicians learn from past failures and correct themselves so that they do not fall into the same abyss again. What has happened is that the Prime Minister has lost whatever goodwill he had enjoyed with the electorate. Ram Temple alone would not satisfy the mind of the people. The voters had set a bench-



mark for Narendra Modi and it is his hitherto appreciated integrity, honesty and patriotism. The moment political turncoats like Satyapal Mallik were accommodated in the BJP and were offered important positions like the governorship of Kashmir, the BJP's fortunes took a beating for the worse.

Similarly, the alliance with the family-controlled JD(S) in Karnataka boomeranged on the BJP. Immediately after his election as the leader of the NDA following the 2014 impressive win, Modi had assured the constituents of his front that he would approach them with a progress card at the end of the five-year tenure. He was given all A+ by the electorate and also elevated the BJP with an absolute majority in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, a rare feat in the last 35 years of India's electoral history. No party has got an absolute majority of its own since the 1984 election in which Rajiv Gandhi-led Congress scored more than 400 seats on its own. The 2019-2024 tenure of Modi as Prime Minister outperformed its track record by beating the COVID-19 pandemic and a synchronized attack by the Opposition parties and the



THE PRIME MINISTER SAID IN HIS MEDIA INTERACTIONS THAT SIX CRORE PERSONS FOUND EMPLOYMENT IN THE ORGANISED SECTOR WHICH THE OPPOSITION BELITTLED AS 'JUMLA'

media. "A corruption free government" was what Modi gave the country during his two tenures. But the clueless manner in which they forged alliances with every Tom, Dick and Harry who sang paeans to Modi did the job that the Congress and other Opposition parties could not do for the last decade. Nobody would deny the fact that Modi delivered what he had promised. More than 11 crore toilets and nearly five crore robust houses for the poor coming under the benchmark of BPL, the Ayushman Bharat medical aid which has more than 50 crore beneficiaries, the Mudra Loan scheme for artisans and small and medium entrepreneurs had a direct bearing on common man's life.

The Prime Minister said in his media interactions that six crore persons found employment in the organized sector which the Opposition belittled as "jumla". But they did not have any response when he pointed out that the Employees Provident Fund saw an increase of 400 per cent which means that he was not on his version. The US economy which had been ruined because of the Great Depression (1929-1941) and

the Second World War (1939-1945) got a new lease of life during the tenure of David Dwight Eisenhower as President (1953-1961). President Eisenhower ordered the construction of the Interstate Highway System, which remains to date the largest construction of roadways. Giant transport aircraft could be landed and taken off from these highways. This is what Modi was doing in India. But one man's greed for power has cost the BJP a comfortable majority. The only lesson the Opposition should learn from this exercise is that the "Janata Janardhan" would love the leader who treats them as equals and not as alms seekers. Yet another lesson for the Opposition is that it is time for them to come out of the demolition and destroy Modi at any cost. A request to the winners and losers would not be out of place at this juncture. "In War: Resolution. In Defeat: Defiance. In Victory: Magnanimity. In Peace: Goodwill". These are the words of the person who covered the First World War for The Pioneer, Sir Winston Churchill.

(The writer is a special correspondent with The Pioneer; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RESPITE AFTER THE DUST STORM

Madam — Regarding the news story "Muggy, parched, blacked-out Mungeshpur dances in the rain," published on June 3, here are my thoughts. As a regular reader of the newspaper, it's heart-breaking to read about the struggles faced by the residents of northwest Delhi's Mungeshpur. The recent dust storm, followed by a brief rainfall, offered a fleeting respite from the oppressive heat, which soared above 50 degrees Celsius. The severe water scarcity and prolonged power cuts exacerbated the residents' plight. It's shocking to learn that some people don't even have a fan to combat the scorching heat and the water supply is limited to just 10 minutes a day.

Despite the hardships, the resilience of the community is admirable. Children eagerly playing in the rain and families sitting on pavements to catch the cool breeze reflect a spirit that refuses to be dampened by adversity. The poignant accounts of individuals like Santoshi Devi and the father-son duo highlight the harsh realities they endure daily. It's a stark reminder of the urgent need for better infrastructure and support for these vulnerable communities.

Pritam Sharma | Lucknow

DMRC KEEPS COMMUTERS COOL

Madam — Apropos the news story "DMRC ensures cool commutes at 24 deg C; daily ridership hits 60.17 lakh in May," published on June 3, this is my response. The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has taken commendable steps to enhance commuter comfort amidst soaring summer temperatures. By maintaining trains at a cool 24 degrees Celsius and boosting ridership to a record 60.17 lakh in May, the DMRC has effectively transformed the travel experience. With over 4,200 daily train trips covering 1.40 lakh kilometres, the metro provides a refreshing reprieve from the heat.

Additionally, the DMRC has demonstrated a strong commitment to its workforce's well-being. Breaks during peak heat

Connecting with the soul of Bharat



Regarding the news story "New Sankalp from the Sadhana in Kanyakumari," published on June 3, here are my thoughts. As a daily newspaper reader, the conclusion of the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections feels like the climax of an epic saga. The journey described—from Kanyakumari to Delhi, with stops in historical and spiritual hubs like

Meerut and Kashi—reflects the vibrant tapestry of our nation. The mixture of spirituality, political fervour and personal reflection resonates deeply, highlighting the unique emotional and cultural depth of our democratic process.

Witnessing the sheer energy, the "blessings from our Nari Shakti," and the profound meditative state amidst the political storm paints a vivid picture of the election's significance. It's not just about the votes; it's about connecting with the soul of Bharat, a blend of ancient wisdom and modern aspirations. The vision of a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047 is ambitious, but the collective enthusiasm and the historical context provide a compelling framework for this journey. This election has been more than a political exercise; it has been a reaffirmation of our shared dreams and values.

Neha Gupta | Delhi

hours and provisions for water and medical facilities are vital measures. Their comprehensive maintenance strategy for AC units and the advanced monitoring systems for station temperatures highlight their dedication to ensuring optimal performance and safety. By prioritising passenger comfort and employee welfare, the DMRC sets a high standard for urban transit systems. Regular infrastructure inspections and robust fire safety mechanisms further underscore their proactive approach to managing the challenges of extreme weather conditions.

Kajal Arora | Ujjain

PROTECTING YOUTH FROM TOBACCO

Madam — Apropos the article, "Tobacco addiction grows steadily among the youth," published on June 3, this is my response. The World No Tobacco Day, observed on May 31, emphasises the need for governments and tobacco companies worldwide to take strong actions to reduce tobacco use and promote a smoke-free lifestyle. For long, tobacco has been one of the leading causes of death worldwide. As for India,

there has been a consistent demand from sections of society for a higher tax burden on tobacco manufacturers since a lot of revenue is generated from the sale of tobacco products.

Increasing excise duty on all tobacco products can be an effective policy measure, which will not only help the central government generate more revenue but at the same time enable curbing tobacco use to a large extent. Reports reveal that tobacco use claims the lives of 13 lakh Indians every year. Therefore, it is more critical than ever before to keep tobacco products out of the reach of our youth. Maybe catchy slogans like "Quitters always win, winners always quit" and "desist from running the white train in your lips" can help in the fight against cigarette smoking. Cigarette smoking, no doubt, is a clear social menace and if smokers are unconcerned about their health, let them at least not harm the health of non-smokers.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Bengaluru becomes 'Garden City' again

Amidst rapid urbanisation and environmental challenges, the city is embracing green initiatives such as rooftop gardens and vertical farming

Bangalore, India, is rapidly developing its infrastructure with a focus on sustainability, innovation and environmentally friendly initiatives. As the city grows, it faces challenges such as urbanisation and environmental issues. To combat these problems, businesses are promoting initiatives like rooftop gardens and vertical farms. Once known as the Garden City of India, Bangalore is now reclaiming its legacy by promoting sustainable living practices and incorporating green spaces into its urban landscape.



city are now promoting rooftop gardening, turning barren rooftops into lush green havens. This initiative not only contributes to biodiversity but also serves as a recreational space for residents.

Vertical farming is another concept that fosters sustainability in Bangalore's urban spaces. This innovative practice involves growing crops in vertically stacked layers that maximise space utilisation and minimise water consumption. By bringing food production closer to urban centres, vertical farms help reduce carbon emissions and offer several benefits over conventional farming practices, such as higher crop yields, reduced water usage and year-round production.

Community gardens have also emerged as a vital initiative to bring communities together and grow their food. These gardens contribute to food security, promote healthy eating habits and strengthen social ties among residents. Additionally, they serve as an educational platform for sustainable agriculture practices and provide opportunities for residents to reconnect with nature.

The government has constructed several laws and initiatives to support sustainable initiatives. The city has accepted green building certifications like LEED and GRIHA to combat environmental issues and ensure eco-friendly development that abides by environmental concerns while effectively meeting the

needs of investors. These initiatives improve locals' quality of life and aid in ecological preservation. The government has also released a toolkit and manual for the green index that will evaluate, analyse and rank environmental conservation initiatives of various infrastructure projects and programmes.

By rewarding rooftop garden development, supporting vertical farming efforts and allowing the formation of community gardens, the government is paving the way for a greener, more sustainable Bangalore. Collaboration among government agencies and the commercial and public sectors is essential for overcoming obstacles such as lack of knowledge, land availability and regulatory barriers. As Bangalore embraces sustainability and environmental management, the city is sowing the seeds for a greener, more liveable future.

(The writer is Co-Chair of CII NR Real Estate & CEO-Residential, Bhartiya Urban; views are personal)



ASHWINDER R SINGH



FIRST COLUMN

GOOD LEADERSHIP PREVENTS BURNOUTS

Leadership stems from actions and integrity, not mere titles



SAKSHI SETHI

A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions and the compassion to listen to the needs of others. He does not set out to be a leader but becomes one by the equality of his actions and the integrity of his intent. “?

Leadership is a key controllable factor that humans can learn and implement in their organizations. It is something that is not defined by position and has a large impact on the productivity of an organization. A leader in an organization must balance various roles, from visionary to manager, mentor and even change agent as people in general are diverse and have distinct components that make them unique and set them apart from the next person. The ability to wear these multiple hats distinguishes great leaders from merely competent ones the ones possessing the necessary skills and knowledge.

‘Organizational leadership’ the term often talked about is a multifaceted and dynamic endeavour that requires a blend of vision, integrity, empathy, decisiveness, resilience, effective communication, accountability and adaptability. The impact of strong leadership extends beyond the confines of management, influencing the very fabric of the organization. Leadership is a strength that inspires and guides the cooperation and attitudes of others on the way to set vision. Effective leaders understand that a well-defined vision aligns teams, fosters a sense of belonging and motivates individuals to contribute their best. They are aware that they must take into consideration the responsibilities of all the decisions they believe are necessary to provide strong bonds and foster competent collaboration between members of their organization. They influence the



followers in such a way that they put more effort into the accomplishment of organizational goals and objectives.

At its core, organizational leadership is about steering the organization towards its vision while managing its resources effectively. It encompasses the ability to make strategic decisions, motivate its employees and create an environment conducive to growth and development.

Burnout, which is often characterized by chronic stress, exhaustion and a sense of ineffectiveness, is a pervasive problem that can significantly impact both individuals and organizations. Effective leadership can be a key factor in preventing burnout and promoting a healthy, productive workplace for it influences every aspect of the organization, from employee morale and productivity to innovation and financial performance. A leader in an organization should embody various qualities and exhibit behaviours that inspire, motivate and guide their team towards achieving common goals.

By embodying attributes such as cultivating a positive and inclusive work culture where everyone feels valued and respected; delegating tasks and trusting team members with responsibilities; establishing and communicating clear, achievable goals; inspiring and motivating the team by setting a positive example, providing encouragement and recognizing achievements can a leader effectively guide their organization towards success and foster a supportive, productive and positive work environment.

There is no denying the fact that organizational leadership has a profound impact on workplace burnout but, leaders who prioritize employee well-being, foster a supportive work environment and implement strategies to manage stress can significantly reduce the incidence of burnout. By understanding the factors that contribute to burnout and adopting a proactive, empathetic approach, leaders can enhance employee satisfaction, productivity and overall organizational health. The relationship between leadership and burnout is complex, but with the right practices and mindset, leaders can steer their organizations towards a healthier and more sustainable future.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

BJP moves mountains to win Mandi seat



K S TOMAR

The BJP is determined to regain the prestigious Mandi seat in Himachal Pradesh. The contest has become a battle royal between former royalty and a film star



Sunny Deol could not uproot any ‘hand-pumps’ in the domain of politics but it could not desist the ‘Jhansi Ki Rani’ Kangana Ranaut to jump into the electoral fray from her hometown Mandi, in Himachal Pradesh. It is a prestigious seat for the BJP high command which gave a ticket to a ‘parachute’ by ignoring the genuine claim of the senior leaders hence Prime Minister, Narendra Modi addressed a huge rally at Mandi town on May 24. PM established a new relationship with being elder brother of Kangna which may benefit her as it sends a signal of her closeness to Modi. She is a die-hard devotee (Bhakt) of Modi and felt extremely elevated when the PM described her as Behan (sister) which may send a clear signal of her closeness and create positive vibes amongst the electorate.

Many of the box-office hits have bombed in the political arena of north India except the ‘dream girl’ Hema Malini, who is still going strong as a ‘jat bahu’ from Mathura in western Uttar Pradesh and late Vinod Khanna, who seamlessly turned into astute politicians after being a ‘heartthrob’ in the 1980s. Northern political winds in India blow in different patterns and that is why superstars like Amitabh Bachchan could not handle the gruel of politics while his ‘sharabi’ heroine Jaya Prada needed the umbrella of a mentor like Amar Singh always by her side, till he breathed last.

