

OPINION 6

INDIAN VOTERS DELIVER A RESOUNDING VERDICT

WORLD 8

ISRAELI STRIKE KILLS AT LEAST 33 AT GAZA SCHOOL

MONEY 10

STOCK MARKETS EXTEND RALLY TO SECOND DAY ON EASING POLITICAL WORRIES

NEW DELHI, FRIDAY JUNE 7, 2024; PAGES 12-13

Established 1864

# the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

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

Late City Vol. 34 Issue 157 \*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

SARABJOT SHOOTS GOLD AT MUNICH WORLD CUP  
11 SPORTS



## Flashback of Coalition Era; Oath on June 9th

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

With caretaker Prime Minister Narendra Modi likely to take oath on June 9 for the third term, demands put up by the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief N Chandrababu Naidu, Janata Dal (Secular) and Janata Dal (United) have put the BJP leadership in a catch 22 situation. It is the first time Modi will be ruling the Government in a coalition without his party having an outright majority. Given the experience of two successive NDA regimes, the complete control of the Government this time will not be in the hands of BJP as it does not have an absolute majority. However, the party is resistant to ceding control over major Ministries to its new alliance. Given the emerging scenario, the BJP top brass will have to deal deftly with these challenges. Top brass of BJP, including Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh and RSS leaders, met on Thursday at party president JP Nadda's residence to discuss the modalities. The TDP and JD(U), holding 16 and 12 seats respectively, are eyeing their preferred Ministries. The TDP is seeking four-five Cabinet berths and Speaker's post, while the JD(U) is pushing for three Ministers. Additionally, Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena, with 7 seats, and Chirag Paswan's LJP, with five seats, each expect two Ministries. Based on initial discussions, the allies are demanding one Minister for every four MPs.



The BJP reportedly asserted retaining crucial portfolios like Defence, Finance, Home, and Foreign Affairs as the deliberations for the distribution of Union Cabinet portfolios are reportedly underway in the NDA. Besides seeking Lok Sabha Speaker's post, TDP's demands include five portfolios: Education, IT, MoS in Finance, rural development, housing and urban affairs, ports & shipping and road transport and highways. Apart from Defence, Finance, Home and Foreign Affairs, the BJP will also want to keep the Ministries that deal with infrastructure development, welfare, youth affairs and agriculture with itself. These portfolios are important for implementing the schemes for the four significant voter groups — the poor, women, youth and farmers. Naidu is also eyeing the position of Lok Sabha Speaker in view of the anti-defection law. The Speaker's post move is likely to protect the alliance partners from any possible split in the future but the BJP appears unwilling to accept this demand. TDP is also seeking more funds for irrigation projects in Andhra Pradesh and to complete the building of its new capital, Amaravati. Now, MoS Finance is expected to be a key post for the TDP, plus two-three other full Ministries, which helps in the development of Andhra Pradesh, The Minister of Civil Aviation and

is hoping that former Chief Minister HD Kumaraswamy is likely to be given the agriculture or any other related portfolio as the party's vote base is largely in rural areas. The Narendra Modi government formed after the 2014 and 2019 elections had only symbolic representation of allies because the BJP had absolute majority on its own. But this time, the BJP may have to distribute ministerial berths in proportion to seats won by each ally. Newly elected MPs of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance will meet on Friday to elect Modi as their leader, paving the way for him to take oath as Prime Minister for a third term. Sources said after Modi's election as the leader of NDA MPs, senior members of the alliance like TDP's N Chandrababu Naidu and JD(U)'s Nitish Kumar will join the Prime Minister for a meeting with President Droupadi Murmu to present her the list of parliamentarians supporting him. Another BJP ally and LJP(R) leader Chirag Paswan, who is seen as a contender for a Cabinet berth, said his party's support to Modi is unconditional, stressing that it was under his leadership that the NDA has won a majority. All NDA constituents are likely to present letters of their support to the President for Modi as the new Prime Minister on Friday, he added. Asked about the JD(U)'s demand for a review of the 'Agnipath' scheme, Paswan quoted Modi as saying in the NDA meeting on Wednesday that he was open to suggestions from allies on different issues.

### Nitish bats on INDIA's poll pitch



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/PATNA

BJP's second largest alliance partner in NDA, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar-led Janata Dal (United) on Thursday sought for a review of the Agnipath scheme, "pursue" of the caste census issue and a review on Uniform Civil Code (UCC), a poll pitch made by the Congress-led INDIA Bloc in the just concluded general elections. And not only this, a day after committing for unconditional support to Narendra Modi to move ahead with his third term as Prime Minister, the party said it will make a bid for "up to three" Cabinet berths based on the formula one Minister over four MPs. JD (U) sources said the party is keen on portfolios such as railways, rural development, agriculture, water resources and heavy industries. "There is anger among voters on the (short-term army recruitment) Agniveer scheme. Our party wants those shortcomings to be removed, on which people have objections," said JD(U) spokesman and a former Rajya Sabha MP KC Tyagi. Asked if his party will push for a caste census, Tyagi said, "No party in the country has denied a caste census. Bihar has shown the way, the Prime Minister also did not oppose... It is the demand of the time, and we will pursue it." Further, he also said the JD(U) is not opposed to the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) but all stakeholders should be consulted on it. "On the UCC, the Chief Minister (Nitish Kumar) had written to the Law Commission. We are not against the UCC. But there should be consultation with all the stakeholders, Chief Ministers, political parties and different sects, and a resolution should be found," he said. In its support to the BJP as a member of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), JD(U) said, "There is no pre-condition, there is unconditional support. But it is in our mind that Bihar should be given special status. After bifurcation, the situation Bihar has faced, it cannot be corrected without granting it special status." **Continued on Page 2**



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addresses a Press conference in New Delhi on Thursday. Photo: Ranjan Dimri / The Pioneer

### Probe 'fake' exit polls for stock market spurt: Rahul

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Buoyed by the huge electoral gains in the just concluded Lok Sabha elections, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday sought an enquiry against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and all those involved in 'manipulating' the stock markets around June 4 when the Lok Sabha poll results were to be announced. Rahul alleged that Modi and Shah were "directly involved" in what he described as the "biggest stock market scam" in which retail investors lost Rs 30 lakh crore, and demanded a Joint Parliamentary Committee probe into it. Congress will also discuss it during the party's working committee (CWC) meeting convened on Saturday post Lok Sabha poll results and how to corner the Government by also roping in INDIA Bloc members on this issue. A former IAS officer EAS Sarma, who served as Finance Secretary in 1999-2000, too demanded an enquiry by the Enforcement Directorate into the June 4 stock market crash on the day of election results in which Rs 31 lakh crore of investors' wealth was wiped out. Addressing a Press conference at the AICC, Rahul also said stock markets rose after "fake" exit polls and then crashed the day Lok Sabha polls votes were counted on June 4. "For the first time we noted that during polls, Prime Minister Modi, Home Minister Shah, and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman commented on the stock market," he said. Why did the Prime Minister and Home Minister give investment advice to people, Rahul asked and alleged that BJP leaders had information that exit polls were wrong. "We want the JPC probe into the biggest stock market scam," he said. People higher up in the BJP carried out this stock market scam and Modi and Shah were directly involved, the Congress leader alleged. "We want an

inquiry against Prime Minister Modi, Home Minister Shah and those who carried out the exit polls," he said. "This is a broader issue than the Adani issue. It is connected to the Adani issue but it is much broader. This is directly the Prime Minister of India and the Home Minister who are privy to data on the actual election results, who have the IB reports, who have their own data, and who are advising retail investors to buy stocks. Quite interestingly, this has never happened before that the PM has commented on the stock market. This is happening for the first time and multiple times when he is saying that the stock market is going to boom. He has information that the exit polls are wrong and he knows what is going to happen because of the IB data and his own party data," Rahul said at the jam-packed Press conference. In a letter to Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth, Sarma wanted to know if market regulator Sebi has taken any action to calm the market or initiated an investigation to ascertain the reason behind sharp fluctuations in stock market movement on June 3 and 4. "It is disturbing that a combination of factors triggered a stock market surge on June 3, 2024, followed by a huge crash during the day that followed, wiping out the hard-earned savings invested in the market by small and marginal investors, allowing the bigger stock market sharks to profiteer at their cost. Even today, the stock market has not fully recovered," said Sarma, who was a Secretary in the Finance Ministry between 1999 and 2000. Following the exit poll prediction of a resounding BJP victory, BSE benchmark Sensex shot up on Monday by 2,507 points or 3.4 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 76,469. However, a day later on Tuesday, the equity markets witnessed a bloodbath, with the Sensex tanking 4,390 points or 6 per cent to settle at 72,079. This was the worst single-day fall in 4 years.

### More voters but lower turnout in 2024, confirms EC



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As the results have already been announced and the Government formation has begun, the Election Commission (EC) on Thursday lifted the model code of conduct (MCC) and said the overall voter turnout in the Lok Sabha elections was recorded at 65.79 per cent. In a communication to the Union Cabinet Secretary and State Chief Secretaries, the EC said as results of Lok Sabha elections and Assembly polls in Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, along with some Assembly bypolls have been declared, "model code of conduct has ceased to be in operation with immediate effect". As per the EC's data, in the 2019 parliamentary polls, the turnout was 67.40 per cent. In 2019, India had 91.20 crore voters and out of these, 61.5 crore had exercised their franchise. In the 2024 polls, the size of the electorate grew to 96.88 crore voters. The women voter turnout was 64.72 per cent while that of men was 63.11 per cent. The turnout of persons of the third gender was 22.33 per cent, the data showed. Similar trends were witnessed in the fifth and sixth phase of the polls held on May 20 and May 25 respectively. In the fifth phase, the women voter turnout was 63 per cent and that of men was 61.48 per cent. In the sixth phase, 61.95 per cent men and 64.95 per cent women voted, according to EC data. The overall voter turnout of the 2024 general election was 65.79 per cent, it said. In the seventh phase, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh were among the States that had a higher women voter turnout. In Himachal Pradesh, the turnout of women voters was 72.64 per cent while that of men was 69.19 per cent, it was 73.75 per cent for women and 68.10 per cent for men in Jharkhand and it was 76.50 per cent for women and 72.42 per cent for men in Odisha. In Uttar Pradesh, the women voter turnout was 58.56 per cent compared to 53.47 per cent for men. EC's data showed that in absolute numbers, out of 10.6 crore electors, 6.42 crore exercised their franchise in the last phase of parliamentary polls. As many as 57 seats went to polls in the seventh phase on June 1. The sixth phase of polls held on May 25 recorded a turnout of 63.37 per cent. Fifty-eight constituencies spread across eight states went to polls in the sixth phase. **Continued on Page 2**

**Sabse Pehle** Life Insurance

Plan No.: 871 UIN: 512N363V01

**GUARANTEED REASON FOR CELEBRATION**

**with Lifetime Guaranteed Returns**

Also Available Online

**Whole Life Insurance with flexibility to choose benefits**

- Limited Premium Paying term 5 to 16 years
- Guaranteed Additions during Premium Paying term
- Regular Income Benefit / Flexi Income Benefit
- Minimum Basic Sum Assured ₹ 5 lacs

A NON - LINKED, NON - PARTICIPATING, INDIVIDUAL, SAVINGS, WHOLE LIFE INSURANCE PLAN

Download LIC Mobile App

Visit: licindia.in

Call Centre Services (022) 6827 6827

Our WhatsApp No. 8976862090

For details, contact your Agent/Nearest LIC Branch or SMS YOUR CITY NAME to 56767474

Follow us: LIC India Forever | IRDAI Regn No.: 512

BEWARE OF SPURIOUS PHONE CALLS AND FICTITIOUS / FRAUDULENT OFFERS. IRDAI is not involved in activities like selling insurance policies, announcing bonus or investment of premiums. Public receiving such phone calls are requested to lodge a police complaint. For more details on risk factors, terms and conditions, please read sales brochure carefully before concluding a sale.