Back to a ‘novice politician’ Kangana. She is being haunted during the election campaign owing to two pejorative issues. First, Kangana’s absence during the catastrophe in July/August last year has become handy for Congress which is exploiting it to the hilt. All 17 assembly segments of the Mandi Lok Sabha seat were hit due



DESPITE THE ODDS, KANGANA IS FULLY PINNING HER HOPE ON THE HIGH POPULARITY AND CHARISMA OF PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI. BJP HAD WON ALL FOUR LOK SABHA SEATS IN HIMACHAL IN 2019 AND POLLED OVER 69.11 PER CENT VOTES

to natural disaster but she remained confined to her abode in Mumbai. The political opponents are accusing her of being an absentee resident of Mandi and affected people will have to hanker in the business capital, Mumbai for the redressal of grievances if she wins.

The second, the Bollywood actress took to Twitter and shared a video of the Dalai Lama with his tongue out, standing next to US President, Joe Biden and the caption read “The Dalai Lama receives a warm welcome at White House” She had to apologise later and clarified that she did not mean to hurt feelings of anyone. But followers of the spiritual leader have not pardoned her hence Buddhists recently organised a demonstration at Kaza, a part of Lahaul Spiti which falls in the Mandi constituency and showed black flags and placards “Go Back” which was condemned by BJP state leaders. The parliamentary election of the Mandi constituency has become a lively affair this time as film star Kangana is pitted against Public Works Minister, Vikramaditya Singh, the son of six-time chief minister, late Virbhadra Singh. Kangana is a native of a small village in the Mandi district and her phenomenal rise as a little girl from the non-descriptive village of Bhambala in the Mandi district in Himachal Pradesh, can be attributed to her sheer determination, commitment and willpower. She is trying to create an emotional connection with voters thereby cit-

ing her struggle and subsequent achievements in the film world. The crowds are thronging to her rallies but it is extremely difficult to predict whether she will be benefited when they go to polling booths on June 1.

Despite the odds, Kangana is fully pinning her hope on the high popularity and ‘charisma’ of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. BJP had won all four Lok Sabha seats in Himachal in 2019 and polled over 69.11 per cent votes. BJP nominee established lead in all 17 segments of the Mandi constituency hence it is a big challenge to retain it, especially in the face of local issues of unemployment, price rise, state’s economic crisis etc.

BJP’s vote share had dwindled during state assembly elections in 2022 which came down to 43 per cent, a drop of 16.11% when compared with previous parliamentary polls. Touring all the seventeen assembly segments in the Mandi parliamentary constituency has posed a huge challenge for Kangana as she is unaware of the topography, especially the far-flung tribal areas of Bharmour, Lahaul & Spiti and Kinnaur. Experts say that the film actor is facing a horde of challenges in her current role which cannot be synonymous with fairy tales or films. On a mandatory basis, the voters would expect her to be a full-time politician and make Mandi parliamentary constituency; she is promising to make Mandi her permanent abode for an easy

approach to getting their work done. Kangana also has the luxury of the support of disciplined BJP party cadres, vast resources and the well-oiled machinery of RSS in her groundwork.

Congress nominee, Vikramaditya enjoys the inherent advantages of having acquaintances with the voters which have become meaningful as his family has represented Mandi seat six times and his mother Pratibha Singh, the state party chief is sitting MP. Vikramaditya is focussing on local issues including the centre’s failure to announce a special package to help victims of last year’s catastrophe and the inaccessibility of Kangana.

In the final assessment, Hindutva rhetoric may have an impact though the rival candidate has strong Hindu credentials, He had attended the Ram Temple Pratishthan ceremony despite the Congress high command’s directive to keep away. Modi’s personal appeal and governance record could disrupt conventional political dynamics.

Ultimately, Kangana’s success hinges on her ability to navigate these challenges while leveraging BJP’s organizational strength and Modi’s popularity coupled with his ten-year association with Himachal as BJP in-charge from 1990 to 2001 may give a special twist to the political scenario in any seat in this hilly state.

(The writer is a political analyst and senior journalist based in Shimla, views are personal)

Rajasthan village girls struggle for sports opportunities

Girls in rural India face challenges accessing sports and education due to limited spaces, family restrictions and gender disparity

In our village, there is no field for girls to play on. The entire village has only one school with a usable field, but it’s dominated by boys, forcing us to practice in a corner, said 16-year-old Sonu from Ghadsisar village in Churu district in Rajasthan, who practices kho-kho daily with her teammates in a corner of the village’s only high school ground.

17-year-old Aarti, who practices kho-kho with Sonu, said, “Our team has only traveled once to Sardarshahar tehsil and once to Foga village to participate in the game. After that, we haven’t gone anywhere. We don’t get the chance because our performance isn’t good enough. How can we per-



MEERA NAYAK

form well without proper practice opportunities? Having a field for practice is essential, but we don’t have one.” Girls do not receive support from their families to go outside the village to practice. Ghadsisar village, located about 254 km from Jaipur in Churu district, has a population of around 3,900. Within this small population, there is a significant

disparity in literacy rates between men (62.73%) and women (38.8%). This reflects the discrimination that girls face in terms of education. Within this smaller group, girls who are challenging the social norms, are further discriminated against due to a lack of a dedicated sports field for girls. Consequently, their practice sessions are disrupted, negatively affecting their performance.

“This village has about 800 houses. The girls who study at the village school still get practice opportunities during school days, but where should the girls who no longer study here go for practice?” said Kanta, another young girl from the village. “The boys can play



anywhere or in fields in other villages, but our families don’t allow us to go far from home for practice. Therefore, our village needs a dedicated field for girls to play,” she added. With years of negotiations, they did manage a corner space in the field but even that becomes unavailable during vacations. “The boys

often climb over the school wall to play on the field, but we girls can’t do that,” informed Kanta. Regarding this issue, the village sarpanch, Manoj Kumar, acknowledged that there is no separate field for girls in the village, which causes difficulties for them in practice. He mentioned that the gram panchayat had

submitted a proposal to the tehsil headquarters, but the tehsil authorities indicated that while there is vacant land in Ghadsisar, it belongs to the johad paytan (water reservoir) and the mining department. Allocating this land for a sports field is beyond the tehsil’s jurisdiction.

Understanding the situation, the panchayat selected a different site and submitted a new proposal to the tehsil. However, due to the code of conduct imposed for the Lok Sabha elections, no action has been taken. The panchayat will make another attempt after the election process is completed to ensure a sports field is available for the girls. Social worker Heera Sharma

emphasized the importance of sports for all children, stating, “Whether it’s a boy or a girl, playing sports is crucial for physical and mental development. It not only keeps the body healthy but also enhances mental well-being. Denying girls the opportunity to play would be unjust. Playing sports boosts girls’ confidence, allowing them to run freely on the field and contributing significantly to their physical development.” She added, “Sports are excellent for fitness and can also provide a career path, with athletes bringing honor to the country. This is why the government is promoting sports and athletes through initiatives like ‘Khelo India.’ Many girls from rural areas

have emerged to represent India at district, state, Olympic and Commonwealth games, winning medals for the country.” This year, at the sixth Khelo India Youth Games held in Tamil Nadu, athletes from Rajasthan delivered outstanding performances across various events, earning the state a place in the top 5. Both girls and boys excelled. Yet despite these successes, many rural areas in the country continue to deprive girls of the chance to participate in sports, even though access to sports fields is essential for all adolescents, regardless of gender.

(The writer is a grassroots writer from Lunkaransar, Rajasthan; views are personal. Charkha Features)

Israel declares 4 more hostages dead in Gaza

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Four more hostages kidnapped on October 7 were declared dead by the Israeli military — including three older men seen in a Hamas video begging to be released. Monday's announcement heightens pressure on the Israeli government to agree to a US cease-fire proposal that could secure the return of the hostages still held in Gaza and end the eight-month war. About 80 hostages in Gaza are believed to be alive, alongside the remains of 43 others. In the days since President Joe Biden announced the cease-fire proposal Friday, Israel has seen some of its largest protests calling on the government to bring them home. Although Biden said the proposal was Israeli, the Israeli leadership has appeared to distance itself from the plan, vowing to keep conducting military operations against Hamas until the militant group is destroyed. All four of the men declared dead Monday night — Nadav Poppell, Amiram Cooper, Yoram Metzger and Haim Peri — were kidnapped and taken into Gaza still alive, according to the Hostages Forum, a grassroots group representing the families of the hostages. "It is time to end this cycle of sacrifice and neglect," the group said following the announcement. "Their murder in captivity is a mark of disgrace and a sad reflection on the significance of delaying previous deals." The group called on the government to immediately approve the new cease-fire plan. Hundreds of people, including relatives of the captives, gathered outside Israel's Defence Ministry and military headquarters in central Tel Aviv late Monday, calling for a deal. Smaller protests took place across the country. About 100 captives were released during

a weeklong exchange of hostages for Palestinian prisoners in November. Three of the men declared dead Monday had female relatives who were released during the exchange. Israel's military spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, said the four hostages were killed while they were together, during the army's operation in Khan Younis in southern Gaza. He said the four were killed months ago, but that recent operations allowed the military to gather enough intelligence to confirm the deaths. Their bodies are still being held by Hamas, and the cause of death was not immediately known. Hamas claimed in May that the other hostage pronounced deceased, Nadav Poppell, died after being wounded in an Israeli airstrike, but provided no evidence. Poppell was over 50. "We are checking all of the options. There are a lot of questions," Hagari said. Cooper, Metzger and Peri were all age 80 or older. They appeared in a video in December released by Hamas under the title, "Don't let us grow old here." In the video, the three men appear gaunt, wearing thin white T-shirts. "We are the generation who built the foundation for the state of Israel," Peri said, noting that all the men had chronic illnesses. "We do not understand why we have been abandoned here." Cooper was an economist and one of the founders of Kibbutz Nir Oz, according to the hostages forum. Metzger helped to found the kibbutz winery and Peri built the community's art gallery and sculpture garden. Nir Oz was among the hardest-hit towns near the border with Gaza during the Hamas attack October 7, when Palestinian militants stormed Israel, killing some 1,200 people and hauling around 250 hostages back to Gaza.

US urges UNSC to support cease-fire plan in Gaza

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

The United States urged the UN Security Council on Monday to support the three-phase plan announced by President Joe Biden aimed at ending the nearly eight-month war in Gaza, freeing all hostages and sending massive aid into the devastated territory. US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said the United States circulated a draft resolution to the 14 other council members to back the proposal for ending the conflict that began with Hamas' surprise attack in southern Israel on October 7 that killed some 1,200 people, mostly Israeli civilians. "Numerous leaders and governments, including in the region, have endorsed this plan and we call on the Security Council to join them in calling for implementation of this deal

without delay and without further conditions," she said in a statement. The brief draft resolution, obtained by The Associated Press, would welcome the May 31 deal announced by Biden and call on Hamas "to accept it fully and implement its terms without delay and without condition". Hamas has said it views the proposal "positively". It makes no mention of Israeli acceptance of the deal. When Biden made the announcement he called it an Israeli offer that includes an "enduring cease-fire" and Israeli withdrawal from Gaza if Hamas releases all hostages it is holding. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told his hardline governing partners on Monday the proposal announced by Biden would meet Israel's goal of destroying Hamas, according to local media. The ultranationalists

have threatened to bring down his government if Netanyahu agrees to a deal that doesn't eliminate Hamas. Netanyahu told parliament's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Monday that Biden gave an outline of the deal but not all the details, and he said there are "gaps". Biden said the first phase of the proposed deal would last for six weeks and include a "full and complete cease-fire", a withdrawal of Israeli forces from all populated areas of Gaza and the release of some hostages, including women, the elderly and the wounded, in exchange for the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. American hostages would be released at this stage, and remains of hostages who have been killed would be returned to their families. There would be a surge in humanitarian assistance, with 600 trucks a day entering Gaza.

Guilty verdict won't stop Trump from appearing on 2024 primary ballots

AP ■ NEW YORK

Donald Trump's name will appear on the ballot Tuesday for the first time since his historic conviction on felony crimes as a handful of states hold the last Republican presidential primary contests of 2024. The former president will be on the ballot in Republican contests in Montana, New Jersey and New Mexico. President Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic nominee, will compete in primaries in the same states, plus the primary in Washington DC, and one in South Dakota. Republicans in DC held a party-run primary in March. South Dakota canceled its GOP presidential primary because Trump was uncontested. Voters will also cast ballots in primary races for federal, state and local offices in those states. Trump and Biden are both expected to easily prevail in the contests, where they're the last major candidates still running. But the results could signal voter concerns about their choices as November's election barrels closer. If Trump's margins of victory are closer than expected, it could be a sign that voters have hesitations about nominating a presidential candidate with a felony criminal record. Trump's dominance in the primary has also been shadowed by ongoing support from a minority of GOP voters for former United Nations Ambassador Nikki

Haley, who dropped out in March. Tuesday's contests will be the first since Haley said two weeks ago that she would vote for Trump in November. They may be an indicator of whether her supporters will follow her. Biden has faced his own ongoing protest vote in recent contests as Democratic voters unhappy with his handling of Israel's war with Hamas seek to register their disapproval. There are organized campaigns in several states Tuesday to vote for "uncommitted" in the Democratic contests. In New Jersey's primary, "uncommitted" will be on the ballot in many counties above the phrase, "Justice For Palestine, Permanent Ceasefire Now!" After Tuesday, Democrats have two additional caucuses on June 8, for Guam and the US Virgin Islands, to close out their 2024 primary calendar. Beyond the presidential contests, the states are holding primary elections for federal and local races Tuesday, with one of the most watched being the Republican Senate race in Montana. Retired Navy SEAL Tim Sheehy has the backing of Trump and national Republican leaders as he faces two other candidates in the race. The winner will challenge Democratic Sen Jon Tester in what's expected to be one of the most competitive races that could decide control of the chamber.