भारतीय जीवन बीमा निगम  
LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION OF INDIA

Har Pal Apke Saath

LIC/PI/2023-24/13/Eng



# BJP MPs in touch with us, says TMC

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Barely a few days into a trouncing victory the Trinamool Congress has claimed that a number of BJP MPs from Bengal had started contacting its top leadership. The State saffron leaders however rejected the claim quickly calling it a "fake story" and a part of TMC's horse-trading games.

A senior TMC leader on Thursday said that at least three out of the 12 victorious BJP MPs had been in contact with the TMC leadership and could soon meet party general secretary Abhishek Banerjee. Though the leader would not give the names he said out of the three leaders at least one was from South Bengal. The TMC trounced the saffron party hands down in recently concluded general elections winning 29 out of 42 parliamentary seats. The BJP won 12 and the Congress bagged one seat. In 2019 elections the



BJP had stunned the TMC by winning 18 seats. "Look at the irony... it is the same BJP Home Minister who was claiming that after 2024 general elections the TMC will crumble like a house of cards and most of its leaders would join the BJP... and now they have to give clarifications why the their own victorious MPs are frequently calling up the TMC office,"

said the leader. Bengal BJP president Sukanto Majumdar however rejected the TMC's claims saying this was "a fake" news adding, "they may resort to some horse-trading but will fail miserably." Meanwhile, Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari on Thursday appealed to Governor CV Ananda Bose to visit the areas

hit by post poll violence alleging the TMC goons were attacking the BJP workers at various parts of the State often rendering them homeless. "I will request the Governor to visit the violence torn areas as the TMC goons are attacking our men for having taken part and campaigning for the BJP in the elections," Adhikari said. In a letter to the Governor he wrote, "As has become synonymous now with West Bengal, the goons of the ruling dispensation has gone berserk upon BJP workers after the declaration of the results of general elections, 2024, on June 4." The alleged TMC goons had attacked the Opposition houses including those of the BJP and Left in a large part of the State, reports said. Attacks were carried out at Rajpur, Sonarpur, Canning, Jaynagar in South 24 Parganas, sources said adding a BJP MLA's office at Durgapur too had

been looted and ransacked. Several BJP party offices at Barrackpore — from where Arjun Singh had contested and lost against the TMC — have been vandalized sources said. The CPI(M) too complained of similar attacks. Party leader and star campaigner Meenakshi Mukherjee said how houses and properties of poor workers had been vandalized and looted at Asansol, Jadavpur, Bankra in Howrah district, Khardaha and Panihati in Dum Dum areas. "There fault is just that they had prevented the TMC from capturing booths... so their shops and houses are being looted and torched... Mamata Banerjee is presiding over these programmes... but remember one day will come when these things will end and TMC will have to go," she said reminding the Left won at least ten elections but never tried to decimate the opposition.

# BJP's move to grant ST status to Paharis didn't pay off in LS polls

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

In the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls, the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) led Union Government had granted the Scheduled Tribe status to the Pahari community hoping to reap rich political dividends. Scrutiny of the Assembly segment-wise poll results revealed the gamble didn't pay off on ground zero. Jammu and Kashmir APNI party candidate, Zaffar Iqbal Manhas, supported by the Bharatiya Janta Party, could garner around 18 percent of the total valid votes polled across the seven assembly segments of Rajouri and Poonch in the Anantnag-Rajouri parliamentary constituency. Manhas polled 92521 votes from Rajouri and Poonch and 49674 from 11 Assembly segments of South Kashmir. He polled 142195 votes (18.14%) of the total valid votes of

1019925. PDP Chief Mehbooba Mufti performed badly as well. Mufti gathered little over 17 percent valid votes from the seven Assembly segments of the twin border districts. She polled 88459 votes from Rajouri-Poonch and 151583 from the Kashmir valley. Jammu and Kashmir National Conference candidate Mian Altaf Ahmad, a tall Gujjar leader turned out to be the biggest beneficiary of the Pahari community voters as he garnered around 58 percent of the total valid votes polled. Mian Altaf Ahmad polled 300043 votes from the seven assembly segments and 221793 from the 11 assembly segments of the South Kashmir Parliamentary constituency. Out of 1816371 votes, as many as 7,29,830 voters were distributed across seven assembly segments of Rajouri

and Poonch districts. However, the remaining 10,86,541 voters were distributed across the eleven constituencies of three districts—Shopian, Kulgam, and Anantnag of South Kashmir. Approximately 60 percent of 7,29,830 voters in Rajouri and Poonch districts belong to the Pahari community while the remaining 40 percent are Gujjar and Bakerwal community votes. When the BJP high command decided against fielding their party candidates from any of the three seats across Kashmir valley the decision was taken to support the candidature of a like-minded political party in the fray. During the entire poll campaign on the Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seat, the BJP leaders openly sought votes for a Pahari leader Zaffar Iqbal Manhas of the Jammu and Kashmir APNI party.

# Kangana slapped by woman CISF constable at Chandigarh airport

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH/NEW DELHI

Actor and BJP MP Kangana Ranaut said she was hit in the face and abused by a woman CISF constable during security check at the Chandigarh airport on Thursday, the ugly fracas breaking out two days after she was elected to the Lok Sabha from Mandi in Himachal Pradesh. The constable, who appeared to be upset with Ranaut over her stance on the farmer protests, has been suspended

and an FIR lodged against her, officials said. The Central Industrial Security Force, tasked with providing security at airports, has also ordered a court of inquiry into the incident. In a video statement titled "Shocking rise in terror and violence in Punjab" posted on X after she landed in Delhi, the "Queen" actor said she was safe and fine. Recapping in detail what had happened, Ranaut said she had been getting a lot of calls from the media and her well-wishers. The constable, she said, came towards her from

the side. "She hit me in the face and started abusing me. I asked her why she did it and she said she supports the farmer protests." "I am safe but my concern is that terrorism is increasing in Punjab... How do we handle that?" Another video doing the rounds of social media showed the agitated constable talking to people presumably after the incident. "Kangana made a statement that farmers were protesting in Delhi because they were paid Rs 100 or Rs 200. At the time, my mother was one of



the protesters," she said in the purported video. Her name has not been officially disclosed. Terming the incident a serious matter, National Commission for Women chairperson Rekha Sharma called for serious action and said the panel had taken up the matter with the CISF. Those responsible for security at airport are themselves breaching security, she said in a post on X. Making her political -- and electoral debut -- and defeated her nearest Congress rival by over 74,000 votes

from Mandi in her home state Himachal Pradesh. The four-time National Award winner has been a high profile, prominent voice supporting the ruling party on issues like the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in 2019-20 and farmer protests in 2020-21. During the agitation against the three farm laws, Ranaut allegedly misidentified a woman farmer from Punjab and called her Bilkis Bano, an octogenarian who had made international headlines during the anti-CAA protests

earlier in the Delhi neighbourhood of Shaheen Bagh. She had then shared a tweet alleging that the 'Shaheen Bagh dadi' also joined the farmers' agitation over the new agriculture laws at various border points of the national capital. She retweeted the post with pictures of two elderly women and wrote that the "same Dadi" who featured in Time Magazine was "available in 100 rupees". The actor later deleted the tweet after Twitter users pointed out that both the women were different.

# Congress slams Centre for shifting of statues from Parliamentary complex

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Statues of Mahatma Gandhi, B R Ambedkar and Chhatrapati Shivaji among others have been removed from their original place within the Parliament premises and shifted to a lawn near the old building as part of a landscaping exercise, a move that drew sharp criticism from the Congress on Thursday. All the statues, including those of tribal leader Birsa Munda and Maharana Pratap, are now at the same place - the lawn between the old Parliament building and the Parliament library. Reacting to the development, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said on X, "Statues of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Mahatma Gandhi, and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar have just been removed from their places of prominence in front of the Parliament House. This is atrocious." Attacking the BJP, Congress's media and publicity department head Pawan Kherra said when Maharashtra voters did not vote for BJP, the statues of Shivaji and Ambedkar were



removed from their original place in Parliament. When they did not get clean sweep in Gujarat, they removed the statue of Mahatma Gandhi from its original place in Parliament, he said. "Just think, if they had been given 400 seats, would they have spared the Constitution?" Kherra said in a post in Hindi on X. The Parliament premises will sport a new look when the 18th Lok Sabha convenes for its maiden session in June as work is underway to integrate the entire complex, comprising four different buildings. As part of the redevelopment of

external areas, the statues of national icons, including those of Gandhi, Shivaji and Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, were to be moved to a lawn near Gate No 5 of the old Parliament building, which has been named as Samvidhan Sadan. This would pave the way for the creation of a vast lawn in front of the Gaja Dwar, which is used by the President and the Prime Minister to enter into the new Parliament building. The lawn can also be used for official ceremonies such as the President's address to the joint sitting of Parliament, usually during the Budget Session.

# States directed to ramp up preparations to deal with heatwave

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As a large number of pockets in the country continue to grapple with a heatwave, the Centre has directed states and Union territories to ramp up preparations, ensuring dedicated heat stroke rooms in healthcare facilities and bolstering fire safety measures. Dr. Atul Goel of the Union Health Ministry spearheaded a virtual review meeting, urging strict adherence to guidelines for combating heat-related illnesses and enhancing fire safety protocols. This proactive approach highlights the government's commitment to safeguarding public health amidst challenging weather conditions. State Health departments have been issued advisories and asked to implement guidelines on strengthening health systems preparedness for Heat-Related Illnesses (HRI) besides issuing a public health advisory with do's and don'ts. They have been urged to follow the guidelines on emergency cooling for severe heat-related illnesses and autopsy findings in heat related deaths. State health departments have



been asked to adhere to the joint communication from Secretary (Health), MoHFW and NDMA and a communication from Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) on health facility fire safety measures and checklist for assessment of health facility and ambulance preparedness to prevent and manage impact of heat. Earlier on March 23, states and UTs were asked to take proactive measures to prevent devastating incidents caused by extreme heat. This was followed by another letter on May 29 for taking all preventive measures in respect to fire safety. Measures to be undertaken by states and UTs, include imple-

mentation of Heat Health Action Plan, dissemination of early warning of heat waves issued by IMD, sensitisation and capacity building of health care staff on HRI symptoms, case identification, clinical management and surveillance. The Ministry also stressed on conducting regular preventive fire risk assessment drills to identify potentially vulnerable areas and implementing appropriate fire prevention measures, such as proper storage of flammable materials and regular and optimal preventive maintenance of electrical circuits and systems and establishing an emergency response plan with SOPs for evacuating patients, staff, and visitors in the event of a fire.