Hunter Biden's federal firearms trial begins, first lady attends

AP ■ WILMINGTON

Lawyers will make their opening statements Tuesday in the federal gun case against President Joe Biden's son Hunter after a jury was seated for the trial. Hunter Biden has been charged with three felonies stemming from a 2018 firearm purchase when he was, according to his memoir, in the throes of a crack addiction. He has been accused of lying to a federally licensed gun dealer, making a false claim on the application by saying he was not a drug user and illegally having the gun for 11 days. Hunter Biden arrived at the courthouse with this wife, Melissa, emerging from an SUV. First lady Jill Biden and his sister Ashley Biden joined him again in the courtroom. The proceedings come after the collapse of a deal with prosecutors that would have avoided the spectacle of a trial so close to the 2024 election. Hunter Biden has pleaded not guilty and has argued he's being



unfairly targeted by the Justice Department after Republicans decried the now-defunct plea deal as special treatment for the Democratic president's son. The trial is unfolding just days after Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, was convicted of 34 felonies in New York City. The two criminal cases are unrelated, but their proximity underscores how the courts have taken center stage during the 2024 campaign. Jury selection moved at a clip

Monday in the president's home state, where Hunter Biden grew up and where, the elder Biden often says, the family is deeply established. Joe Biden spent 36 years as a senator in Delaware, commuting daily back and forth from Washington, D.C. People just know the story of how Biden's two young sons, Hunter and Beau, were injured in the car accident that killed his wife and baby girl in the early 1970s. And Beau Biden was the former state attorney

general before he died at age 46 from cancer. Some prospective jurors were dismissed because they knew the family personally, others because they held both positive and negative political views about the Bidens and couldn't be impartial. Still, it took only a day to find the jury of six men and six women plus four women serving as alternates, who will decide the case. One potential juror who was sent home said she didn't know whether she could be impartial because of the opinion she had formed about Hunter Biden based on media reports. "It's not a good one," she said. Another was excused because he was aware of the case and said, "It seems like politics is playing a big role in who gets charged with what and when." But much of the questioning focused on drug use, addiction and gun ownership, as attorneys sought to test prospective jurors' knowledge of the case, and dismiss those with strong thoughts on drug use, or who

might want to regulate firearms — some of the very people Biden counts as constituents. The panel of 12 was chosen out of roughly 65 people. Their names were not made public. They included a woman whose sister was convicted about 10 years ago of credit card fraud and drug charges in Delaware, a man whose father had been killed in a crime involving a gun, and a woman married to a former law enforcement officer who is also a licensed gun owner. Hunter Biden also faces a trial in California in September on charges of failing to pay \$1.4 million in taxes. Both cases were to have been resolved through the deal with prosecutors last July, the culmination of a yearslong investigation into his business dealings. But Judge Maryellen Noreika, who was nominated to the bench by Trump, questioned some unusual aspects of the deal, which included a proposed guilty plea to misdemeanor offenses to resolve the

tax crimes and a diversion agreement on the gun charge, which meant as long as he stayed out of trouble for two years the case would be dismissed. The lawyers could not come to a resolution on her questions, and the deal fell apart. Attorney General Merrick Garland then appointed the top investigator, a former US attorney for Delaware, David Weiss, as a special counsel in August, and a month later Hunter Biden was indicted. Opening statements come as Garland faces members of the Republican-led House judiciary committee in Washington, which has been investigating the president and his family and whose chairman has been at the forefront of a stalled impeachment inquiry stemming from Hunter Biden's business dealings. The Delaware trial isn't about Hunter Biden's foreign business affairs, though the proceedings were likely to dredge up dark, embarrassing and painful memories.

'No dialogue with Turkey before Ankara announces plans to withdraw its troops'

AP ■ DAMASCUS

Syria's foreign minister said on Tuesday that any dialogue between Syria and Turkey should follow Ankara's announcement that it will withdraw its troops from all Syrian territories it controls. Faisal Mekdad said during a joint news conference with Iran's acting foreign minister, Ali Bagheri Kani, came after Turkey threatened in recent days to act against Kurdish-led authorities in Syria's northeast as they prepare to hold municipal elections next week. Turkey has launched three major cross-border operations into Syria since 2016 and controls some territories in the north. Ankara was a main backer of Syrian opposition fighters who have been trying to remove Syrian President Bashar Assad from power since the conflict began in March 2011.

Attempts to reconcile between Syria and Turkey have failed to achieve progress since early 2023 despite meetings in Moscow between the countries' foreign ministers and defense ministers. "The main condition to any Syrian-Turkish dialogue is for Ankara to announce its readiness to withdraw from our lands that it occupies," Mekdad said. "We do not negotiate with those who occupy our land." Bagheri Kani said Tehran has always supported territorial integrity of all regional countries, particularly Syria. "We have supported and will continue to support Syria in its battle against terrorism," he said, in reference to Syrian insurgent groups that Damascus and Tehran consider terrorist organisations. Iran and Russia, main backers of Assad who took part in Syria's conflict that has killed half a million people, have

tried to mediate between Turkey and Syria in the past. Over the years, Syrian government forces have taken control of most parts of Syria with their help. On Turkey's support to Syrian insurgent groups in the north, Mekdad said: "It is not permissible for the Turkish occupation of Syrian lands to continue to support terrorist organizations in northern Syria." Last week, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Ankara won't hesitate to act against Kurdish-led groups in northern Syria that it accuses of links to outlawed Kurdish militants, if they proceed with plans to hold local elections in the region on June 11. Pro-government Syrian media outlets said Bagheri Kani met earlier Tuesday at the Iranian embassy in Damascus with leaders of Syria-based Palestinian factions. They gave no further details.

Germany floods kill five people

Berlin (AP): A woman's body has been recovered from a car that sank into floodwater in Bavaria, police said on Tuesday, bringing the confirmed death toll in flooding across southern Germany to five. Persistent heavy rain led to widespread flooding over the weekend. While the situation has now eased in southwestern Germany, water levels remained high in parts of Bavaria, particularly in the Danube and in the Rosenheim area in the southeast. Some major railway lines, including several leading to Munich, were still blocked or disrupted. The bodies of four people who died in the floods were found Sunday and Monday, three of them in inundated basements. Police reported the fifth victim Tuesday in the small town of Markt Rettenbach. They said a driver who apparently had ignored barriers blocking a flooded road on Monday slipped off the road into a field and called emergency services to alert them that her car was filling with water.

Biden lays into Trump over convictions, says he now poses greater threat than in 2016

AP ■ GREENWICH

President Joe Biden laid into his predecessor and likely opponent in November's election, Donald Trump, for being convicted by a Manhattan jury on 34 felony counts related to hush money payments, saying Monday night that "this campaign has entered uncharted territory." Speaking at a fundraiser in Greenwich, Connecticut, Biden said the former president "wants you to believe it's all rigged. Nothing could be further from the truth." Echoing comments he made in reaction to the verdict at the White House last week, Biden said, "It's reckless and dangerous and downright irresponsible for anyone to say that it's rigged just because you don't like the verdict." He added that the justice system was a core of American democracy and "we should

never allow anyone to tear it down." Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, was convicted on all counts related to a scheme during his 2016 presidential campaign to pay off porn actor Stormy Daniels, who said the two had sex. The former president slammed the verdict as politically motivated, and has blamed it on Biden — while seeking to make himself a political martyr in the eyes of supporters, suggesting that if this could happen to him, similar things might befall them. As he did last week, Biden noted that Trump's was a state case rather than a federal one, was heard by a jury chosen the same way all juries nationwide are chosen, and featured five weeks of evidence. He said the verdict was unanimous and Trump can appeal.

But Biden went farther Monday, accusing Trump of equating the justice system and elections. He said the former president was "attacking both the judiciary and elections system as rigged." "Nothing could be more dangerous for the country, more dangerous for American democracy," Biden said. The president made no mention of the federal gun case against his son, Hunter, which began Monday in Delaware. Instead, he said, "Here's what is becoming clearer and clearer every day: The threat Trump poses in his second term would be greater than it was in his first." "This isn't the same Trump that got elected in 2016," Biden said. "He's worse." Biden was attending a fundraiser hosted by Richard Plepler, the former CEO of HBO, and featuring Shonda Rhimes, who created such television smash-as "Bridgerton," "Scandal

and "Grey's Anatomy." Biden went on to reference a television ad his campaign has produced featuring another of his celebrity backers, actor Robert De Niro, narrating and asserting that Trump "snapped" after losing to Biden in 2020. "Something snapped in this guy — for real — when he lost in 2020," Biden said, suggesting the former president was "unhinged" and was the driving force behind a mob of his supporters overrunning the US Capitol on January 6, 2021. "He can't accept the fact that he lost, it's literally driving him crazy," Biden said. The Trump campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Biden continued his sharp criticism, saying the former president "wants to terminate the Constitution" and "says if he loses there will be a bloodbath in America."

Heavy security in China and HK mark 35th anniversary of Tiananmen Crackdown

AP ■ BEIJING

Checkpoints and rows of police vehicles lined a major road leading to Beijing's Tiananmen Square on Tuesday as China heightened security on the 35th anniversary of a bloody crackdown on pro-democracy protests. Hong Kong police took at least two people off the streets as the effort to prevent any public remembrance extended beyond the mainland. China has long quashed any memory of the crackdown, when the Chinese government ordered in the army to end the months-long protests and uphold Communist rule. An estimated 180,000 troops and armed police rolled in with tanks and armored vehicles, and fired into crowds trying to block them as they pushed toward the student-led demonstration on Tiananmen Square.



The death toll remains unknown to this day. Hundreds, if not thousands are believed to have been killed in an operation that started the night before and ended on the morning of June 4, 1989. The crackdown became a turning point in modern Chinese history, ending a crisis in favor of Communist Party hardliners

who advocated for control instead of political reforms. The economy boomed in the ensuing decades, turning a once impoverished country into the world's second largest economy, but societal controls have been tightened since party leader Xi Jinping came to power in 2012. Across China, the event remains a sensitive

and taboo subject that is heavily censored, with any mention on social media quickly erased. Life went on mostly as normal in the Chinese capital on Tuesday, with tourists lining the streets leading to gates to enter Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City, the former imperial palace across from the north side of the square. The subway exit closest to the square was closed, as was a viewing point atop Tiananmen Gate, according to a visitor registration website. "As to the political disturbance that occurred in the late 1980s, the Chinese government has long had a clear conclusion," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said without elaborating. Asked about Western government statements on the anniversary, she added, "We are firmly opposed to anyone using this as a pretext to attack and smear China and interfere in China's internal affairs."

Mexico's next pres faces 3 challenges: money, dialogue and US election

AP ■ MEXICO CITY

Mexico's newly elected president, the first woman to win the job, faces a long list of challenges, including persistent cartel violence, a deeply divided country, cash-straitened social programs and the long shadow of her mentor, outgoing President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador. But for some analysts it mostly comes down to three things: money, dialogue and the outcome of the US presidential election. Claudia Sheinbaum, who begins her six-year presidential term October 1, has four months ahead of her to define her administration's agenda. During this time, Lopez Obrador is expected to continue delivering his daily morning press briefings as he tries to solidify his legacy. The coexistence might be far from easy: He has divided society; she says she wants to unite it. He is a leader of the masses;



she is an academic and a scientist. Lopez Obrador has said he will not interfere with his protegee's administration. "I do not aspire to be a 'moral leader', a 'maximum boss', a 'caudillo,'" he said Monday. He has insisted that once his presidency is over, he is going to "talk with the trees, live with the birds." Yet, it was he who announced Monday that current Treasury Secretary Rogelio Ramirez de la O would remain in his post through the next administration in a bid to avoid a market meltdown. The

balance between continuity and change will not be simple. A top economic challenge will be whether Sheinbaum will have the money to continue her predecessor's popular social programs, considering the government has a big deficit of almost 6 per cent that the Treasury has vowed to reduce. "There needs to be fiscal reform," said Isidro Morales, an economics and international relations expert. Otherwise, he warns, citing Mexico's decreasing oil income as one

problem, "Claudia is going to have her hands tied." Mexico's state-owned oil company Pemex is Lopez Obrador's most fervent symbol of nationalism, but it continues to lose money and oil is far from the primary revenue stream it once was. Yet, it is a red line for Sheinbaum who, despite being a climate scientist who wants to move into clean energy, closed her campaign last week before gigantic banners of support from oil industry workers. Mexico's presidential transition also happens to fall right into the heart of the US presidential campaign. "Mexico's most important election is taking place on November 5," said Carlos A. Perez Ricard, a professor at Mexican public research centre CIDE, referring to the US presidential election. President Joe Biden's reelection or the return to power of former President Donald Trump will be "the real variable that will change scenarios," Perez Ricard said.

Sharif in China: Have plans to deepen all-weather bonds

PTI ■ BEIJING/ ISLAMABAD

On his first visit to China after assuming office, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Tuesday said he is visiting Beijing with "serious plans" to deepen the all-weather ties amid China's concerns over deadly terror attacks on its nationals in Pakistan and deepening political and economic crisis undermining its stability. "Landed in Shenzhen on the first leg of my official visit to China at the invitation of the Chinese leadership," Sharif posted on X as he arrived in the southern Chinese city as part of his five-day official visit to China. Sharif wrote that he was looking forward to his engagements with the provincial authorities, the business community and industry giants here before proceeding to Beijing for official talks with President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Qiang and other Chinese leaders and senior officials. "We are coming with serious plans to make our friendship become much higher than the

Himalayas and deeper than the deepest ocean of the world," Sharif said as he left for China to further bolster bilateral ties and to launch the second phase of the multi-billion dollar CPEC projects in his country. Sharif will be in China from June 4 to 8 at the invitation of President Xi. His visit also coincides with the end of the general elections in India, which both view as a strategic rival and the advent of the new government in New Delhi. The 72-year-old leader embarked on his first visit to China after he took over as prime minister for the second term after his Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party-led coalition government assumed power in March. He is due to arrive in Beijing on Wednesday and is set to hold talks with President Xi to seek more investments and aid to shore up Pakistan's deteriorating economic situation. Pakistan considers China as one of the most trusted friends around the globe, Sharif told

Chinese state-run Xinhua news agency in an interview stating that besides being iron brothers, unshakable friendship, "our hearts beat together". Ahead of his visit, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said that during the trip both Xi and Sharif will "jointly draw a blueprint", without providing any details. China which according to reports has spent about USD 28 billion in the estimated over USD 62 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) since it was started in 2013 is increasingly wary of committing itself to more investments in much talked about its second phase in view of the deteriorating security, political and economic crisis in Pakistan. The CPEC, which connects Gwadar Port in Pakistan's Balochistan with China's Xinjiang province, is the flagship project of China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI is seen as an attempt by China to further its influence abroad with infrastructure projects funded by Chinese investments across the world.

"Envisaged over a decade ago, CPEC has been touted as a 'game changer' by the state, while critics have termed it a 'debt trap'," an editorial in Pakistan daily Dawn said on Tuesday on Sharif's visit to Beijing. While the CPEC has been "beneficial to Pakistan, bringing online a number of power projects, as well as expanding the road network... Yet many promises remain unfulfilled", it said. "For example, the special economic zones have yet to open for business, while Pakistan is saddled with billions in Chinese debt. Therefore, Prime Minister Sharif's visit presents an opportunity to address these challenges," it said. Ahead of Sharif's visit, reports in Pakistan media said China is now pressing Pakistan to launch massive military operations to crack down on militant groups attacking Chinese personnel working on scores of CPEC projects. Pakistan said it has committed 12,000 troops to protect hundreds of Chinese workers.

Alvi calls for dialogue among stakeholders to extricate Pakistan out of political crisis

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan's former president Arif Alvi has urged all stakeholders to hold dialogue with jailed ex-prime minister Imran Khan and his party, underlining that it was the sole path to mitigate the cash-strapped country's dire economic condition. Addressing a gathering of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) office-bearers and various wings in Lahore on Monday, Alvi congratulated PTI workers, supporters, and the people of Pakistan on the acquittal of party founder Imran Khan, along with former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, in the cipher case. Alvi, inclined towards the PTI party, was a senior member of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party before the cricketer-turned-politician made him the country's President in 2018. Khan was on Monday acquitted in three high-profile cases, including the cipher case, in a major relief to the beleaguered



former prime minister who was sentenced to 10 years in jail for making public a secret diplomatic communication. The meeting was chaired by PTI Central Punjab President Ejaz Manhas, with senior PTI leaders such as Azam Khan Swati, Brigadier (ret'd) Ejaz Shah, Azeemuddin Lakho, Sardar Azeemullah Advocate, and Zubair Kisan in attendance. The Express Tribune newspaper reported. The 74-year-old former president reiterated the importance of dialogue in resolving the political crisis, stressing that all stakeholders must participate as it is the sole path to improve-

ment in Pakistan's dire economic condition. Pakistan's economy is facing severe headwinds and the cash-strapped country has made a formal request to International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the next bailout package between USD 6 and USD 8 billion with the possibility of augmentation through climate financing. He claimed the PML-N leadership had encouraged corruption over the past two years since the regime change, referring to the ouster of Khan as the prime minister in 2022. Praising the PTI government's social welfare initiatives, Alvi stated that 71-year-old Khan

had earnestly worked to transform Pakistan into a welfare state modelled after Madinah. "Imran Khan aimed to create a society where everyone is equal and has access to necessities," he remarked, accusing the PML-N of plotting to overthrow the Khan-led government. Alvi maintained that although the PTI government was removed through a conspiracy, they will not rest until they regain power to continue serving the people of Pakistan. Speaking to the media, Alvi condemned the baseless cases filed against PTI workers, commending the judiciary for upholding the law. He stressed that justice should be equal for all and urged the nation to overcome its current predicament. He called on the army, civilians, and politicians to learn from the Hamoodur Rahman Commission report and step back from inappropriate actions. He insisted that all institutions must extricate themselves from their current deadlocks to progress.

Islamabad High Court orders de-sealing of Imran Khan's party secretariat

Islamabad (PTI): The Islamabad High Court on Tuesday ordered authorities here to de-seal the Central Secretariat building of jailed ex-prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, providing a major relief to the beleaguered party. The Capital Development Authority (CDA) on May 24 raided the office of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in Islamabad and sealed the building, alleging that it was built by violating laws. The party had challenged the action in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) where Justice Saman Rizvi on Monday reserved judgement after concluding the hearing. Announcing the verdict on Tuesday, the court ordered the CDA to de-seal the PTI central secretariat. CDA may take action strictly in accordance with law in case of any non-conformity or violation of the applicable

laws," IHC's Justice Saman Rafat Imtiaz said in a six-page written order. The court, in its order, also said that no receipt of such notice or show cause notice is on record. Moreover, the CDA did not issue a prior notice to the PTI before sealing its office. The order also said that the sealing order was neither addressed nor copied to the petitioner let alone any evidence of service of the same. The development comes a day after PTI founder Khan was acquitted in three high-profile cases, including the cipher case, in a major relief to the beleaguered former prime minister who was sentenced to 10 years in jail for making public a secret diplomatic communication. The 71-year-old former cricketer-turned-politician has been in jail since August last year after being convicted in some of the nearly 200 cases slapped on him since his ouster in April 2022.

Tractors rumble in streets again ahead of EU polls

AP ■ BEERSEL (BELGIUM)

The far-right Flemish Interest party had set up the demonstration in the picture-pretty rolling fields south of Brussels, ahead of the four-day European Union elections which start on Thursday. The goal was clear: Decrying how farmers would lose fertile land to what they see as overbearing environmentalists trying to turn it into a chain of woods, killing off a traditional way of life. It was also another show how agriculture has been instrumentalised by the populist and hard right groups throughout the 27-nation bloc. And in a final push on Tuesday, militant agricultural groups from more than a half dozen nations were converging on EU headquarters in a show of force that they hoped would sweep the progressive Green Deal climate pact off the table in the wake of the elections and give farmers the leeway they had for so long in deciding how to till the land. "As a farmer, you have just been turned into a number," growled

Eduard Van Overstraeten, who said that of the 60 hectares he used to farm for wheat, corn and potatoes, he now was forced to sell a quarter of it — including his farmhouse — to help make a string of distinct woods around Brussels to become one continuous nature zone to improve biodiversity and fight pollution. Similar stories of discontent, centering on limiting use of manure and pesticides to forcing parts of farm land to be kept pristine nature zones for the benefit of birds and bees — and eventually the population at large — have driven this influential electoral base of conservative Christian Democrats further to the fringes of the right. "Nobody defends us, so others have to come to power," said Van Overstraeten. And just as a wealthy think tank funded by the self-proclaimed illiberal Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has helped Tuesday's and previous demonstrations in Brussels, it is the surging Flemish Interest party that does so at a local level. "They are looking for another

party that brings a credible story. And that is us," said Klaas Sloomans, parliamentarian for the Flemish Interest. "It is common sense that you need to protect farmers and food supplies," he added. And it is the crux of the political issue that pits farmers against environmentalists, the greens and much of the left against the populist and far-right forces: do you protect farmers and food supplies by giving farmers free rein to work as they see best? Or by hemming them in and imposing strict regulations to cut pollution and promote a life closer to nature that would contain the excesses of climate change? Over the past year though, scientific arguments have taken a second seat to the rumble of the street. Crucially, the centre parties, especially the Christian Democrats, have started to dither and waver toward the right following months of unrelenting demonstrations across the bloc, with hundreds of tractors often blocking essential economic lifelines or many of the Europe's great cities like Paris and Madrid.

US defence secretary meets Cambodian officials to push for stronger ties with Chinese ally

Phnom Penh (Cambodia) (AP): US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin met with Cambodian officials on Tuesday to discuss a possible resumption of joint military exercises, suggesting the beginning of a thaw in relations between the countries that have been strained over Cambodia's growing closeness with China. Austin met with Defence Minister Tea Seiha, Prime Minister Hun Manet and Senate President Hun Sen, the Pentagon said. Hun Sen, the former prime minister, is Hun Manet's father. The officials discussed ways to strengthen defence ties in support of regional peace and security, including through a resumption of military training exchanges, de-mining training, and Cambodian participation in U.S. military education programs, Pentagon Press Secretary Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder said in a statement. Hun Manet said on Telegram that he and Austin discussed ways to resume cooperation, including Cambodian access to US military education programs and joint military exercises between the coun-

tries. Cambodia, which is China's closest ally in Southeast Asia, halted joint military exercises with the US in 2017. US relations with Cambodia have been frosty for years, in large part because of its close ties with China, and particularly China's military presence at a Cambodian navy base in the Gulf of Thailand that has been upgraded with Beijing's assistance. Washington has also been vocal about Cambodia's human rights record, including continuing clampdowns on political dissidents and critics. Cambodian officials deny that China will have any special basing privileges and say their country maintains a neutral defense posture. Austin arrived from Singapore, where he attended the Shangri-La defence forum and held talks with his Chinese counterpart, Adm. Dong Jun, as the US and China gradually work to repair lines of communications between their militaries that could be critical as tensions continue to rise between them in the Indo-Pacific region.

South Korea suspends military deal with N Korea

Seoul (AP): South Korea on Tuesday took steps to suspend a contentious military agreement with North Korea and resume frontline military activities, as tensions between the rivals are rising over the North's recent launch of trash-carrying balloons. North Korea didn't immediately respond, but South Korea's resumption of firing exercises or propaganda loud-speaker broadcasts will likely prompt North Korea to take similar or stronger steps along the rivals' tense border. In the past week, North Korea has used balloons to drop manure, cigarette butts, scraps of cloth and waste paper on South Korea, prompting Seoul to vow "unbearable" retaliation. On Sunday, North Korea said it would halt its balloon campaign. On Tuesday, South Korea's Cabinet Council and President Yoon Suk Yeol approved a proposal to suspend the 2018 inter-Korean agreement on lowering frontline military tensions. It will take effect once Seoul formally notifies the North. Cho Chang-rae, South Korea's deputy defense minister for policy, told reporters that South Korea will use all available measures to protect the public from North Korean provocations. The responsibility for this situation lies solely with North Korea. If North Korea launches additional provocations, our military, in conjunction with the solid the South Korea-US defence posture, will punish North Korea swiftly, strongly and to the end," Cho said. The military agreement — reached during a short-lived era of reconciliation between the Koreas — required the two countries to cease all hostile acts at border areas, such as live firing drills, aerial drills and psychological warfare. During the cabinet meeting, Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, South Korea's No. 2 official, said the 2018 deal has weakened South Korean military readiness at a time when the North's provocations pose real threats to the public.

Indonesia's Mount Ibu erupts, spewing lava, ash

AP ■ KYIV

Indonesia's Mount Ibu spewed red lava and thick grey ash clouds that towered 5,000 meters (16,400 feet) into the sky during a two-minute eruption Tuesday morning. The eruption spewed thick ash toward the volcano's west and northwest sides, said Muhammad Wafid, chief of Indonesia's Geology Agency. A timelapse video distributed by Indonesia's Geological agency shows red sparks at the top of the volcano followed by a thick column of ash. The video was recorded from an observation post located next to an evacuation site in a field at Gam Ici village. Several evacuation tents were erected nearby. Mount Ibu has been continually erupting almost every day since early May. Indonesian authorities raised an eruption



alert to the highest level following a series of eruptions, as thousands of deep volcanic earthquakes and visual activities from Mount Ibu have significantly increased. Authorities urged people to stay at least 7 kilometers (4.4 miles) from the 1,325-meter

(4,347-foot) volcano. Indonesia, an archipelago of 270 million people, has 120 active volcanoes. It is prone to volcanic activity because it sits along the "Ring of Fire," a horseshoe-shaped series of seismic fault lines around the Pacific Ocean.