# All seven newly elected MPs of Delhi call on LG

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The seven newly elected BJP MPs from Delhi on Thursday called on Lt Governor V K Saxena at Raj Niwas, and discussed various issues including "water shortage crisis" in the city. The LG congratulated the new Lok Sabha MPs from the city and hosted a lunch for them, the Raj Niwas officials said. "Newly elected Members of Lok Sabha from Delhi called on Hon'ble Lt Governor today," Raj Niwas said in a post on X and shared Saxena's photo with the BJP MPs. Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, elected from South Delhi, said the BJP MPs paid a courtesy visit to the LG. "The water shortage crisis in Delhi and various other issues were discussed in the meeting. The BJP MPs were also guided by Saxena for development of Delhi," he said. The Supreme Court earlier in the day, while directing the Himachal Pradesh government to release 137 cusecs of surplus



drinking water for the national capital by June 7, said there should be no wastage of water by the Delhi government since there is an "acute water crisis". The BJP registered a clean sweep in Delhi in the May 25 Lok Sabha elections, third time in a row, winning all the seven seats by defeating the AAP-Congress alliance candidates. The BJP MPs including Bidhuri, Manoj Tiwari from North East Delhi, Bansuri Swaraj from New Delhi, Kamaljeet Sehrawat from West Delhi, Harsh Malhotra from East Delhi, Yogender Chandolia from North West Delhi and Praveen Khandelwal from Chandni Chowk called on the LG.

# WHO emphasises urgent need for tackling food safety challenges

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Every day, 1.6 million people worldwide, including 40 per cent of children under 5, suffer from illnesses due to unsafe food consumption, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has revealed, emphasizing the urgent need for global action to tackle food safety challenges and safeguard public health. Sharing the data on the eve of the World Food Safety Day, Saima Wazed, WHO Regional Director, underscored the urgent need for global action on food safety given that unsafe food not only poses health risks but also leads to reduced productivity and increased medical costs, amounting to a staggering annual loss of \$110 billion, particularly impacting low- and middle-income countries. "Unsafe food leads to reduced productivity and raises medical costs resulting from foodborne illnesses that amount to an esti-



mated annual loss of USD 110 billion, in low- and middle-income countries," she added. The Regional Director noted that the South-East Asia Region bears the second-highest health burden, after Africa, due to the consumption of contaminated food. The region experiences an estimated 150 million illnesses and 175,000 every year. Tropical climate, which promotes the spread of pests and advances the formation of naturally occurring toxins, coupled with the impacts of climate change are the reasons behind food contamination. "Food safety is a collective

responsibility, and governments, producers, and consumers need to play their role in ensuring food safety," Saima said. She called on governments to develop and regularly test the effectiveness of national food safety emergency response plans. The Regional Director said that producers or food business operators are responsible for implementing and updating food safety management plans. She also called on consumers to empower themselves by practising safe food handling at home and reporting a food safety incident. This year's theme, 'Prepare for the unexpected,' highlights the

importance of being proactive in preventing, detecting, and responding to food-related hazards. Addressing food safety requires a collective effort, with governments, producers, and consumers each playing a vital role. Governments must prioritize the development and testing of national food safety emergency response plans, while producers are responsible for implementing and updating food safety management protocols. Consumers, too, have a role to play by practicing safe food handling at home and promptly reporting any food safety incidents they encounter. Foodborne illnesses are usually infectious or toxic in nature and caused by bacteria, viruses, parasites or chemical substances entering the body through contaminated food. Chemical contamination can lead to acute poisoning or long-term diseases, such as cancer. Many foodborne diseases may lead to long-lasting disability and death.

# Nitish bats on INDIA's poll...

From Page 1 Support from allies like the JD(U) and Chandrababu Naidu-led TDP is crucial for the BJP as it could not reach the majority mark on its own in the Lok Sabha election. The BJP bagged 240 seats, 32 short of an absolute majority. Among its allies, N Chandrababu Naidu's Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Nitish Kumar's JD(U), which won 16 and 12 seats in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, respectively, and other alliance partners, the NDA has 293 seats. With 12 MPs, the JD(U) is the second biggest BJP ally after the Telugu Desam Party's 16. "We are now eyeing up to three Cabinet berths..." another close aide of Nitish said requesting not be named as of now since talks are going on. Another top party leader

said it is hopeful of a "respectable" representation in the Union Council of Ministers. "The matter of Cabinet berths will be decided by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and our party chief Nitish. But, it should be respectable," said Shrawan Kumar, JD(U) leader and Bihar Rural Development Minister. He also said the matter of representation in the Union Cabinet should be decided keeping the 2025 Bihar Assembly polls in mind. In 2019, a "token representation" of just one berth had been turned down by Nitish. Among the frontrunners for ministerial berths in the party include its Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Jha, Rajiv Ranjan Singh 'Lalan', Kaushalendra Kumar, Rampriti Mandal and Lovely Anand, they said.

# More voters but lower turnout in 2024, confirms...

From Page 1 According to data issued earlier by the poll panel, the fifth phase of the general elections held on May 20 recorded a turnout of 62.20 per cent. As many as 49 seats in eight States went to polls in this phase. The fourth phase, in which 86 constituencies in 10 States went to polls on May 13, recorded a turnout of 69.16 per cent, the highest among the six phases. The first phase of the Lok Sabha elections held on April 19 in 102 seats across 21 States recorded a turnout of 66.14 per cent. In the second phase, held on April 26 in 88 seats across 13 states, the turnout was recorded at 66.71 per cent, marginally higher than the first phase. In the third phase, 94 seats across 11 States went to polls on May 7 and recorded a turnout of 65.68 per cent. On Thursday, Chief Election

Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar, along with two Election Commissioners on Thursday presented details of newly elected Lok Sabha members to President Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here. The meeting is part of the process for the formation of the next or the 18th Lok Sabha. CEC Rajiv Kumar, accompanied by Election Commissioners Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu, met the President at 4.30 pm, a statement issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan said. "A copy of the notification issued by the Election Commission of India, in terms of Section 73 of the Representation of People's Act, 1951, containing the names of the members elected to the House of the People following the General Elections to the 18th Lok Sabha, was submitted by them to the President," it said.



# AAP to go solo in Assembly polls next year

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has decided to go solo in the Assembly polls next year in the national capital. AAP's Delhi convenor Gopal Rai on Thursday hinted that the ruling party in the city will go solo in next year's Assembly polls in 2025 while stating that his party's alliance with the Congress was only for the Lok Sabha 2024 elections. After a meeting of party MLAs and senior leaders at Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence, Rai said that the party gave full support to the INDIA bloc in the Lok Sabha polls. "The INDIA bloc was only contesting the Lok Sabha polls. Several parties fought elections together and AAP was also a part of it. As of now, there is no alliance

for the Delhi Assembly polls," he said. The AAP-Congress combine drew a blank in the Lok Sabha polls in Delhi, with BJP effecting a clean sweep on all seven parliamentary seats for a record third time. The AAP, in alliance with the Congress, that contested East Delhi, West Delhi, New Delhi and South Delhi seats could not secure a single win. However, its vote share rose to 24.14 per cent as compared to 18.2 per cent in 2019 polls. In 2014, the AAP's vote share was 33.1 per cent in 2014 general elections. The Congress lost all the seats of North East Delhi, North West Delhi and Chandni Chowk seats. The party secured a vote share of 18.94 per cent which was 22.6 per cent in 2019 elections.

In 2014 polls, the party secured 15.2 per cent vote share. Talking about the arrest of the AAP Chief, he said, "We have decided that since Kejriwal is still in jail, the AAP will continue its struggle." Further he said, "Since there was a Model Code of Conduct (MCC) in place for the last two months, the developmental work in Delhi was halted. We have decided that all the MLAs on Saturday and Sunday will hold a meeting with their party workers in their legislative assemblies and fasten the pace of developmental work. The MLAs will be between the public." Two AAP MLAs, including Kondli MLA Kuldeep Kumar and Malviya Nagar MLA Somnath Bharti, were defeated in their respective legislative assembly constituencies.



Rai also added that they have decided to hold a meeting of all the party workers on June 13. "We have decided that we will have a meeting of all the AAP workers in Delhi on June 13. The way the country is fighting against the jailing of Delhi Chief Minister, we will keep fighting against the dictatorship of BJP. On the other hand, due to MCC in place the developmental projects were halted, we will work on fastening its pace," he said. On the loss of all seven seats of Delhi in Lok Sabha elections, he stated, "There is a trend in Delhi that we have seen that the people vote differently in the Lok Sabha elections and Assembly elections. The pattern has repeated in this general election and will be repeated in the assembly

elections also in 2025. Hence, we are focusing on the developmental projects." On his party's alliance with the Congress in the national capital, he stated that the greatest benefit from this was that the margins of loss have reduced. "The biggest advantage from fighting with the Congress was that the margin of winning of the BJP candidates were reduced significantly," he said, adding that the circumstances in which the alliance lost was very different. Delhi has 70 assembly segments, including 13 SC reserved ones, and seven Lok Sabha constituencies. Each parliamentary segment has 10 assembly seats. In the recently concluded Lok Sabha polls, the AAP had allied with the Congress to contest the seven Lok Sabha

seats in the national capital. As far as Delhi is concerned, the AAP's vote share in the Lok Sabha elections has increased significantly compared to the 2014 and 2019 elections. Several reports, as a matter of fact, indicate that all constituencies of Delhi where Central government employees resides, have voted heavily in favour of AAP & against the BJP in the recently concluded LS elections. Despite the BJP's strong performance in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections, they were reduced to just 3 seats in the 2015 assembly elections and 8 in 2020. This time, the AAP's vote share in the Lok Sabha has seen a massive jump. If past trends are any indication, the BJP is poised to be wiped out in the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections.

## SC directs Himachal to release surplus water to Capital

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Amid water scarcity in the National Capital, the Supreme Court on Thursday directed the Himachal Pradesh Government to release 137 cusecs of surplus water available with it for Delhi, which is grappling with water crisis. A vacation bench of Justices P K Mishra and K V Viswanathan noted that the Himachal Pradesh government has no objection and is willing to release the surplus water available with it. The top court made it clear that there should be no wastage of water by the Delhi government and there should be no politics over water. One cusec (cubic foot per second) is equal to 28.317 litres of liquid flow every second.