S Korean pres vows to expand aid contribution, mineral ties with Africa

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea will expand development aid to Africa and pursue deeper cooperation with the region on critical minerals and technology, President Yoon Suk Yeol said on Tuesday as he hosted a meeting with dozens of African leaders in Seoul. In a speech to the Korea-Africa Summit, Yoon also urged African countries to take firmer steps in an international pressure campaign against North Korea. The North recently accelerated its tests of nuclear-capable weapons systems and flew hundreds of balloons to drop tons of trash and manure on South Korea as relations between the war-divided Koreas worsen. Representatives from 48 African nations, including 25 heads of state, are attending the two-day summit, where talks

are expected to focus on trade and investment. Trade with African nations currently accounts for less than 2 per cent of South Korea's total imports and exports. South Korean officials say expanding ties in the area of minerals and resources would help improve the country's supply chain resilience in key technology industries. Following Tuesday's meeting, South Korea and the African nations announced that they will start high-level talks aimed at improving cooperation over minerals. The African region is a major source of minerals such as nickel, cobalt, graphite and lithium, which are crucial for technology industries such as semiconductors, batteries and electric vehicles, which are major export items for South Korea. There are concerns in South Korea that it may face

growing challenges in securing a stable supply of core minerals since it has so far secured a much smaller number of mines than the United States, China and Japan. Yoon also said South Korea plans to expand its cumulative development aid contributions to Africa to around USD 10 billion by 2030 and separately provide USD 14 billion in export financing to encourage South Korean investment in the region. "We will also explore sustainable ways of cooperation in issues that are directly tied to future growth, including the stable supply of critical minerals and digital transformation," Yoon said. The countries also vowed stronger collaboration in the building of sustainable infrastructure in Africa, including data-driven smart cities and

intelligent transportation systems. South Korea's outreach to Africa comes at a time when North Korea is becoming more active in trying to break out of its diplomatic isolation and build cooperation with countries confronting the United States, as its leader Kim Jong Un embraces the idea of a "new Cold War". Kim in recent months has boosted the visibility of his ties with Russia and China and sent a government delegation to Iran. North Korea also has long-standing relations with several African nations, including Uganda, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, although some governments in the region have scaled back their ties with the North amid tightened UN sanctions over its nuclear weapons and missile programmes.

China's spacecraft takes off from far side of Moon to bring home first samples

PTI ■ BEIJING

China's Change-6 probe on Tuesday lifted off from the far side of the Moon for its journey back to Earth carrying the first rock samples ever collected from the rarely explored terrain, in an ambitious mission that underscored the country's rise as a major space power. The ascender has entered a pre-set orbit around the Moon after taking off from the far side this morning, the China National Space Administration (CNSA) announced. At 7:38 a.m. (Beijing Time) on Tuesday, it lifted off from the lunar surface, carrying samples collected from the Moon's far side, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported. Its return journey to Earth is estimated to take about three weeks, with a

landing expected in China's Inner Mongolia region around June 25. After the sampling was completed, a Chinese national flag carried by the lander was unfurled for the first time on the far side of the Moon, the CNSA said. The Change-6 probe, comprising an orbiter, a lander, an ascender and a returner — like its predecessor Change-5 — was launched on May 3. It is tasked with collecting and returning samples from the Moon's far side, the first endeavour of its kind. China is the only country to have landed on the far side of the moon, having also done so before in 2019. India became the first country to land near the little-explored



lunar south pole region last year when its Chandrayaan-3's lander, carrying the Pragyaan rover, successfully landed there. The lander-ascender combination, separated from the orbiter-returner combination on May 30, touched down at the

designated landing area in the South Pole-Aitken (SPA) Basin on June 2 for the first time in human history. The spacecraft finished its intelligent and rapid sampling work, and the samples were stowed in a container inside the ascender

of the probe as planned, the CNSA said. During sampling and packaging, researchers conducted simulated sampling in a ground lab based on the detection data sent back by the Queqiao-2 relay satellite, providing important support for decision-making and operations in every link. "The mission has withstood the test of high temperature on the far side of the moon," the CNSA said. It adopted two methods of moon sampling, including using a drill to collect subsurface samples and grabbing samples on the surface with a robotic arm. Ge Ping, the spokesperson for the Change-6 mission, said that through detailed analysis of the soil structure, physical properties and material composition

of the Change-6 samples, scientists will be able to deepen research on the formation and evolutionary history of the Moon, the origin of the solar system and so on, laying an improved foundation for later exploration missions to build on. The multiple payloads installed on the lander, including the landing camera, panoramic camera, lunar soil structure detector and lunar mineral spectrum analyser, worked well and carried out scientific exploration as planned, the CNSA said. The international payloads carried by the lander of Change-6, including the Negative Ions on the Lunar Surface (NILS), developed by the European Space Agency (ESA)/Sweden, and the Detection of

Outgassing Radon (DORN), developed by France, also worked well and carried out corresponding scientific detection, it said. The ascender is expected to carry out unmanned rendezvous and docking with the orbiter-returner combination in lunar orbit, and the samples will be transferred to the returner, Xinhua news agency reported. The orbiter-returner combination will orbit the Moon, awaiting the optimal time to transfer back to Earth. When it approaches Earth, the returner carrying the lunar samples will re-enter the atmosphere, aiming for a touchdown at Siziwang Banner in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, the CNSA said. China's plans include landing astronauts on

the moon by 2030 and building a research base at its south pole, a region believed to contain water ice. China plans to launch two more missions as it nears its 2030 target of sending astronauts to the moon.

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY
HARBOUR WORKS DIVISION No.1
e-TENDER CALL NOTICE
e-TID No. CE/HWD/ACCTS-15/23/164, dttd. 29.05.2024
Name of the work: "Supply & installation of Ladders & Bollards along with installation of Cell & Super-M Fenders in various Berths of Paradip Port for two years". Put to tender value: Rs.1,16,88,795.32 plus GST as applicable. Last date & time of submission of tender through online bidding is 19.06.2024 up to 17:15 Hrs. For details, please log on to the Website: <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>
Sd/- Executive Engineer, Harbour Works Division No.1, Paradip Port Authority
PPA/PPR/04/2024-2025 dttd.03.06.2024

Sebi forms committee to review ownership, economic structure of clearing corporations

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi on Tuesday said it has set up a committee to review the ownership and economic structure of clearing corporations and suggest measures to ensure that clearing corporations function as resilient, independent, and neutral risk managers. The ad-hoc committee would be chaired by Usha Thorat, former Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The decision has been taken in the wake of the substantial growth of Indian securities markets in recent years and the importance of clearing corporations as central risk management institutions. In a statement, Sebi said that the committee has been entrusted with the task of reviewing ownership structure as well as finances of clearing corporations. With regards to ownership structure, the committee will examine the feasibility, and broadening the list of eligible investors, who are



allowed to take shareholding in a clearing corporation and suggest categories of investors who can acquire stakes in such corporations. Additionally, it will examine the need to alter the caps on the shareholding of various entities in a clearing corporation. Given the common service, cutting across exchanges that is provided by a clearing corporation in an inter-operable environment, the committee can suggest shareholding pattern of clearing corporation suited

to such an environment, Sebi said. While suggesting alternative ownership structures, the committee can also examine the shareholding structures of other clearing corporations globally. The suggested alternatives should keep in view the periodic capital needs of a clearing corporation towards achieving optimum financial structure for a clearing corporation which ensures its financial independence and sustenance as a robust going concern, while also taking into consideration the following aspects.

systemic stress," the regulator said.

At present, the current ownership structure of a clearing corporation is dominated by the parent exchange with all clearing corporations under the regulatory purview of Sebi being subsidiaries of their parent exchanges.

"The dominance of the parent exchange in the ownership structure invariably exposes a clearing corporation to the expectations of shareholders of the parent exchange, with the financial statements of clearing corporations being incorporated in the consolidated financial statement of the parent exchange," the regulator added.

Additionally, the committee is required to deliberate and suggest alternatives towards achieving optimum financial structure for a clearing corporation which ensures its financial independence and sustenance as a robust going concern, while also taking into consideration the following aspects.

Stock market future trajectory depends on new Government economic policies: Experts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Future trajectory of stock market hinges on the new government's economic policies, with factors like GDP growth, inflation, and global conditions playing a key role, experts said on Tuesday. With the BJP-led NDA still looking to form a government, though with the important support of coalition partners, markets look jittery about the prospects of strong decision making.

In fact, experts cautioned investors to be prepared for volatility due to currently high valuations and suggested adopting a diversified approach. Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty tanked over 8 per cent in intra-day on Tuesday and later ended nearly 6 per cent lower, suffering their worst decline in four years, as trends showed the ruling BJP is short of clear majority in the Lok Sabha elections.

Sensex crashed 4,389.73 points to settle at 72,079.05 and Nifty tanked 1,379.40 points to 21,884.50. However, markets jumped sharply on Monday after exit polls predicted a massive win for the BJP-led NDA in the Lok Sabha polls. The reformist approach, which was a hallmark of the previous two terms of the NDA government, might take a backseat in the third term, Manish Chaudhary, Head of Research, StoxBox, said. As per the available trends, BJP is likely to get about 240 seats in the 543-member Lok Sabha. Now it will have to rely on allies like TDP and JDU to form the next government. "The election results are showing a less than halfway mark for the current BJP government, pointing towards



a coalition government. This will lead to dependence on allies in making key policy decisions, and sharing certain cabinet seats, which will lead to policy paralysis and uncertainty in the government's functioning", Yashovardhan Khemka, Senior Manager, Research & Analytics at Abans Holdings, said. The markets are pricing the risk associated with this scenario, and the potential impact of a shift toward socialist policies by the government, thus leading to sell-off in the market, Yashovardhan Khemka,

Senior Manager, Research & Analytics at Abans Holdings, said.

"The future trajectory of the market depends on the new government's economic policies, with factors like GDP growth, inflation, and global conditions playing a key role," Suman Bannerjee, CIO, Hedonova, said.

Since May 2014, a combination of political stability with promises of reforms, improving economic conditions, and supportive global factors like quantitative easing by developed markets fuelled a strong rally in Indian stock markets. This surge had led to over Rs 300 lakh crore in investor wealth, reflecting growing confidence and participation. Experts said investors like certainty and continuation of policies, India is a long-term structural growth story. "A lot of elements are in place. Over anything the economics should prevail. We are already in top in factors like GDP, market cap, demographic dividend etc," Manish Jain, Director — Institutional Business (Equity & FI) Division at Mirae Asset Capital Markets, said.

Netherlands emerges as India's third largest export destination in 2023-24

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Netherlands has emerged as India's third largest export destination after the US and UAE during 2023-24, even as the country's merchandise shipments dipped by over 3 per cent, according to the commerce ministry data. The main commodities which registered healthy exports growth in the Netherlands include petroleum products (USD 14.29 billion), electrical goods, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals in the last fiscal.

India's trade surplus with the Netherlands has increased to USD 17.4 billion in the last fiscal from USD 13 billion in 2022-23. The Netherlands has taken over major destinations such as the UK, Hong Kong, Bangladesh and Germany. India's exports to the Netherlands rose by about 3.5 per cent to USD 22.36 billion in 2023-24 as against USD 21.61 billion in 2022-23, the data showed.

In 2021-22 and 2020-21, the outbound shipments to the European country stood at USD 12.55 billion and USD 6.5 billion, respectively. The exports have been registering healthy growth continuously since 2000-01, when India's exports to that nation were USD 880 million. Further, in 2021-22, the Netherlands was the fifth largest destination for Indian exports as against the ninth



largest in 2020-21. According to trade experts, the Netherlands has emerged as a hub for Europe with efficient ports and connectivity with the EU through roads, railways and waterways. Mumbai-based exporter and Chairman of Technocraft Industries Sharad Kumar Saraf said the trend of increasing exports would continue in the future also. Saraf said that the Netherlands is a gateway to Europe as its ports are very efficient. India and the Netherlands established diplomatic relations in 1947. Since then, the two countries have developed strong political, economic and commercial relations. In 2023-24, the bilateral trade between the two countries marginally dipped to USD

27.34 billion as against USD 27.58 billion in 2022-23. The Netherlands is among the top trading partners of India in Europe, after Germany, Switzerland, the UK and Belgium. It is also a major investor in India. During the last fiscal, India received about USD 5 billion in foreign direct investment from the Netherlands. It was USD 2.6 billion in 2022-23. There are over 200 Dutch companies present in India, including Philips, Akzo Nobel, DSM, KLM and Rabobank. Similarly, there are more than 200 Indian companies operating in the Netherlands, including all the major IT firms such as TCS, HCL, Wipro, Infosys, Tech Mahindra as well as Sun Pharmaceutical and Tata Steel.

Rupee plunges 45 paise to close at 83.59 against US \$

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee tumbled 45 paise to close at 83.59 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday as the ruling BJP is unlikely to muster an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha elections. Besides, a massive sell-off in domestic equities and a strong greenback against major currencies overseas added to the gloom, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened weak at 83.25 and oscillated between a high of 83.23 and a low of 83.59 against the greenback during the session. The domestic currency finally closed at 83.59 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a fall of 45 paise from its previous close.

On Monday, the rupee closed at 83.14 against the US dollar. Counting of votes on Tuesday indicated disappointing results for the BJP-led NDA in the Lok Sabha elections, which appears to be losing heavily in its strongholds of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan although it is expected to form the government with about 290 seats.



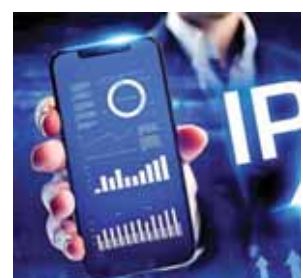
On its own, the Bharatiya Janata Party appeared to be falling below the majority mark with leads in 236 seats despite significant gains in Odisha, Telangana and Kerala, giving some solace to the party after the unexpected losses in the Hindi belt. Its rival INDIA alliance was leading in about 230 seats. In the last elections, the BJP had 303 seats on its own, while the NDA had over 350. "The rupee depreciated...Today as domestic markets

fell sharply amid uncertainty over election results outcome. This may have also led to some sell-off by foreign investors. The US dollar recovered from yesterday's losses on the weak Euro, which fell on disappointing employment data. The US dollar fell on Monday on weaker than expected ISM manufacturing PMI and construction spending," Anuj Choudhary — Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.17 per cent higher at 104.25. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, dropped 1.88 per cent to USD 76.89 per barrel. On the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex crashed 4,389.73 points, or 5.74 per cent, to close at 72,079.05. The broader NSE Nifty tumbled 1,379.40 points or 5.93 per cent to 21,884.50. Foreign investors were net buyers of Indian equities on Monday as they purchased shares worth Rs 6,850.76 crore on a net basis. FIIs bought shares worth Rs 23,451.26 crore and sold equities worth Rs 16,600.50 crore in the cash segment.