Considering the urgency in the matter, the bench directed Himachal Pradesh to release the water on June 7 with prior intimation to Haryana. It said the Upper Yamuna River Board (UYRB) shall measure the excess water which comes to Hathnikund for its onward supply to Wazirabad and Delhi. "As and when the surplus water is released with prior information to Haryana by the state of Himachal Pradesh, the state of Haryana shall facilitate the flow of surplus water so released by Himachal Pradesh to Hathnikund and to Wazirabad so that it reaches Delhi uninterrupted and is made available for the citizens of Delhi for drinking water," the bench ordered. "A status report be submitted before this court on Monday (June



10)," it said. The apex court said the Delhi government and the respondents, including Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, shall file their compliance affidavits by Monday. The bench, which was hearing a plea filed by the Delhi gov-

ernment seeking a direction to Haryana to release the surplus water provided by Himachal Pradesh to the national capital to mitigate its ongoing water crisis, posted the matter for further hearing on June 10. The bench stressed that it is aware of the fact that there is an acute water crisis in Delhi and 'there should be no politics on water.' "Since Himachal Pradesh has no objection and is ready and willing to release the surplus water available with it, we direct that Himachal Pradesh shall release 137 cusecs of surplus water available with it from the upstream so that the water reaches Hathnikund barrage and reaches Delhi through Wazirabad," the bench said. "As and when surplus water is released with prior information to Haryana by the Himachal Pradesh government, Haryana shall facilitate the surplus water to Hathnikund and to Wazirabad barrage, so that it reaches Delhi uninterrupted and it is

made available for citizen of Delhi for drinking. There should not be any wastage of water by Delhi government." The bench said that a status report should be submitted before it on Monday and all the parties' (petitioner Delhi government and respondents Haryana and Himachal Pradesh) should file the compliance affidavit by Monday. During the hearing, the bench queried the Haryana government counsel, since Himachal Pradesh has no objection to supply excess water to Delhi then why is the Haryana government objecting to it? The apex court was hearing a plea by Delhi government seeking a direction to Haryana to release surplus water provided by Himachal Pradesh to the national capital to mitigate its ongoing water crisis.

## Government directs establishments to have proper fire safety arrangements

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has directed hotels, resto-bars, clubs and bonded warehouses dealing in liquor to have proper fire safety arrangements on Thursday. This comes against the backdrop of a fire tragedy in a private hospital where seven newborns died last month in East Delhi. The excise department of Delhi government recently issued direction that the resto-bars and eateries having less than 90 square metres area will also have to take all precautions and adequate safety measures to prevent any mishap or fire incident, failing which action including suspension or

cancellation of licence will be taken as per the rules. "At present, Delhi is facing severe heat waves due to which several fire incidents have occurred and accordingly the issue of fire NOC for restaurants and eateries has been reviewed," said the circular. The fire department presently grants no objection certificates (NOC) only to restaurants and eateries having an area of 90 square metres and above. The excise department is mandatorily seeking an affidavit regarding compliance of fire safety measures from the restaurants having area less than 90 square metres, said a recently issued circular.

## LG accords prosecution sanction against six accused in Parliamentary attack case

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Thursday accorded prosecution sanction under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) against the six people accused in the Parliament attack on December 13, 2023. Saxena has accorded prosecution sanction against the six individuals, namely Manoranjan D, Sagar Sharma, Amol Dhanraj Shinde, Neelam Ranolia, Lalit Jha and Mahesh Kumawat under UAPA, for illegally entering and allegedly attacking the Parliament and throwing smoke canisters in the Lok Sabha during the live session. The Delhi Police had requested their prosecution under section 16 and 18 of UAPA from the competent authority, i.e. the Lt. Governor, who found sufficient material on record, to grant the sanction. While the Delhi Police had requested for necessary prosecution sanction under UAPA, the Review Committee of Tis Hazari Court's Directorate of Prosecution (DoP) on May 30 had also gone through the



entire evidence collected by the Investigating Agency and found the involvement of the accused in Parliament attack case. The Review Committee noted that prima facie a case was made out against the accused under UAPA. The Delhi Police had registered a case on December 14 under section 186 (obstructing public servant in discharge of public information, 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty), 452 (house trespass after preparation for hurt, assault or wrongful restraint), 153 (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth,

## Sachdeva expresses gratitude to voters for support in LS polls

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva on Thursday said that the Lok Sabha 2024 election results show that people of the national capital are looking for an alternative for the assembly polls due next year while expressing gratitude to the voters of Scheduled Caste and Sikh majority constituencies for supporting the party in the elections. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which won all seven seats in Delhi in the 2014 and 2019 general elections, completed its third consecutive sweep in the city on Tuesday. "Our opponents used to say that vote split paved the way for the BJP's victory in the Lok Sabha polls but this time both the AAP and the Congress were defeated despite alliance," Sachdeva said. The Lok Sabha poll results also showed that people of Delhi have rejected the corruption of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and are looking for an alternative in the 2025 assembly polls, the Delhi BJP president said. "That alternative is the Bharatiya Janata Party," he said, adding that a double engine government at



the Centre and Delhi will make the national capital a world-class city. In the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP led over the AAP-Congress alliance candidates in 52 out of 70 assembly segments spread across the seven parliamentary constituencies in Delhi, Sachdeva claimed. He said the BJP has been out of power in Delhi since 1998 and there is a large section of people in the city who have not experienced a BJP-led government. People of Delhi gave chance to the Congress for 15 years and then to the AAP in the last 10 years but now they are looking for an alternative,

that BJP leader said. He said the BJP will provide better facilities to the people of the national capital and also make the city better. While stating that the support of every section of society is essential for victory, Sachdeva said, "BJP has thwarted the opposition alliance of AAP and Congress in this election, and the biggest contribution in that is of Delhi's Scheduled Caste and Sikh voters. Achieving victory by winning nine out of 12 reserved assembly constituencies in Delhi after almost three decades is a testament to the support of the poor who want a BJP government." He added

that BJP has also achieved unprecedented success in Delhi's 5 Sikh majority assembly constituencies. The AAP led by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal registered massive victories in the Delhi assembly polls in 2015 and 2020 restricting the BJP to just three and eight seats, respectively. Delhi has 70 assembly segments, including 13 SC reserved ones, and seven Lok Sabha constituencies. Each parliamentary segment has 10 assembly seats. Sachdeva said, "In the Lok Sabha elections, the united opposition fielded two Scheduled Caste candidates,

former MP Udit Raj and Kondli MLA Kuldeep Kumar. Where Udit Raj lost miserably with almost 3 lakh votes, MLA Kuldeep Kumar also suffered a crushing defeat in his assembly constituency Kondli." He added that based on the love and blessings of the Scheduled Caste community, BJP has won big in reserved assembly constituencies Bawana, Mongolpuri, Madipur Karol Bagh, Patel Nagar, Deoli, Gokulpuri, Trilokpuri, and Kondli with significant vote margins. "On the other hand, Ambedkar Nagar was lost by only 903 votes, while Seemapuri and Sultanpuri too were lost by small margins," he said, adding that in the Sikh majority constituency of Kalkaji, he won by 12,149 votes, while in Harinagar, he won by a significant margin of 9,846 votes. "We will now aim to win 12 Scheduled Caste and 5 Sikh majority assembly constituencies in the 2025 Assembly elections. BJP will now intensify its struggle for the rights of the Scheduled Caste community. Planned efforts will also be made to strengthen the party's connection with the Sikh community," he stated.

## Atishi welcomes SC direction to Himachal Pradesh to release surplus water for city

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Water Minister Atishi on Thursday welcomed the Supreme Court decision directing Himachal Pradesh to release surplus water to the national capital, terming it a "victory" for the people of the city. Meanwhile, the Delhi BJP claimed that they had urged AAP to demand excess water from its INDIA alliance partner Congress' ruled state, stating that they refused to do so. The Supreme Court on Thursday directed the Himachal Pradesh government to release 137 cusecs of surplus water available with it to Delhi, which is grappling with a water crisis. A vacation bench of Justices P K Mishra and K V Viswanathan noted that the Himachal Pradesh government has no objection and is willing to release the surplus water. The bench also directed the



Haryana government to facilitate the flow of surplus water released by Himachal Pradesh so that it reaches the national capital. In a post on X (formerly Twitter), Atishi said, "I salute the Hon'ble Supreme Court for standing with the people of Delhi during this unprecedented water crisis. This is a time that calls for coordinated effort above all else, and the SC

order marks a victory for the people of Delhi and their right to water." While welcoming the order of the Supreme Court of India, Delhi BJP Virendra Sachdeva said, "BJP had been urging the Delhi Government to demand excess water from Himachal Pradesh but it never did so. Today we have been proven right. All through the last

## Police calls for concerted efforts by all to tackle counterfeiting, unlicensed hotels

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police called for a concerted effort by all stakeholders to tackle the issue of counterfeiting and unlicensed hotels in the digital era, by utilising emerging technologies like blockchain and biometrics. Addressing a stakeholders' consultation organised by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) on the occasion of World Anti-Counterfeiting Day, Joint Commissioner of Police (Tech, Cyber and Licensing) B Shanker Jaiswal said, "AI has made things very complex. Earlier in the software industry, pirated versions of MS Office and Windows were a concern. Now, the counterfeiting problems are of a different nature." FICCI CASCADE (Committee Against Smuggling and Counterfeiting Activities Destroying the Economy) Chairman Anil Rajput said the



consultation with stakeholders aims to strengthen anti-counterfeiting efforts and protect consumers from the risks associated with counterfeit goods in the digital era. Emphasising the need to develop consumer-friendly blockchain technology to support the fast-growing economy and address counterfeiting issues in the digital world, Jaiswal highlighted the rapid advancement of deepfake technology, stating that anti-deep fake technology is lagging, and all stake-

holders should collaborate to address this challenge. Dwelling on unlicensed hotels to the hospitality sector, Jaiswal said, "The Delhi Police deals with the licensing of restaurants and hotels, granting licences only to those that meet the norms." However, he expressed concern over online aggregators like OYO and MakeMyTrip listing unlicensed hotels on their websites. "Some of the listed hotels may not have safety standards. Just because they are listed, as a

consumer, I have an implicit understanding that they are safe," he said. The Delhi Police had called a stakeholders' meeting to discuss the matter and stressed the need to integrate blockchain, cryptography, and biometric security to address counterfeiting problems in the digital world effectively. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Amit Goyal said, "Counterfeiting is one of the oldest known crimes and is evolving as per the market demand. With the rise in digital technology, counterfeiting has become more organised and difficult to track the gangs behind it." He added that e-commerce is also being used as a platform for selling counterfeit products, and cyber frauds are happening with the use of AI and deep fake technologies. "The way forward is training all the stakeholders and using technologies to track the culprits," he said.



# India to invite top neighbouring leaders on Modi's Oath ceremony

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

India is likely to invite leaders of a number of its neighbouring countries, including Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, to the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the weekend, it was learnt here. Modi is all set to take charge as the prime minister for a historic third consecutive term with the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) winning 293 seats in the Lok Sabha polls. Top leaders of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal and Mauritius are likely to be among the foreign leaders to be invited for Modi's oath-taking ceremony. The media division of Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe's office said Modi invited him to the swearing-in ceremony. It said Wickremesinghe accepted the invite and congratulated Modi on the electoral victory in a

phone call. "During the conversation, Prime Minister @narendramodi invited President Wickremesinghe to his swearing-in ceremony, which President @RW\_UNP accepted," it said. Modi also had a phone conversation with Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and invited her to attend his swearing-in ceremony which she accepted, sources said. They said Nepalese Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', Bhutanese Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay and Prime Minister of Mauritius Pravind Jugnauth are set to be invited to Modi's swearing-in ceremony. Modi had a separate phone conversations with Prachanda. The formal invitations are set to be sent on Thursday, said one of the people cited above. Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu was also invited for the swearing-in ceremony, it was learnt. The leaders of regional grouping SAARC (South Asian



Association for Regional Cooperation) countries attended Modi's first swearing-in ceremony when he took the reins as the prime minister after a massive electoral victory for the BJP. Leaders of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) countries attended Modi's swearing-in ceremony in 2019 when he became prime minister for the

second consecutive term. Modi is likely to take oath on June 8. More than 50 world leaders including US President Joe Biden, Russian President Vladimir Putin, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, French President Emmanuel Macron and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu congratulated Prime Minister Modi for securing third consecutive term.

Prime Minister Modi on Thursday received a congratulatory telephone call from Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Prime Minister's Office (PMO) here said. Modi thanked his Australian counterpart for his wishes. Modi warmly recalled his visit to Australia in 2023 and his meeting with Albanese on the sidelines of the G20 Summit last September in Delhi. Prime

Minister reiterated his firm commitment to work together with the Australian Prime Minister to further strengthen the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, and work closely on the shared priorities in the Indo-Pacific region. Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong congratulated his India counterpart Narendra Modi and his ruling alliance on their electoral victory, saying he was looking forward to deepening ties between the two countries, PTI said from Singapore. In a post on social media platform X, Wong described Modi's win, which secures a third consecutive term for him, as "historic". Wong said he was looking forward to working with Modi to deepen the Singapore-India partnership and to celebrate the 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two countries in 2025. "Congratulations @narendramodi on the historic victory by the NDA for the third consecutive term. Look for-

ward to working with you to deepen the Singapore-India partnership and to celebrate the 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties next year." President Biden on Wednesday congratulated Modi on his electoral victory, with his administration saying that it was looking forward to continuing to further its partnership with India to promote prosperity and innovation, address the climate crisis and ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific region, PTI said from Washington. Biden, who is currently travelling to France, personally made a phone call to Modi to congratulate him. "Congratulations to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the National Democratic Alliance on their victory, and the nearly 650 million voters in this historic election. The friendship between our nations is only growing as we unlock a shared future of unlimited potential," he said in a social media post later.

"The friendship between our nations is only growing as we unlock a shared future of unlimited potential," Biden said on X, which was soon followed by similar congratulatory messages by other senior members of his administration, including Secretary of State Tony Blinken. In a post tagging Biden on X, Prime Minister Modi said he was happy to receive the call from his "friend". "Deeply value his warm words of felicitations and his appreciation for the Indian democracy. Conveyed that India-US Comprehensive Global Partnership is poised to witness many new landmarks in the years to come. Our partnership will continue to be a force for global good for the benefit of humanity," Modi said. In his replies to world leaders, including Putin and Sunak, in their congratulatory messages to him, Modi has underscored the strength of India's relations with their countries and his commitment to further strengthening it.

## Priyanka hails people of UP Report: 93 per cent of MPs elected to LS millionaires

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday hailed the people of Uttar Pradesh (UP), saying they gave a solid message to the whole country of saving the Constitution and re-established the old ideal that public issues are paramount. The BJP-led NDA suffered a jolt in UP, where it won just 36 seats as against the INDIA bloc which bagged 43 -- a significant contribution to the overall tally of the opposition alliance. In a post in Hindi on X, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said, "My salute to all my colleagues of UP Congress. I saw you working hard in the sun and dust, you did not bow down, you did not stop, you showed courage to fight in the toughest of times." "Atrocities were committed



against you, fake cases were filed against you, you were put in jail, you were repeatedly put under house arrest but you did not get scared. Many leaders left in fear, you stood firm," she said. Priyanka further said she was proud of the vigilant people of Uttar Pradesh, who understood the depth and truth of this country and gave a solid message to the whole of India of saving the Constitution. "You have re-established an old

ideal in today's politics - that the issues of the people are paramount, the price of ignoring them is heavy," she said. The election is of the people, the people fight it and the people win, Priyanka said. The Akhilesh Yadav-led Samajwadi Party, which leads the INDIA bloc in Uttar Pradesh, alone got 37 seats this time, becoming the single largest party in the politically crucial state. The BJP managed to win just 33 seats.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

A staggering 93 per cent of the candidates who won the 2024 Lok Sabha elections are millionaires, up from 88 per cent in 2019, according to an analysis by poll rights body Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR). The top three wealthiest candidates are TDP's Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani from Andhra Pradesh's Guntur constituency with assets worth Rs 5,705 crore, BJP's Konda Vishweshwar Reddy from Telangana's Chevella with total assets amounting to Rs 4,568 crore and BJP's Naveen Jindal from Haryana's Kurukshetra with assets worth Rs 1,241 crore. Out of the 543 winning candidates, 504 are millionaires, the analysis found. In 2019, 475 (88 per cent) winning candidates were millionaires and 443 (82 per



cent) in 2014. The trend indicates a steady climb since 2009 when only 315 (58 per cent) MPs were millionaires. According to the analysis, 227 (95 per cent) of the BJP's 240 winning candidates, 92 (93 per cent) of the Congress' 99, 21 (95 per cent) of the DMK's 22, 27 (93 per cent) of the TMC's 29 and 34 (92 per cent) of the Samajwadi Party's 37 candidates have declared

assets worth more than Rs 1 crore. All winning candidates of the AAP (3), the JDU (12) and the TDP (16) are millionaires, ADR data showed. The analysis also delves into candidates' chances of winning based on their financial backgrounds. It found that the probability of a millionaire candidate clinching victory in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections stood at 19.6 per

cent, compared to a meagre 0.7 per cent for candidates with assets less than a crore. The analysis also provides a breakdown of wealth distribution among the winning candidates. The data showed that 42 per cent of the candidates possess assets totalling Rs 10 crore and above. While 19 per cent of the candidates fall within the bracket of Rs 5 to 10 crore, 32 per cent hold assets ranging between Rs 1 and 5 crore. Only about 1 per cent of the winning candidates have assets worth less than Rs 20 lakh. Among major parties, the average assets per winning candidate vary significantly. The TDP leads with an average of Rs 442.26 crore per winner, followed by the BJP with Rs 50.04 crore, the DMK with Rs 31.22 crore, the Congress with Rs 22.93 crore, TMC with Rs 17.98 crore and SP with Rs 15.24 crore.

The analysis also highlights disparities within the financial profiles of winning candidates. While some boast of substantial assets, others have relatively low worth. For instance, BJP's Jyotirmay Singh Mahato from West Bengal's Purulia has declared assets totalling a mere Rs 5 lakh. Similarly, TMC's Mitali Bag from West Bengal's Arambag holds assets worth Rs 7 lakh. Assets of SP's Priya Saroj from Uttar Pradesh's Machhlishahr are valued at Rs 11 lakh. In addition, the analysis identifies candidates with high liabilities. TDP's Pemmasani tops the list with liabilities exceeding Rs 1,038 crore. DMK's S Jagathrathakan from Tamil Nadu's Arakkonam has liabilities worth Rs 649 crore and TDP's Prabhakar Reddy Vemireddy from Andhra Pradesh's Nellore has liabilities worth Rs 197 crore.

## Lok Sabha polls 2024: About 280 MPs being elected for first time

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

The 18th Lok Sabha will see about 280 MPs who have been elected for the first time, an increase from the 2019 elections when 267 members were first-time MPs. A total of 263 newly elected MPs have previously served as members of Lok Sabha. Additionally, 16 MPs have been members of Rajya Sabha, and one MP has served seven terms in Lok Sabha, according to think-tank PRS Legislative Research. Of the re-elected MPs, eight changed their constituency, and one was re-elected from two constituencies. Nine re-elected MPs represented a different party in the 17th Lok Sabha, while eight others represented a party that split from their earlier party. Out of the 53 ministers who contested, 35 have won. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is the largest party in

the new Lok Sabha with 240 seats. The next largest party is the Indian National Congress (INC) with 99 seats, followed by the Samajwadi Party with 37 seats. Moreover, the average age of MPs elected to the 18th Lok Sabha is 56 years, a slight dip from 59 years in the 17th Lok Sabha, according to an analysis by think-tank PRS Legislative Research. According to the analysis, the average age of MPs elected to the 18th Lok Sabha is 56 years. The average age was 59 years in the 17th Lok Sabha. It said 11 per cent of the MPs are aged 40 or below, and 38 per cent are between the age of 41 and 55. About 52 per cent of the MPs are aged above 55 and the oldest MP is 82 years old. The Samajwadi Party's Puspendra Saroj and Priya Saroj became the youngest candidates to win the Lok Sabha polls at the age of 25, while the DMK's T R Bалу

(82) was the oldest candidate to win. Also, the 2024 Lok Sabha elections witnessed an increase in political parties' participation, with candidates from 41 parties being elected, compared to 36 in the 2019 general election. According to an analysis by the think-tank PRS, national parties secured 346 seats, accounting for 64 per cent of the total, while the state-recognised parties won 179 seats, representing 33 per cent. Unrecognised parties clinched 11 seats, and independents won seven. According to an analysis by the poll rights body of Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), there has been a 104 per cent rise in the number of political parties from 2009 to 2024. In 2024, a total of 751 parties participated, compared to 677 in 2019, 464 in 2014, and 368 in 2009. The ADR and National



Election Watch conducted a comprehensive review of the self-sworn affidavits of 8,337 candidates contesting the just concluded elections. The candidate pool comprises 1,333 from national parties, 532 from state parties, 2,580 from registered unrecognised parties, and 3,915 independent candidates.