Kronox Lab Sciences IPO receives 24.57 times subscription on day two of offer

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The initial public offer of Kronox Lab Sciences received 24.57 times subscription on the second day of bidding on Tuesday. The IPO got bids for 16,45,99,160 shares against 66,99,000 shares on offer, as per NSE data. The quota for non-institutional investors got subscribed 52.92 times while the category for Retail Individual Investors (RIIs) fetched 24.52 times subscription. The portion for



Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) received 3.39 times subscription. The Initial Public Offer (IPO) has an offer for sale of up to 95,70,000 equity shares. The

price range for the IPO is Rs 129-136 a share. Kronox Lab Sciences has raised Rs 39.04 crore from anchor investors. Pantomath Capital Advisors is the manager to the offer. The company's equity shares are proposed to be listed on the BSE and NSE. Vadodara-based Kronox Lab Sciences is the manufacturer of high-purity speciality fine chemicals. Its high purity speciality fine chemicals portfolio has more than 185 products. The products are used mainly for applications

across pharmaceuticals, nutraceuticals, biotech, animal health, scientific research, agrochemicals, and personal care, among others. Kronox exports to more than 20 countries with major exports to the US, the UK, Mexico, Australia, and Egypt. The company has 3 manufacturing facilities and a Research, Development and Testing (RDT) laboratory, situated in Vadodra, Gujarat. Additionally, the company has acquired land in Dahej, Gujarat to set up a new manufacturing plant.

Government revises upwards wheat output to record 112.92 million tonne

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has revised upwards wheat production at record 112.92 million tonne for the 2023-24 crop year (July-June) in its third estimate. The output, which has been revised upwards by 0.91 million tonne from the second estimate, is also higher than the previous record high of 110.55 million tonne achieved in the 2022-23 crop year, the agriculture ministry said on Tuesday.

Wheat, the main rabi (winter) crop, has been harvested and over 26 million tonne has already been procured by the central government at minimum support price. In its third estimate, the agriculture ministry has projected increase in rice output to 136.7 million tonne for 2023-24 from 135.75 million tonne in the previous crop year. However, the total foodgrain output is estimated slightly lower at 328.85 million tonne as compared to the level achieved in 2022-23 but higher by 21.1 million tonne from the last five years' average of 307.75 million tonne. Among pulses, tur output is pegged higher at 3.38 million tonne from last year's 3.31 million tonne. Lentil output is estimated at 1.75 million tonne as compared with 1.55 million tonne in the previous year.

In case of oilseeds, soybean production is estimated at 13.05 million tonne and rapemustard seed at 13.16 million tonne. Among cash crops, cotton output is estimated at 32.52 million bales (of 170 kg each) and production of sugarcane is pegged at 442.52 million tonne for 2023-24 crop year.

Gold jumps ₹450; silver climbs ₹200

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices jumped Rs 450 to Rs 72,900 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday in line with strong trends internationally, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous session, the precious metal had closed at Rs 72,450 per 10 grams. Additionally, silver prices climbed Rs 200 to Rs 93,100 per kg. It had settled at Rs 92,900 per kg in the previous session. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 72,900 per 10 grams, up by Rs 450 against the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the global markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,335 per ounce, up USD 15 from the previous close. Gold rose on Tuesday as



disappointing US manufacturing data raised hopes that the Federal Reserve will have room to lower borrowing costs this year, Gandhi said. In addition, silver went up to USD 30.25 per ounce. It had ended at USD 30.19 per ounce in the previous session. "Gold is stuck in a range in the absence of fresh triggers and as markets look ahead to the European Central Banks policy outcome on Thursday and the US Nonfarm Payroll/employment data on Friday," Pranav Mer, VP of Research (Commodity & Currency) at BlinkX and JM Financial Services, said.

Students clearing JEE Advanced 2024 can apply for admissions to IIT Delhi Abu Dhabi Campus

New Delhi: The Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IIT Delhi) recently launched its first tranche of undergraduate (UG) programmes at its Abu Dhabi campus. Students who qualify JEE Advanced 2024 can use their rank to apply for admission to IIT Delhi-Abu Dhabi through a separate portal that is navigable from the website after the declaration of the JEE Advanced results. The seat allocation for IIT Delhi-Abu Dhabi will take place through this portal (and not through the JoSAA portal) for students coming through both routes, JEE Advanced and CAET, it said. Scheduled to commence in the academic year 2024-25, the two undergraduate programmes will commence with a starting batch of 30 students each. Within each discipline, up to 10 seats can be taken by students who qualify in the JEE Advanced examination. PNS

IPEF's clean economy investor forum meet in Singapore begins on June 5

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Senior officials from the commerce ministry will participate in the two-day clean economy investor forum meet in Singapore, organised by Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), an official said. Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal, Additional Secretary in the ministry Rajesh Agrawal, and other senior officials have reached Singapore for the meet, which will start on June 5. "Indian projects would be pitched in the forum. Over 150 investors would participate," the official said. The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) was launched in May 2022 and it currently includes 14 partners — Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, the US, and Vietnam. It provides a platform for countries in the region to collaborate on advancing resilient, sustainable and inclusive economic growth, and aims to contribute to

cooperation, stability and prosperity in the region. The IPEF comprises four pillars of cooperation — Trade, Supply Chain, Clean Economy, and Fair Economy. India is not part of the trade pillar. The IPEF Clean Economy Investor Forum is one of the initiatives under the IPEF. It brings together the region's top investors, philanthropies, financial institutions, innovative companies, startups and entrepreneurs. The forum aims to mobilize investments into sustainable infrastructure, climate technology and renewable energy projects. The Department of Commerce is the nodal agency for the IPEF engagements, and the IPEF Clean Economy Investor Forum is managed by Invest India, the country's national investment promotion agency. Apart from showcasing India's leadership position in the Clean Economy space and the various innovative solutions driving it, India will showcase some of the large infrastructure projects in Clean Economy and top climate tech companies to the global investors for investment opportunities.

Air India ties up with Delhi Metro, DIAL to facilitate check-in for international passengers

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Air India on Tuesday said it has partnered with Delhi Metro and Delhi airport to facilitate check-in for international air passengers at two metro stations in Delhi. The check-in and baggage drop facility at the Delhi airport allows passengers to check in their baggage at the metro station, giving the outstation travellers the option to explore the city baggage-free. During this period, their baggage gets securely loaded onto the aircraft through an advanced automated infrastructure created by the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) and Delhi International Airport Ltd (DIAL). Currently available for domestic air travel, this service will now be extended to international flyers and will remain operational at two Delhi metro stations--

New Delhi and Shivaji Stadium-- from 7 am to 9 pm, Air India said in a statement. It also added that the check-in can be done 12 hours to 2 hours prior to flight departure for domestic itineraries and four to two hours prior to departure for international schedules. The metro rail has a frequency of 10 minutes, and it takes 19 minutes to reach the departure level at Delhi airport's Terminal 3, making the travel faster and hassle-free, the airline said. "This initiative not only provides a cost-effective option for travellers coming from distant locations but also helps control congestion at the airport, leading to a better experience for all our customers. "This initiative will significantly enhance the convenience of our customers," said Rajesh Dogra, Chief Customer Experience Officer at Air India.

Djokovic wins his record 370th Slam match

AP ■ PARIS

Novak Djokovic was laying on his back on a French Open sideline early in the second set Monday, wincing while his injured right knee was manipulated by a trainer — and worrying that he might need to quit playing the match.

After stumbling and limping around, then finding himself down by a set and a break against a younger, eager opponent, Djokovic regained his nerve with the help of what he said a tournament doctor told him was the maximum dose of pills allowed to dull the pain and reduce any inflammation.

So, yes, Djokovic kept at it and came back to win in five sets across about 4 1/2 hours for the second consecutive time, surging past No. 23 Francisco Cerundolo 6-1, 5-7, 3-6, 7-5, 6-3 in the fourth round at Roland Garros for his record 370th win in a Grand Slam match.

But here's the catch: Djokovic said he could not be certain whether he would be healthy enough to play in the quarterfinals on Wednesday. "I don't know what will happen tomorrow — or after tomorrow, if I'll be able to step out on the court and play," the 37-year-old Djokovic said.

"You know, I hope so. Let's see what happens." Djokovic said the knee has bothered him for a couple of weeks, chalking it up to wear and tear, and it got worse after he tweaked it against Cerundolo.

Djokovic took a medical timeout at 2-1 in the second set, was treated by the trainer on subsequent changeovers, and was given more medicine after the third set. "I didn't know, to be honest," Djokovic said, "whether I should



continue or not." Eventually, he felt better and could move without restrictions, and his level of play soared accordingly. This was the second consecutive five-set comeback victory that lasted about 4 1/2 hours for Djokovic, who is ranked No. 1 and the defending champion in Paris. He said that accumulation of time was not a problem; his knee was, however. Djokovic is supposed to meet No. 7 seed Casper Ruud on Wednesday. Ruud, who eliminated No. 12 Taylor Fritz 7-6 (6), 3-6, 6-4, 6-2 Monday, lost to Djokovic in the French Open final last year and to Rafael Nadal in the 2022 title match. "The effect of the medications will not last for too long, so I'll see," Djokovic said. "I guess we'll do some more screening and tests and checkups tomorrow." The questions about his status took attention away from the latest in the long series of Djokovic's monumental achievements. Beating Cerundolo allowed Djokovic

to break a tie with Roger Federer for the most match wins at major tournaments — and also for the most Slam quarterfinals for a man, reaching the 59th of his career. But just barely. Djokovic trailed by two sets to one, and was down a break at 4-2 in the fourth, putting him two games from defeat. "I was," Djokovic said afterward, "maybe three or four points away from losing this match." Still, he came through in ways he has so often over his years of dominance and 24 major trophies, a total that includes three at the French Open. He both turned around a contest after trailing — go ahead and ask Federer about holding match points against the guy — and emerging when the tension is greatest. Djokovic is 40-11 in fifth sets over his career; compare that with Cerundolo's 1-3 mark, and the outcome should surprise no one. "Really, the toughest guy ever to play tennis," Cerundolo

said. "He always finds a way to come back and play his best tennis at the toughest moments and at the end of every match." At 2-1 in the crucible of the fifth set, Djokovic's feet gave way as he chased a ball to his right, and he rolled on the ground, caking his white shorts, his red shirt and parts of his arms and legs with the rust-colored clay. As he walked to the sideline to grab a bottle of water to clean off, he gave a piece of his mind to anyone who would listen, renewing an earlier complaint about wanting the court to be swept to improve traction. "Well done, supervisor and everybody," Djokovic said, his voice drenched in sarcasm. "Not slippery at all." At his news conference, he restated his concerns and his disappointment in the decision to not do more about the clay. "I mean, today I injured myself. Yes, I survived. I won the match. Great. But will I be

able to play next one?" he said, tapping his palms on a table for emphasis. "I don't know. I don't know the severity of the injury. But could have this injury be prevented? Possibly, if there was just a little bit more of a frequent care of the court during the set."

Against Cerundolo, a 25-year-old from Argentina who was trying to reach his first Grand Slam quarterfinal, Djokovic again used all of his skills, experience and ability to adjust on the fly. He came through, in part, by putting extra speed on his groundstrokes.

From 3-all in the fifth, Djokovic grabbed every remaining game. That included breaking to lead 5-3 with a forehand winner that caught the baseline — so close to being out that chair umpire Aurélie Tourte climbed down to check. The other men's quarterfinal Wednesday will be Alex de Minaur, who beat 2021 U.S. Open champion Daniil Medvedev, against Alexander Zverev, a 4-6, 6-1, 5-7, 7-6 (2), 6-2 winner against Holger Rune in a match that ended at 1:40 a.m. On Tuesday, Djokovic's comeback truly began in the evening, at 4-3 in the fourth, when he smacked a winner to earn a break point — not to mention roars from the stands — and converted when Cerundolo netted a shot.

He arrived in Paris with just a 14-6 record in 2024 and not one appearance in a tournament final, let alone a title. Sure, he's been living on the edge so far at the French Open — his past two matches required 9 hours, 8 minutes over 10 sets — but no one ever has been as good as Djokovic at Slam time.

Euro host Germany warms up in 0-0 draw with Ukraine

AP ■ BERLIN

Host Germany and England kicked off the true buildup to the European Championship with their first warmup games, only after Real Madrid capped the club season by signing Kylian Mbappé.

About 90 minutes after France captain Mbappé finally confirmed he was joining the new Champions League winner, Germany put national team action on midsummer's center stage in an enterprising 0-0 draw with Ukraine.

England got off to a slow start before a second half surge in a 3-0 win over Bosnia-Herzegovina, including a national record-extending 63rd goal for Harry Kane, who went on as a substitute.

Croatia, another of the European powers, eased to a 3-0 win over North Macedonia.

All three Euro 2024 contenders were without their Madrid stars — Toni Kroos, Jude Bellingham and Luka Modric — who are resting this week after their title win on Saturday against Borussia Dortmund.

It was a night for untested lineups to search for some rhythm in their play and debuts given to several emerging talents ahead of rosters being finalized on Friday.

Germany's 21-year-old forward Maximilian Beier almost scored with his first shot in international soccer, striking the underside of the bar in the 60th minute. It was one of 26 attempts on the Ukraine goal by coach Julian Nagelsmann's team.



The roster deadline is one week before Germany opens its home tournament against Scotland in Munich on June 14. Scotland stepped up its preparations with a modest 2-0 win against Gibraltar, which extended its run of losses to 13 games.

Albania, which is in the same Euro 2024 group as Croatia, cruised past Liechtenstein 3-0.

GERMANY GOAL-LESS Hoffenheim forward Beier somehow did not score as a second-half substitute in his Germany debut. After immediately rattling the crossbar, Beier was denied three minutes later by goalkeeper Anatolii Trubin's diving save, then he sent a stooping header wide of the goal.

Nagelsmann also gave a debut to Bayern Munich's 20-year-old midfielder Aleksandar Pavlovic. The head of Germany's federal government, Chancellor Olaf Scholz, was at

the game in Nuremberg, which is not among the 10 Euro 2024 venues.

Both Germany and Ukraine start their tournament in Munich. Ukraine begins against Romania on June 17, three days after Germany meets Scotland in Bayern's home stadium.

Scotland took time to find an edge against minnow Gibraltar, missing a slew of first-half chances, and got second-half goals from Ryan Christie and Ché Adams. They have more responsibility after regular No. 9 Lyndon Dykes was ruled out of Euro 2024 last week after being injured in training.

ENGLAND EASY Harry Kane has 62 more goals for England than Cole Palmer but the emerging Chelsea playmaker scored the first of what should be many for the Three Lions.

Palmer has been a penalty specialist for his club and was able to take a 60th-minute spot kick to open the scoring as Kane was still on the bench.

Kylian Mbappé finally joins Real Madrid

AP ■ MADRID

Kylian Mbappé is finally a Real Madrid player. Madrid said on Monday it reached a deal with the France star for the next five seasons, bringing together one of soccer's top talents and its most successful club.

Madrid did not release any financial details. It also didn't immediately say when it will officially introduce Mbappé, who is with France preparing for the European Championship.

The announcement came after years of flirtation by Madrid with the player who inherited the status of the best in the game from Lionel Messi.

"A dream come true," Mbappé said on X. "So happy and proud to join the club of my dream. Nobody can understand how excited I am right now. Can't wait to see

you, Madridistas (Madrid fans), and thanks for your unbelievable support. ¡Hala Madrid!" The post, with the message written in English, Spanish and French, was accompanied by photos of a young Mbappé wearing a Madrid jacket while visiting the club. One photo was with Madrid great Cristiano Ronaldo.

The club also posted a video on its website showing Mbappé highlights. At the beginning, a voiceover says, "Are you watching closely?" The 25-year-old World Cup winner joins a Madrid team that is already loaded with talent and still celebrating its latest European triumph — and sixth in 10 seasons.

Just two days ago, Madrid won a record-extending 15th European Cup title when it beat Borussia Dortmund 2-0 in the Champions League final in London.

Mbappé joins a team that already features young stars in Vinícius Júnior, Rodrygo and Jude Bellingham.

His signing could revive Madrid's "galatico" squads, when it had some of the world's top players including Ronaldo, Zinedine Zidane, Brazil's Ronaldo, David Beckham, Luis Figo and Karim Benzema, among others. The current Madrid players were quick to welcome their newest teammate. "Welcome to the best club in the world," forward Brahim Díaz said.

"I don't know if we won the Champion League on Saturday or if we won it today with Mbappé's signing," former Madrid goalkeeper Iker Casillas said.

Until now, Mbappé has played club soccer only for French teams — first at Monaco and for the past seven seasons at Paris Saint-Germain, which



he left as a free agent after it failed to persuade him to renew his contract. Mbappé didn't take the option for an extra year on the deal he signed two years ago.

Monaco wished Mbappé success and posted a photo of the player as a youngster holding Monaco's jersey in

front of several posters of Madrid players, including Ronaldo.

The Spanish league said "a new star in the universe of Real Madrid."

In 2021, Madrid was rejected after offering PSG a bid of 180 million euros, the same amount PSG paid Monaco for

a teenage Mbappé years earlier. Madrid president Florentino Pérez made signing Mbappé a strategic club priority since the powerhouse failed to lock him up when Mbappé visited the club's facilities at age 14.

He, instead, opted to join Monaco's youth academy, and became a teenage sensation when he helped lead the Principality club to the Champions League semifinals in 2017.

The Qatar-backed PSG turned down Madrid's 2021 bid, but with Mbappé's contract expiring the next year, Madrid took it for granted that Mbappé, who had never hid his desire to one day play for the Spanish club, would come south of the Pyrenees in 2022.

But French President Emmanuel Macron encouraged him to stay, and Mbappé stunned Pérez and

most of the soccer world by signing a contract extension to "continue his adventure" in Paris. Madrid won the 2022 Champions League after beating Mbappé's PSG in the knockout rounds.

Pérez said after Mbappé turned down his club two years ago that perhaps it was best he didn't come after all, but there were no bridges burned and Madrid is getting a once-in-a-generation player as a free agent.

Mbappé studied Spanish while he was with Monaco and speaks it well, which should help him blend well into a team that also features French players Eduardo Camavinga, Aurélien Tchouaméni and Ferland Mendy. Mbappé's resume features winning the World Cup at 19, a World Cup final hat trick at 23, seven French leagues, four French Cups, and a proven

proven for dominating games with his scoring ability. Mbappé captains France. When they won the World Cup in 2018, he was the second teenager after Pelé to score in a World Cup final. Four years later, he was one of only two players in history to score a hat trick in a World Cup final when France fell to Messi's Argentina.

Mbappé was unable to lead PSG to the ultimate goal of a Champions League crown, losing the only final he played in 2020. He also failed to score in both semifinal legs against Dortmund this season.

Mbappé left PSG as its all-time leading scorer with 256 goals, including a club record 175 in the French league. His highest scoring season with PSG was 44, and he was the top scorer of the French league for the sixth consecutive season (27).

Lakshya Sen enters second round of Indonesia Open



PTI ■ JAKARTA

Star Indian shuttler Lakshya Sen entered the men's singles second round of the Indonesia Open Super 1000 tournament with a straight-game win over Japan's Kanta Tsuneyama here on Tuesday.

Sen took just 40 minutes to get the better of Tsuneyama 21-12 21-17 in an opening round clash.

Sen, who sneaked into the Olympic qualification with back-to-back semifinal finishes at French Open and All England Championships, will next be up against the winner of the match between seventh seed Anthony Sinisuka Ginting of Indonesia and Japan's Kenta Nishimoto.

21 20-22. The Indian mixed doubles pair of B Sumeeth Reddy and Sikki Reddy had to battle hard before prevailing 18-21 21-16 21-17 over the American pair of Vinson Chiu and Jennie Gai in the opening round.

But a herculean task awaits the Indian pair as it will take on the winner of the match between top seeds Si Wei Zheng and Ya Qiong Huang of China and Indonesian combination of Rehan Naufal Kusharjanto and Lisa Ayu Kusumawati in the next round.

Later in the day, the Indian women's doubles pair of Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand will be up against Chinese Taipei's Yu-Pei Cheng and Yu Hsing Sun, while former world no.1 HS Prannoy will lock horns against Priyanshu Rajawat in an all-Indian men's singles opening round contest.

De Minaur is a firm clay court believer after reaching French Open quarterfinals

AP ■ PARIS

The terrible weather at the French Open produced a surprisingly positive outcome for Alex de Minaur.

It turned him into a clay court believer. De Minaur reached the quarterfinals in Paris for the first time on Monday after beating former U.S. Open champion Daniil Medvedev 4-6, 6-2, 6-1, 6-3.

"Looks like I've converted myself into a clay specialist," de Minaur said, laughing. Standing in his path to a first major semifinal will be No. 4 Alexander Zverev, who beat No. 13 Holger Rune 4-6, 6-1, 5-7, 7-6 (2), 6-2 in a match that started on Monday night and finished at 1:40 a.m. On Tuesday.

De Minaur reached the last eight against his own expectations, during a tournament hit by five consecutive days of rain delays and scheduling chaos at Roland Garros.

"It's pretty extraordinary, if you ask me. I always thought that for me to play well on the clay I needed hot, lively conditions," the 25-year-old Australian said. "But, you know, this whole tournament has proven otherwise, right? It's been a



complete shock to the system, to everything I ever believed in."

He's bracing himself for some merciless teasing over his self-professed ability — or lack of — on clay.

"Now the toughest thing is dealing with my team. They've got bragging rights," he said, smiling wryly. "They gave me a lot of slack for me complaining all these years of my level on the clay." After topping the fifth-seeded Medvedev, de Minaur turned to his box and yelled something special at them. "I screamed I love the clay. I love it here. I can't get enough," he revealed, laughing again.

His only other major quarterfinal appearance was

four years ago at the U.S. Open. He's the first Australian man through to the last eight at Roland Garros since former No. 1 Lleyton Hewitt 20 years ago. De Minaur was too young to recall that.

De Minaur is excited about Australian tennis, which has nine players in the top 100 of the ATP rankings, even without the absent and injured Nick Kyrgios. The 2022 Wimbledon runner-up has a lingering wrist injury. No. 100 is Thanasi Kokkinakis, who was in the crowd at Court Suzanne Lenglen to cheer on de Minaur.

"I've got Kokkinakis watching me, supporting me. It's great to see," de Minaur said.

Catley to lead Australia's women soccer squad at Paris Olympics

AP ■ SYDNEY

Steph Catley will lead Australia's women's soccer squad at the Paris Olympics in the injury-enforced absence of regular captain Sam Kerr. The Australian Olympic Committee confirmed the 18-player squad on Tuesday. Kerr was ruled out after she tore the anterior cruciate ligament in her right knee while training with her Chelsea Women's Super League club team in January.

Catley, vice-captains Emily Van Egmond and Ellie Carpenter, Mackenzie Arnold, Caitlin Foord, Alanna Kennedy, Clare Polkinghorne and Tameka Yallop will all become three-time Olympians in Paris.

Kyra Cooney-Cross, Mary Fowler, Katrina Gorry, Michelle Heyman, Teagan Micah, Hayley Raso all return for their second Olympics, while Clare Hunt, Kaitlyn Torpey, Cortnee Vine and Clare Wheeler have been selected for their first Olympics.

"This has been an incredibly challenging squad to select with so many quality players competing fiercely for limited spots," Matildas head coach Tony Gustavsson said. "It has



been a methodical process over the past couple of years to reach this point, and each of the players selected brings unique and beneficial qualities to our team that will be vital for our Paris 2024 campaign."

Australia beat China 2-0 on Monday night in its final home friendly before the Paris Games. Australia goalkeeper Lydia Williams, who says she will retire at the Olympics, was honored in the match played before 77,000 fans at Sydney's Olympic stadium. Williams, Australian soccer's longest-serving player, was subbed off at halftime to a

standing ovation. She is one of the four traveling reserves going to Paris with the Matildas on standby in case of injuries.

A guard of honor assembled for the 36-year-old Williams before the Sydney match as Australian tennis great Evonne Goolagong Cawley presented Williams, a Noongar Indigenous woman, with a traditional animal skin cloak.

Australia is playing in Group B against the United States, Germany and Zambia. Australia has never won an Olympic medal, coming close at the Tokyo Games in 2021 after losing 4-3 in the bronze medal match against the United States, which was then ranked world No. 1.

The Australians co-hosted the Women's World Cup with New Zealand last year and reached the semifinals. **Australia squad:** Mackenzie Arnold, Ellie Carpenter, Steph Catley (captain), Kyra Cooney-Cross, Caitlin Foord, Mary Fowler, Katrina Gorry, Michelle Heyman, Clare Hunt, Alanna Kennedy, Teagan Micah, Clare Polkinghorne, Hayley Raso, Kaitlyn Torpey, Emily van Egmond, Cortnee Vine, Clare Wheeler, Tameka Yallop.

India open against Ireland in renewed quest for World Cup glory

PTI ■ NEW YORK
Sceptics call them 'old wine in new bottle' but a clutch of superstar Indian cricketers would leave no stone unturned to break away from their archaic template when they take on a plucky Ireland in their opening game of the T20 World Cup here on Wednesday. The team knows that it is a touch undercooked with a lot of confusion still persisting about what could be the best combination on a drop-in virgin strip. As is clear from the games so far, scoring won't be a walk in the park like it was during the Indian Premier League the last couple of months. But the bigger concern is the baggage of being favourites who don't really make it count in the end. Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli have individually laid their hands on global silverware but an assortment of some other 'once in a generation' cricketers, including Jasprit Bumrah and Ravindra Jadeja, have not and they would be eager

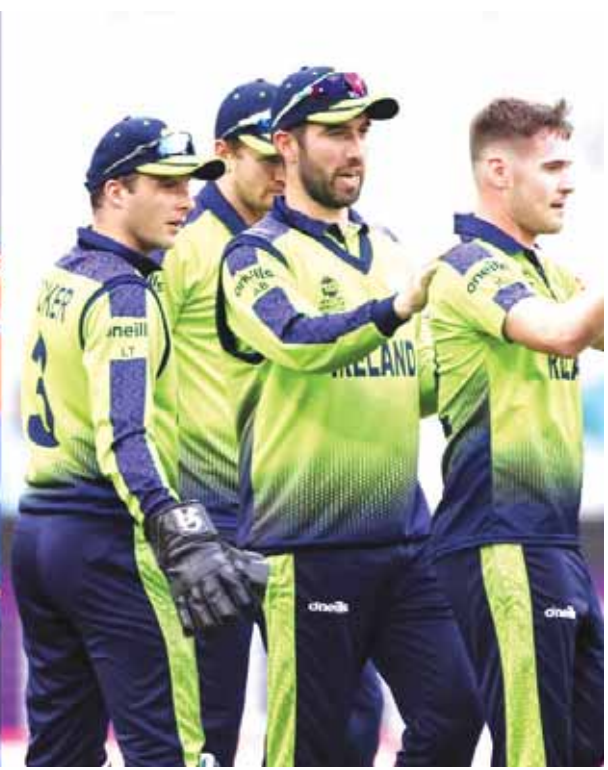
to finally lift one. This Indian cricket team wouldn't want to be the Brazil football team of 1982 and 86 when global stars like Socrates, Zico, Careca, Falcao and Alemão couldn't win the FIFA trophy. The most poignant sight of last year's ODI World Cup was a forlorn Rohit, after the final, desperately trying to hide his well-up eyes from the TV cameras as he quietly climbed the steps of the Narendra Modi Stadium dressing room. There was also Kohli, who after scoring those 765 invaluable runs, could only get a fleeting blank gaze towards the podium where the trophy was kept. The best players sometimes don't add up to become the best team and while India have put faith in their most experienced lot, it can't be simply wished away that this current batch has faltered at the final two hurdles way too many times. At 37, this could safely be termed as Rohit's last World Cup in the white-ball format as one doesn't have to be Nostradamus to predict that



he won't be around for the next T20 World Cup in India and the 50-over World Cup in South Africa in 2027.