As many as 251 (46 per cent) of the 543 newly elected Lok Sabha members have criminal cases registered against them and 27 of them have been convicted, according to an analysis by ADR. This is the highest number of candidates facing criminal charges to be elected to the Lower House. A total of 233 MPs (43 per

cent) had declared criminal cases against themselves, 185 (34 per cent) in 2014, 162 (30 per cent) in 2009 and 125 (23 per cent) in 2004. According to the analysis, there has been a 55 per cent increase in the number of MPs with declared criminal cases since 2009. Of the 251 winning candidates this year, 170 (31 per cent) face serious criminal cases, including rape, murder, attempt to murder, kidnapping, and crimes against women. This is also an increase from 159 (29 per cent) MPs in 2019, 112 (21 per cent) MPs in 2014, and 76 (14 per cent) MPs in 2009, the analysis showed. There has been a 124 per cent increase in the number of MPs with declared serious criminal cases since 2009, it said. The analysis also highlights specific cases among the winning candidates. While 27 winning candidates have

declared they have been convicted in criminal cases, four declared cases related to murder under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), and 27 declared cases related to attempt to murder under Section 307 of the IPC. Fifteen winning candidates have declared cases related to crimes against women, including two facing charges of rape under IPC Section 376. Additionally, four winning candidates have declared cases related to kidnapping and 43 have declared cases related to hate speech. The chances of winning for a candidate with declared criminal cases in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections stood at 15.3 per cent, compared to just 4.4 per cent for candidates with a clean background, the analysis found. Of the 240 winning candidates of the BJP, which emerged as the largest party in the 18th Lok Sabha, 94 (39

per cent) have declared criminal cases, according to the ADR. Forty-nine (49 per cent) of the Congress' 99 winning candidates have declared criminal cases and 21 (45 per cent) of the Samajwadi Party's 37 candidates face criminal charges. Thirteen (45 per cent) of the TMC's 29, 13 (59 per cent) of the DMK's 22, eight (50 per cent) of the TDP's 16, and five (71 per cent) of the Shiv Sena's seven winning candidates have declared criminal cases. Sixty-three (26 per cent) BJP candidates, 32 (32 per cent) Congress candidates and 17 (46 per cent) SP candidates have declared serious criminal cases, the analysis found. Seven (24 per cent) TMC candidates, six (27 per cent) DMK candidates, five (31 per cent) TDP candidates, and four (57 per cent) Shiv Sena candidates face serious criminal cases, it stated.

## Congress asks if Modi would fulfil promise of giving special status to Bihar, Andhra Pradesh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi whether he would fulfil his promise of giving special category status to the states of Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh also took a swipe at the prime minister, saying it is being claimed repeatedly that the Modi 3.0 government will be formed but the truth is that this time it will be "Modi 1/3 government". In a video statement posted on X, Ramesh said the Congress has four questions for the prime minister -- two for Andhra Pradesh and two for Bihar. "On April 30, 2014, in the holy city of Tirupati, you promised to give special category status to Andhra Pradesh so that massive



investment comes in. It's been 10 years but it has not happened. Will that promise be fulfilled now? Will the PM give special category status to Andhra Pradesh," Ramesh said. He claimed that Prime Minister Modi has been trying to privatise the steel plant in Vishakhapatnam. "All parties are opposed to this. Will you stop the privatization of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant now?" he said.

Ramesh also asked the prime minister whether he will fulfil his 2014 election promise and the ten-year-old demand of his ally and JD(U) chief Nitish Kumar by giving special category status to Bihar. "There has been a demand for this but the PM did not break his silence on the issue," he said. Ramesh said the 'mahagathabandhan' government of the RJD, Congress and Nitish Kumar had gotten a caste

survey done in Bihar. We demanded that a nationwide caste census be carried out and even Nitish Kumar has supported this. Do you (PM) promise to conduct caste census in the entire country like it has been done in Bihar?" Ramesh said. The Congress' posers on Bihar and Andhra come after the BJP on its own fell short of an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha polls but it may, as things stand, form the government on the back of its allies. With support from Naidu's TDP and Nitish Kumar's JD(U), which won 16 and 12 seats in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, respectively, and other alliance partners, the NDA has crossed the halfway mark. The TDP and JD(U) have already dismissed suggestions of defecting to the opposition alliance and have clearly stated that they will remain with the NDA.

## Experts stress on strategies, prevention measures to combat dengue threat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

As climate change exacerbates the spread and intensity of mosquitoes breeding across the country and dengue threat looms large, experts have stressed on strategies including larval elimination, development of patient-friendly drugs and vaccines, and engagement with local communities and effective prevention measures to combat the escalating threat which is on the rise across the countries. Dr. Tanu Jain, Director of the National Centre for Vector Borne Diseases Control (NCVDC) emphasised the necessity of intersectoral coordination and greater community involvement in combating infectious diseases like dengue, particularly with the impending monsoon season. "For the community, it starts with awareness about the impor-



tance of cleanliness inside and outside their homes, and in workspaces," Dr. Jain highlighted. She was speaking at a recent community forum organized by the Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative (DNDi) South Asia in collaboration with Maulana Azad Medical College (MAMC), Delhi here titled "Dengue Jagrukta Abhiyan: Samudai Bhagidari, Sabki Jimmewari," that aimed to foster unity among com-

munities in the fight against dengue. Dr. Balram Bhargava, Former Secretary of the Department of Health Research & Director General of ICMR, underscored the urgent need for new diagnostic kits and the fast-tracking of trials for dengue drugs and vaccines. Likewise, Dr. Kavita Singh, Director of South Asia DNDi, stressed the importance of diverse collaborations in tackling global health issues, including inter-

ministerial cooperation and action-oriented dialogues among community members, ASHA workers, and health professionals. "This is especially true for the Asia region where dengue is the fastest spreading vector-borne disease and carries over 70 per cent of the disease burden," she noted while Dr. Nandini Sharma, Ex Director & Head of Community Medicine at Maulana Azad Medical College, discussed the necessity of creating patient-friendly drugs. "The development of a vaccine will not guarantee its widespread acceptability unless the community is fully convinced of its efficacy." Dengue, the most prevalent mosquito-borne disease globally, has seen a significant rise in cases in India over the past two decades owing to rapid urbanization, population growth, rising temperatures, and climate change.



# Congress won in Haryana because of lies it spread about reservation end: CM Saini

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini Thursday said the Congress could win five seats in Haryana because it succeeded in spreading the lie that if BJP is voted back to power at the Centre it will abolish reservation and scrap the Constitution.

Saini made the remark speaking to reporters after Speaker Gian Chand Gupta administered oath to him as legislator in his chamber. Saini, who was sworn in as the chief minister on March 12, won the by-election for the Karnal assembly seat held last month.

On Congress leader Bhupinder Singh Hooda's demand from the governor to dismiss the state BJP government, Saini asserted that his dispensation had won the trust vote in March and there is no threat to it.

Asked about reasons for losing five seats to Congress, which scored zilch in the previous general election, Saini said "...We held a meeting of our MLAs and Ministers yesterday. The issue which has emerged is that in this election Congress took support of lies."

He said the Congress "succeeded in spreading the lie that if Modi ji becomes Prime



Minister for the third time, the Constitution will be scrapped and reservation ended." Ahead of Haryana Assembly polls due in October, Saini said that BJP workers will reach out to the SC community and visit every home and "expose the Congress's propaganda." They will also tell them that it is the Congress which insulted the constitution on various occasions, he said.

On Congress's claim that his government is in minority, Saini said his government still had a majority. "On March 13, on the floor of the House, we won the trust vote. If Hooda feels the government is in minority and that he has the numbers, let

him parade his MLAs before the Governor," he said. Saini had taken oath as chief minister on March 12 after the party replaced Manohar Lal Khattar with him. Saini said the Congress may have wrested five seats, but the poll percentage of BJP in the LS polls in the state was more than the Congress. BJP secured a vote share of 46.11 per cent against Congress's 43.67 per cent. Saini said in its six years of rule, Congress did not do as much work as the Narendra Modi government did over the past ten years. The government brought out 25 crore people out of poverty, he said.

"I will appeal to people of state that they should understand the lies of Congress and propaganda they spread," he said.

Saini recently defeated his main rival, Congress's Tarlochan Singh to win the bypoll for the Karnal Assembly seat, which was earlier held by party colleague Manohar Lal Khattar.

In the 2019 Assembly polls, Khattar had retained the seat defeating Tarlochan Singh. Saini, the outgoing MP from Kurukshetra, had contested the by-election for the Karnal assembly seat after he replaced Khattar as chief minister. The bypoll was necessitated by Khattar's resignation as MLA from Karnal after his removal from the post of chief minister. Polling for the state's 10 Lok Sabha seats and the Karnal assembly constituency was held in the sixth phase of the general election on May 25 and the results were declared on June 4. Khattar, who was fielded by the BJP from the Karnal parliamentary segment, won the seat.

# BJP will analyse reason for poor show in Bihar, says Samrat

PTI ■ PATNA

Bihar BJP president Samrat Chaudhary on Thursday said the party will analyse the reason for its poor show in the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections in the state.

Compared to the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the NDA's tally in Bihar decreased by nine seats. The JD(U) lost four seats - Kishanganj, Katihar, Purnia, and Jahanabad - while the BJP lost in Patliputra, Arrah, Buxar, Aurangabad, and Sasaram Lok Sabha seats.

The INDIA bloc managed to win nine seats, while independent candidate Pappu Yadav won the Purnia Lok Sabha constituency. "People of Bihar gave us 75 per cent marks (12...we lost 25 Lok Sabha seats...we lost 25 per cent seats (five seats). We could have easily won more Lok Sabha seats. We (NDA) were expecting to win 39-40 seats this time. We will certainly examine the reason for the party's poor performance in seats that we lost," Chaudhary, who is also



the state Deputy Chief Minister, told reporters here. "We will discuss what went wrong in each constituency and why we lost. The NDA, under the leadership of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, has also started preparations for the 2025 assembly polls," said the Bihar BJP president. Within the NDA, JD(U) and the BJP won 12 seats each, while the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) secured five seats, and the Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) won one seat. In the INDIA bloc, the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) won four seats, Congress three seats, and the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation two seats.

# BJP's Biplab Deb keen to be Tripura CM again

PTI ■ AGARTALA

Despite his thumping victory in the Lok Sabha election, BJP leader Biplab Kumar Deb on Thursday expressed his strong desire to return as the chief minister of Tripura. However, everything depends on the party, said Deb, who guided the BJP to capture power in Tripura ending a 25-year-long Communist rule in 2018 and became the chief minister before being abruptly removed four years later. Tripura BJP president Manik Saha then took charge and after the 2023 assembly

elections, he continues to be at the helm of the BJP-led government in the state.

Currently a Rajya Sabha MP, Deb defeated his rival Asish Kumar Saha of the Congress by over six lakh votes from the West Tripura Lok Sabha constituency. Saha was also the joint candidate of the INDIA bloc.

"A chief minister is the head of a state while a union minister works under the prime minister. I prefer to return to state politics. And, it will not be less than the post of the chief minister. I had worked in the state as head of the government, not a minister," he told PTI.