A very gutsy Irish team with some quality T20 players like Paul Stirling, Josh Little, Harry Tector, Andy



Balbirnie, awaits India in the lung-opener. On a slow track and a sub-standard outfield at the Nassau County ground, how India plays against Irish left-arm spinner George

Dockrell will be interesting. Where India hold the advantage is their spinners who are way better compared to what the Irish team have though the pace attack, aside from Bumrah, looks a bit weak in absence of the redoubtable Mohammed Shami. Often having too many options isn't the best option just like Indians have at the top. To fit in skipper Rohit and team's most elite batter in Kohli, they have to probably sacrifice Yashasvi Jaiswal. Rishabh Pant's batting at No.3 in the practice game was like a breath of fresh air and Hardik Pandya's bowling form will indicate how India fares in this competition. At the Cantigue Park nets on Monday, Pandya spent considerable time bowling to Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav and Rohit. If he can bowl at least three overs every day, the Indian team can also look to play Shivam Dube and include an extra spinner in the line-up. Like earlier days, Ireland isn't exactly a minnow in this format and very recently,

they have beaten Pakistan in their own den in the run-up to the World Cup. Little has more than little experience of playing IPL for Gujarat Titans and the troika of Balbirnie, Stirling and Tector can more than chance their arms. The 'Green Shirts' will be the banana peel that Rohit and his men can ill-afford to slip on before they meet the more famous 'Green Jerseys' at the weekend. **Teams (from):** India: Rohit Sharma (captain), Virat Kohli, Rishabh Pant (wk), Suryakumar Yadav, Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh, Mohammed Siraj, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Sanju Samson, Yuzvendra Chahal. Ireland: Paul Stirling (captain), Mark Adair, Ross Adair, Andy Balbirnie, Curtis Campher, Gareth Delany, George Dockrell, Graham Hume, Josh Little*, Barry McCarthy, Neil Rock (wk), Harry Tector, Lorcan Tucker (wk), Ben White, Craig Young.

Gavaskar picks Kohli to open for India against Ireland



PTI ■ NEW YORK
Batting legend Sunil Gavaskar feels Virat Kohli should open alongside skipper Rohit Sharma in India's T20 World Cup game against Ireland on Wednesday with Yashasvi Jaiswal dropping down to the number three position. There has been a lot of debate around Kohli's batting position in the T20 World Cup. Kohli has been India's designated number three batter in the white-ball format for a long time. He heads to the marquee event on the back of an excellent IPL season. "Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli to open the batting along with Yashasvi Jaiswal at three, Gavaskar said on 'Star Sports' while giving his preferred line-up for the game here. Opening for the Royal

Challengers Bengaluru, Kohli piled up 741 runs in 15 matches at an average of 61.75 and a strike rate of over 154. He struck a century and five fifties during the prolific run. Gavaskar picked the flamboyant Rishabh Pant ahead of Sanju Samson for wicketkeeping duties and Mohammed Siraj ahead of left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh. "Suryakumar Yadav at four, Rishabh Pant at five. At number six, I would have Hardik Pandya, number seven would be Ravindra Jadeja, number eight, not necessarily in that batting order, Shivam Dube. Number nine Kuldeep Yadav, number 10 Jasprit Bumrah and number 11 will be Siraj," he said. After the game against Ireland, India will take on arch-foes Pakistan here on Sunday.

T20 form best in a decade following IPL success: Cummins

PTI ■ BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS)
Australia pace spearhead Pat Cummins feels his T20 game is at its best in a decade as he heads into the World Cup high on confidence after a successful Indian Premier League campaign. Cummins reached Bridgetown on Saturday. He enters the World Cup after a hectic IPL campaign where he led the Sunrisers Hyderabad to a runner up finish.

"Probably as well as I have for the last 10 years really," Cummins told cricket.Com.Au of his T20 bowling. Having never played in the Caribbean, the Australian Test and ODI captain had his first-ever training session in the West Indies on Monday. But Cummins is confident of how he's placed ahead of the World Cup, having continuously played T20 cricket since March in the IPL. "We played 17 games straight



(at the IPL). For the most part, international T20s are after the Test series, and you've got to try and hit a yorker or a slower ball, and then go back to a Test series," Cummins said. "So just getting the pace of the game and executing some of those balls that you need more in T20 cricket than in other formats, I feel really well placed." Cummins feels that sticking to the same format significantly impacts the tactical side of bowling.

"A lot of T20 bowling in particular is about thinking through your sequencing of which ball to bowl or when, and I think over the course of the season you get to learn pretty quickly what's working and what isn't," he said. "Even if it doesn't work first game, and you feel like it's never going to work every game, but you know that if you zoom out over the course of the tournament it's going to work for you. So it's nice coming in here with that confidence."

Sri Lanka players criticise their T20 WC schedule citing lengthy travel time

PTI ■ NEW YORK
Sri Lanka captain Wanindu Hasaranga and spinner Maheesh Theekshana have lambasted the scheduling of their team's matches in the ongoing T20 World Cup, saying the roster is "unfair" and has already forced them to cancel one practice due to the long travel time. Sri Lanka lost their group D opener to South Africa and Theekshana spoke out on the scheduling which he believes has negatively impacted the team. "So unfair for us, we have to leave every day (after the match) because we are playing (at) four different



venues," Theekshana said. "The flight we took from Florida, from Miami, we had to wait like eight hours in the airport to get the flight. We were supposed to leave at 8pm but we got the flight at 5am. It's really unfair for us, but it

doesn't matter when you play," he added. South Africa, on the other hand, will be playing two more games here while India, who will start against Ireland on Wednesday, will also play three matches in the city before their last group match in Florida. "...Even from the hotel, it (the practice venue) is one hour and 40 minutes. Even today (for the match against South Africa), we had to wake up around 5am to come here," Theekshana pointed out. And that's why the island nation was forced to cancel a training session ahead of the South Africa match. "Yeah, that's why," Theekshana said. Theekshana refused to take names but did mention that a few teams "have got the opportunity to stay in the same place but their hotel is only 14 minutes to the ground."

Everything about this place suits me: Phil Salt revels in Caribbean homecoming

PTI ■ BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS)
It was a homecoming of sorts for England opener Phil Salt when he touched base here for the T20 World Cup. Salt lived in Barbados for five years after moving to the island as a 10-year-old and was there in the stands when England won the 2010 T20 World Cup. He eventually moved back to England and as an emerging player was eligible to play for the West Indies as well. "Everything about the place suits me. Pretty laid back, a lot of cricket, a lot of sport and I've still got a lot of friends on the island," Salt was quoted as saying by the ICC's official website for the World Cup. He is back as one among England's defending champion team which will open its campaign against Scotland later on Wednesday. The right-hander made his T20 International debut in January 2022, six months after padding up for the first time in ODIs. "I watched England here, watched them win it. I think every kid in the crowd would have gone, that's going to be me one day, or I'd like that to be me one day, but you never believe it," he said. "So now to be here in an England shirt, with the opportunity to do something special in the next month is incredible really. I got a touch of the trophy that day."

All-round Afghanistan trounce Uganda by 125 runs for winning start in T20 WC

PTI ■ PROVIDENCE (GUYANA)
Pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi produced a fiery spell after Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadran struck half centuries in a solid opening partnership as Afghanistan began their T20 World Cup campaign with a comprehensive 125-run victory over debutants Uganda here. Kolkata Knight Riders opener Gurbaz (76 off 45 balls) and his partner Zadran (70 off 46 balls) registered the second highest opening partnership (154) in the men's T20 World Cup as Afghanistan posted a challenging 183/5 after being asked to bat. Left-arm pacer Farooqi (5/9) then knocked the wind out of the Ugandan batting line-up with his maiden five-wicket haul. The debutants were shot out for 58 in 16 overs. "The kind of start we wanted as a team. Does not matter who we play, it is about the mindset," skipper and country's biggest cricket icon



Rashid Khan said after the match. "The hard work we have done in the last few weeks, the way the openers started and the way our bowlers bowled - it was a great overall team effort," Rashid, who polished off the tail, added. "That is the beauty of this team. We have so many options and that makes it easy as a captain," world's premier T20 spinner gushed. Seamer Farooqi was twice on the brink of claiming a hat-

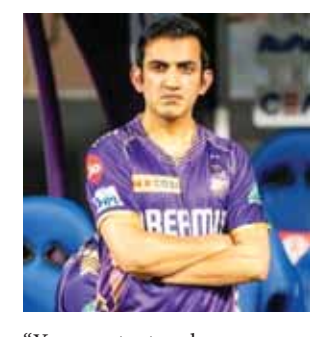
trick. He was lethal with the new ball. After being hit for a four off his first delivery, he bowled a brilliant in-swinging which clipped Ronak Patel's bat before crashing onto the stumps. He then trapped Roger Mukasa leg before wicket with a similar delivery. "I have missed it (getting the hat-trick) a few times (smiles). Something that is not under my control and if I get a chance again, I will try to get that hat-trick," Farooqi

said while collecting his 'Player of the Match' award. Naveen-ul-Haq also picked up two wickets in his first over, leaving Uganda in dire straits at 18/5. Farooqi then returned in the 13th over to snare three more wickets to register his career-best figures in T20 Internationals. He first deceived Riazat Ali Shah with a slower delivery to bowl him out before forcing skipper Brian Masaba to nick the ball with an eager Gurbaz collecting it. He missed out on a hat-trick again but claimed his fifth victim in the last ball of the over. "I kept it simple and wanted to hit the wickets. Playing franchise cricket helps you improve and helps on the big stage as well. "Playing with so many big players, it helps in dealing with pressure and in bowling in the right areas," said Farooqi, who has played for SRH in previous editions of IPL.

Gambhir is a shrewd tactician, will make a good coach for Indian team: Lalchand Rajput

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Former India coach Lalchand Rajput says Gautam Gambhir is the right candidate to take Indian cricket forward since he is a shrewd tactician, a no-nonsense guy and someone who adds value to the set up being a two-time World Cup winner. Although it is not known if Gambhir has officially applied for the India coach post, it is being speculated that he may replace Rahul Dravid in the high-pressure position after the T20 World Cup. The deadline to apply for the job ended on May 27. "Gambhir is a no-nonsense guy, he has played cricket the hard way and he reads the game well and that has been seen for KKR (Kolkata Knight Riders) as well," Rajput, who coached India to T20 World Cup win in 2007, told PTI in an exclusive interaction on Tuesday. Rajput cited the example of Kolkata Knight Riders's

winning run at the IPL. "KKR was the same team last year and you see the difference that he made this year. He is a shrewd tactician as well," said Rajput, the director of cricket for Jabalpur Lions in the upcoming Madhya Pradesh T20 League (MPT20) the Scindia Cup. Rajput said Gambhir's experience as a two-time World Cup winning Indian player would also come handy. "I am sure with all his experience - he has won two World Cup (wins) as a player - that will really add value. He is a good candidate, but it all depends upon BCCI who they want. He will be the right candidate to take Indian cricket forward," Rajput added. The former India opener drew comparisons between India's squads from the 2007 World T20 winning side with the current squad in the Americas, saying having experienced players in the side is paramount.



"You got to have some experience as well. We can't just go with the fairly new (side) because in World Cup, pressure is also there," he said. "You should have some senior guys and along with that the juniors because they have to complement each other. Even if you look at our 2007 squad, there were seniors like (Virender) Sehwag, Gambhir, Irfan Pathan, Harbhajan (Singh), RP Singh, Yuvraj Singh..." "Yes, there were youngsters like Rohit Sharma, Robin Uthappa and even Dinesh Karthik - there was a good mixture (and) it

complemented well," he said. Rajput said it would be a headache to select India's playing XI but backed Rishabh Pant as the wicketkeeper-batter and Virat Kohli as the opener. "It is a headache to get to the final XI because everybody has been performing well. But wicket-keeping choice, definitely, Pant is the frontrunner because there is no other second thought," he said. "It is the only thing that who will open, if (Yashasvi) Jaiswal opens, then your balance becomes a little bit (off), then you can't play both Hardik Pandya and Shivam Dube." "Looking at the balance, Virat Kohli opens, then you can have Suryakumar (Yadav) at No. 3, then No. 4. Can be Pant. At five, Hardik Pandya, No. 6 will be Shivam Dube," he added. Rajput urged the Indian team to think positively and not about the end result as they chase an elusive ICC trophy.