President Draupadi Murmu hosted a farewell dinner for the outgoing Council of Ministers led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday. Vice President Jagdeep Dhankar, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla were also present on the occasion. Pioneer photo

## PUBLIC NOTICE

It is informed to the public at large that the Jammu and Kashmir Bank Ltd., Sector-18, Noida. (P) is desirous of sanctioning Housing Loan Facility in favour of Sh. Kulwant Singh S/o Sh. Gopal Singh and Smt Rita Rautela W/o Sh. Kulwant Singh, for purchasing built-up Flat No 4101, Tenth Floor, Sapna Ghar CGHS Ltd., Plot No. 6B, Sector 11, Dwarka, New Delhi. If anyone has any objection or claim the title/rights of the said property, please contact the undersigned within 7 (Seven) days of this Public Notice.

The Jammu and Kashmir Bank Ltd. Sector-18, Noida, (U.P.) M.No. 995833360

## PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given that Veena Manglik, Gaurav Manglik & Saurabh Manglik claims to be owner and in possession of Flat No. 504, Dwarka-2, Tower No. 20 in Gulmohur Garden, Raj Nagar Extn. Ghaziabad, U.P. (herein after called the said property) having inherited half undivided share in the said property after the death of Ajay Kumar Manglik who expired on 10.04.2023, said Ajay Kumar Manglik and Veena Manglik were the joint owners of the said property vide Sale deed dated 15.01.2020 reg. vide doc no. 557 & said Veena Manglik, Gaurav Manglik & Saurabh Manglik have agreed to sell the said Property to Jagat Sharma & Meenu Sharma and said Jagat Sharma & Meenu Sharma has agreed to create a mortgage in favour of our clients Axis Bank Limited, Axis House Sector 128, Noida U.P. any person's having claim against the said Property, or any part thereof, by way of sale, exchange, mortgage (equitable/registered or otherwise), gift, trust, inheritance, lien or otherwise whatsoever, are hereby intimated to notify the same in writing to us with supporting documentary evidence at the address mentioned below within 7 days from the date hereof, failing which the claim or claims, if any, of such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned and our client shall proceed with the disbursement of loan and subsequent creation of mortgage in respect thereof.

Vishal Diwan (Advocate) For Diwan and Company LLP H. No.2 (LGF), NRI Complex New Delhi-110002 Mobile No. 9816399999

## CHANGE OF NAME

I, Suman W/o Virender Singh and D/o Badlu Ram Yadav bearing permanent Account Numer (PAN), KRKPS2825G resident of House No.256, Kapashera, South West Delhi-110037, I hereby declare that Suman and Hirnwati is the one and the same person. Henceforth I shall be known as Suman for all future purpose.

PD(501)C

I, Mahipal Singh S/o Narendra Singh Bhandari R/o Flat No. B-106D, Rajat Vihar, Sector-62, Noida, UP-201301 have changed my name to Mahipal Singh Bhandari for all purposes.

PD(502)C

## LOST & FOUND

I, Sanjeev Kumar Sharma S/o Mahesh Chand R/o C-6/306 Yamuna Vihar Delhi-declare that my property documents Demand Letter Possession Letter Possession Slip D. Form have been lost. Finder please contact-9810220062

PD(503)C

## PUBLIC NOTICE

That my Clients Mrs. Shubha G. V. W/o Mr. H.B. Suresh & Mr. H.B. Suresh S/o Mr. H. Basava Rajappa are the owners of Free Hold Flat Bearing No. 287, Pocket-J, CAT-III, First+ Second floor, Duplex, Sarita Vihar, New Delhi-110076. Have lost(1). Original Possession Slip issued by DDA in favour of Kuldeep Singh Gulati in respect of Flat No. J-287 Dated: 04.02.1991(2). Original SPA executed by Mr. Mani Gulati in favour of Mrs. Ritu Gulati regarding to execute conveyance Deed by DDA in favour of Mani Gulati. If anyone found these said documents or have any objection regarding these documents please inform me on my given Mobile No. 9911004142. Within seven days.

Yogesh Kumar (Advocate)

## PUBLIC NOTICE

The Public at large is hereby informed that Late Shri Vineet Chawla S/o Late Shri P.L. Chawla R/o 33, Surya Niketan, Delhi 110092 was having residential property in joint ownership along with his wife Smt Neeti Chawla, in our project - Vatika India Nextcity which his legal heirs Vijay Chawla, Advityaa Chawla and Neeti Chawla requested the company to be transferred to Mrs. Neeti Chawla and Mr. Advityaa Chawla. Any person having any objection on this please may contact the company officer details as under within 15 days after which No Claim would be accepted.

Vatika Limited A-002, Ground Floor, Block-A, Vatika INXT City Centre, Sector-83, Gurugram, Haryana, INDIA - 122012

## NORTHERN RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE

Sr. DEE-TRS-GZB acting for and on behalf of President of India invites E-Tender against Tender No. 230-TRS-GZB-2023-24-29. The details are as under:-

Sl. No.	Name of the work	Supply, Installation and Commissioning of CCTV Cameras including its accessories in the premises of Electric Loco Shed, Ghaziabad.
1.	Approx. cost of work	Rs. 10,96,220.00
2.	Earnest Money to be deposited	Rs. 21,900.00
3.	Last Date & Time of Submission of tender	27.06.2024 (11:00 Hrs.)
4.	Date & Time of opening of tender document	27.06.2024 (After 11:00 Hrs.)
5.	Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen	www.ireps.gov.in

Note: (i) The tenderer/s must be registered on the Indian Railway E-Procurement System (IREPS) site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for participating in e-tender system. (ii) For all terms and conditions please refer tender document. (iii) No manual offers are acceptable. (iv) Cost of Tender document and Earnest money will be acceptable through net banking or payment gateway only.

No.: 230-TRS-GZB-2023-24-29 Dated: 04.06.2024 1692/2024

## SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

IN THE COURT OF HONORABLE JUDGE SHRI H.P. Mehta SIR COURT NO 06

IN THE COURT OF COMMERCIAL COURT AT CIVIL COURT OF AHMEDABAD Commercial Civil Suit No. 1145/2021

Chandrakant M. Mehta Authorize Person of Kartik Clothing And Pvt. Ltd. At -42/43, Hirabhai Market, Divan Ballubhai School Road, Kankariya Ahmedabad-22

Suresh Kumar Agwal Owner of Gartex Shop No. 6315 Padamsinh Road, Near Bapnagar, Devang Nagar, Karolbaug, Delhi-110060

Suit Valued at Rs. 4,60,160.00

The defendant is hereby informed that the summons issued against you by this court repeatedly remained unresponded and as your whereabouts are unknown this summons is published as per order below Exn. 20. Whereas the plaintiff above named has instituted suit against you under Order XXXVII of the code of Civil Procedure, 1908 for Rs. 4,60,160.00 with interest and cost from the date of filing of the suit till realization. You are hereby summoned to cause and appearance to be entered for your suit within ten days from the publication hereof in default where of the plaintiff will be entitled to at any time after the expiration of such ten days to obtain decree for any sum not exceeding the sum of Rs. 4,60,160.00 and such amount as the court may award for costs and interest. If any of the court may award, if you cause and appearance to be entered for you, the plaintiff will thereafter served upon you a summons for judgment at the hearing of which you will be entitled to ask the court for leave to defend the suit.

Leave to defend may be obtained if you satisfy the court by affidavit or otherwise that there is a defense to the suit on merit or that it is reasonable.

Witness Shri Ahmadabad aforesaid. Plaintiffs Advocate - A.G.Jani

C.M. Mahida Prepared by Assistant K.M. Datunia Compared by Superintendent Grade-I H.S. Deesai City Civil Court, Bhadra Ahmedabad

IN THE COURT OF HONORABLE JUDGE SHRI H.P. Mehta SIR COURT NO 08

IN THE COURT OF COMMERCIAL COURT AT CIVIL COURT OF AHMEDABAD Commercial Civil Suit No. 435/2020

Chandrakant M. Mehta Authorize Person of Kartik Clothing And Pvt. Ltd. At -42/43, Hirabhai Market, Divan Ballubhai School Road, Kankariya Ahmedabad-22

V/s 1. Tusharbhaji Subhashbhai Khanna Owner/Authorize Person of Avion Fabrics At-Dukan No. 27, D.D.A Market, Double Store, New Rajendranagar, New Delhi-110060

2. Subhashbhai Khanna Reside - H - 352, Dhanna House, New Rajendranagar, New Delhi - 110060

Suit Valued at Rs. 4,77,623.00

Whereas you the defendants is/are hereby informed that the summons issued against you by this court through bailiff and/or Register post, ad has returned unresponded subsequently, and as your current whereabouts are unknown, hence in the consequence plaintiff advocate has given application vide FALL 15 and court ordered on it therefore this summons is published. Whereas Plaintiff above named has instituted a suit relating to a commercial dispute against you and you are hereby summoned to file a statement within 30 days of the service of the present summons and in case you fail to file the written statement within the said period of 30 days, you shall be allowed to file the written statement on such other days, as may be specified by the court, for reasons to be recorded in writing and on payment of such costs as the court deems fit, which shall not be later than 120 days from the date of services of summons on you. On expiry of one hundred and twenty days from the date of services of summons you shall forfeit the right to file the written statement and the court shall not allow the written statement to be taken on record. You are required to appear in this Court in person by a pleader duly instructed, and able to answer all material questions relating to suit or which shall be accompanied by some person able to answer all such questions on the 15 day of June of 2024 at 11:00 O'Clock in the fore noon, to answer the claim lodged by the applicant seeking interim injunction as prayed and further you are hereby to produce on the said day all documents in your possession or power upon which you base your defence or claim for set-off or counter-claim, and where you rely on any other document whether in your possession or power or not, as evidence in support of your defence or claim, you shall enter such documents in list to be annexed to the written statement. Take notice that, in default of your appearance on the day before mentioned the suit will be heard and determined in your absence.

Witness Shri Ahmadabad aforesaid. Plaintiffs Advocate - A.G.Jani

C.M. Mahida Prepared by Assistant K.M. Datunia Compared by Superintendent Grade-I H.S. Deesai City Civil Court, Bhadra Ahmedabad

## PUBLIC NOTICE

It is to inform to the public at large that Mr. Bhatti Aggarwal has acquired One Flat on Left Side Portion of Third Floor with roof rights, Built up Property No. 544 area 38 sq. yds. Kharsa No. 58/4, situated in the area of Village Khujeli, Kharsa, Guru Ram Dass Nagar, Ilaga, Shahdara, Delhi vide Regd. GPA dt. 13.05.2005 executed by Mr. D.K. Bhargava and Mr. Narendra Goel along with ATS. Now Mrs. Bhatti Aggarwal is the undisputed owner of above said property.

Any person / firm / institution / company having any claim or right in respect of the said Property by way of inheritance, share, sale, agreement, lease, license, gift, possession, legal heirs, partners or encumbrance whatsoever or otherwise is hereby required to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice of his/her share or claim, if any, with all supporting documents at below mentioned address. After expiration of notice period, the claims, if any, of such person shall be treated null and void and also treated as waived and not binding on our client.

Ajay Giri (Advocate) H No. 26/161, Basement, Vikram Vihar, Lajpat Nagar 4, New Delhi 110024

## PUBLIC NOTICE

It is to inform to the public at large that Mr. Shadi Lal has acquired Plot area measuring 300 sq. yds., Khawat No. 62/56, Khatoni No. 75, Mu. No. 45, Kila No. 4(8-0), situated at Village Agwanpur, Tehsil & Distt. Faridabad, Haryana vide regd. GPA dt. 21.11.2014 executed by Mr. Ashwani Goyal, Now Mr. Shadi Lal is the undisputed owner of above said property.

Any person / firm / institution / company having any claim or right in respect of the said Property by way of inheritance, share, sale, agreement, lease, license, gift, possession, legal heirs, partners or encumbrance whatsoever or otherwise is hereby required to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice of his/her share or claim, if any, with all supporting documents at below mentioned address. After expiration of notice period, the claims, if any, of such person shall be treated null and void and also treated as waived and not binding on our client.

Ajay Giri (Advocate) H No. 26/161, Basement, Vikram Vihar, Lajpat Nagar 4, New Delhi 110024

## PUBLIC NOTICE

General Public is hereby informed that My clients Sh. Vinod Kumar Kanodia, S/o Sh. Krishan Lal Kanodia and Mrs. Anu, W/o Shri Vinod Kumar Kanodia, both R/O C-4, DDA Janta Flats, Katwara, Sarai, Phase-1, New Delhi, have severed all their relations with their son Sh. Rohit Kumar, S/o Sh. Vinod Kumar Kanodia and his wife Mrs. Pritibha Sharma, W/o Sh. Rohit Kumar, due to their bad habits, abnormal behavior and false allegations. Both of my above named clients do hereby irrevocably, unconditionally and irreversibly also declare and state that they have disowned, disinherited and debarred their said son and daughter in law from all their movable and immovable properties and all the other assets. Anybody dealing with Sh. Rohit Kumar and his wife Mrs. Pritibha Sharma, will do so at his/her/their own risk and responsibility and my client Sh. Vinod Kumar Kanodia, S/o Sh. Krishan Lal Kanodia and Mrs. Anu, W/o Shri Vinod Kumar Kanodia shall not be responsible for any act, deed or dealing done by anyone (whatsoever) with Sh. Rohit Kumar and his wife Mrs. Pritibha Sharma, now and forever in future.

The General Public is also hereby informed that all the transactions done by them or any such dealing with the aforementioned clients will do so with their own cost/risk and none of them will be responsible and in case any loss or liability arises, the respective parties should bear it in their own risk and any such relations with their son and daughter in law in future, may do so, in their whichever manner they want to, with a condition that my clients won't be part of any such dealings or transactions arising therefrom.

VINAY PAL (ADVOCATE) Enr No UP/7606/2014

Ch.No 625, 6th Floor D Block, Additional Complex Building, Supreme Court Of India, New Delhi - 110001, Mb. 8860251052

## SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited Plot No-23, Shal Tower, 3rd Floor, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005

The Authorised ICICI Bank Officer under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued Demand Notices to the borrower(s) mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice.

Having failed to repay the amount, the Notice is issued to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken symbolic possession of the property described below, by exercising powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property. Any dealings with the property will be subject to charges of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower(s)/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand (Rs)	Name of Branch
1.	Mantosh Kumar/ Susnita Das/ LBDE000002372711/ LBND00000537568	Flat No. T13-2001, Tower No. 13, 20th Floor, "Exotica Dreamville", Situated At Plot No. Gh-01/A, Sector-16C, Phase-2, Greater Noida District Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh Noida-201307. / June 5, 2024	February 13, 2024 Rs. 24,77,654/-	Delhi/ NCR
2.	Buland Akhtar/ Shahnoj Ansum/ LBDEL00001692983	L.I.G (DS-II), Flat No.256-B, First Floor, Situated At Block-B, Sector-19, Noida, District Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh- 201301./ June 5, 2024	February 28, 2024 Rs. 4,97,021/-	Delhi/ NCR

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/guarantors(s) is/are hereby issued a 30 day Notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold after 30 days from the date of publishing this Notice, as per the provisions under Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Date: June 07, 2024 Place: Delhi/ NCR Sincerely Authorised Signatory For ICICI Bank Ltd.

## SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited Plot No-23, Shal Tower, 3rd Floor, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005

The Authorised ICICI Bank Officer under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued Demand Notices to the borrower(s) mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice.

Having failed to repay the amount, the Notice is issued to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken symbolic possession of the property described below, by exercising powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property. Any dealings with the property will be subject to charges of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower(s)/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand (Rs)	Name of Branch
1.	Vinod Kumar Bhasini/ Gulshan Kumar Bhasini/ LBDEL000055696299/ LBDEL000055696633	Property No-17/68-A, A Second Floor, Without Roof Rights, Right Block 17, Situated At Tilak Nagar, New Delhi 110018/ June 04, 2024	January 11, 2024 Rs. 40,95,041/-	Delhi/ NCR
2.	Aayush Singh/ Daulat Singh/ Sadhana Singh/ LBGH700005188692	Flat No.3J-0606, Tower-3, 6th Floor (Without Roof Rights), Block-J, Nilaya Greens, Kharsa No.1015, 1023/1M, 1023/2M, Area 1023 M, Village Mota, Raj Nagar Extension, NH-58, Paragana, Jalalabad, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh 200001/ June 04, 2024	January 17, 2024 Rs. 24,55,504/-	Delhi/ NCR
3.	Archana Singh/ Satya Prakash Singh/ LBDEL000072265/ LBDEL00002872267	Flat No. 1108, Tower-B, 11th Floor, (Without Roof Right), Word No. 16/ Loni, Situated in The Residential Group Housing Complex At 'SG Homes', Plot No GH-04, Sector-3, Vasundhara, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh 201001./ June 04, 2024	February 28, 2024 Rs. 25,10,220/-	Delhi/ NCR
4.	Vaani Singh/ LBDEL00005957485/ LBGH700005981061	Flat No. A-1204-A, 12th Floor, Tower A, Mehak Jeevan, Nh-58, Raj Nagar Extension, Tehsil and District Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh- 201001./ June 04, 2024	February 16, 2024 Rs. 15,29,505/-	Delhi/ NCR
5.	Rajendra Pratap Singh/ Swaati/ LBDEL00005044535	Property Bearing No A-20, Front Side/ Northern Side Third Floor With Entire Terrace Naraina Vihar Delhi 110075/ June 04, 2024	February 13, 2024 Rs.4,00,79,291/-	Delhi/ NCR

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/guarantors(s) is/are hereby issued a 30 day Notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold after 30 days from the date of publishing this Notice, as per the provisions under Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Date: June 07, 2024 Place: Delhi/NCR Sincerely Authorised Signatory For ICICI Bank Ltd.

## "Form No. INC-25A

Advertisement to be published in the newspaper for conversion of public company into a private company Before the Regional Director, Ministry of Corporate Affairs Northern Region, New Delhi

In the matter of the Companies Act, 2013, section 14 of Companies Act, 2013 and rule 41 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014 AND

In the matter of M/s Clearhead Consultants Limited (CIN: U74110UP1995PLC193374) having its registered office at Unit No. 620, Tower Astralis Building, Supreme Sector-94, Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar-201301 UP. Applicant

Notice is hereby given to the general public that the company intending to make an application to the Central Government under section 14 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with amended rules and a draft of converting into a private limited company in terms of the special resolution passed at the Extra Ordinary General Meeting held on 24th Day of May, 2024 to enable the company to give effect to such conversion. Any person whose interest is likely to be affected by the proposed change/status of the company may deliver or cause to be delivered or send by registered post of the objections supported by an affidavit stating the nature of the interest and grounds of objection to the concerned Regional Director, B-2 Wing, 2nd Floor, Pt. Deendayal Anandya Bawan, 2nd Floor, CGO Complex, New Delhi-110003, within fourteen days from the date of publication of this notice with a copy to the applicant company at its registered office at the address mentioned below.

For and on behalf of: M/s Clearhead Consultants Limited Sd/- Meera Singh (Director) DIN: 07185789 Complete address of registered office: Unit No. 620, Tower Astralis Building, Supreme Sector-94, Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar-201301 UP Date: 04/06/2024 Place: Noida

## POSSESSION NOTICE

(For Immovable Property) [See rule 8 (1)]

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorized officer of the Indian Bank under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the power conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 issued a demand notice dated 11.04.2022 calling upon the borrower Mr. Narendra Kumar Sharma R/O LGF-13, Basement Devika Chamber RDC Raj Nagar, Ghaziabad Uttar Pradesh 201001 also at A-269, Sector 23, Sanjay Nagar, Ghaziabad Uttar Pradesh 201001 to repay the amount mentioned in the being Rs. 4.44.643.00 (Rupees Four Lakh Forty Four Thousand Six Hundred Forty-Three only; inclusive of MOI of Rs. 52,945.1- Only) and FITL of Rs. 46,961.00/- (Forty-Six Thousand Nine Hundred Sixty-One Only





www.dailypioneer.com

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

PAPER WITH PASSION

## Hearth over heart

Taking Ram temple credit couldn't help BJP win Ayodhya; voters wanted development instead

The BJP slogan 'Jo Ram ko laaye hain, hum unko laayenge' (We will support those who brought Ram to Ayodhya), though catchy, failed to resonate in the very city where the temple was built. The BJP's shocking loss on the Ayodhya seat underscores a fundamental principle: Development must take precedence over religious agenda. Coming just months after the grand consecration, the BJP's defeat underscores the nuanced dynamics between religious fervour and tangible progress. Ayodhya holds profound significance in the cultural and religious ethos of India. The temple was a promise long-awaited, one that the BJP fervently championed. However, it could not harvest the political spoils and its nominee from Faizabad — which includes Ayodhya — Lallu Singh was defeated by Samajwadi Party's Awadhesh Prasad by 54,567 votes. Ostensibly, apart from the Dalit vote favouring the INDIA bloc, the pressing issues of development and unemployment trumped religion. The loss has ignited a discourse questioning the efficacy of prioritising religious symbolism over pragmatic development initiatives. It also underscores the evolving priorities of the electorate. While religious sentiments undoubtedly hold sway, voters increasingly demand from their leaders tangible improvements in the quality of life, infrastructure and economic prospects. The discrepancy between the monumental religious symbolism and on-the-ground developmental realities became starkly evident during the elections.



We Indians are without a doubt God-fearing, but we are logical and rational as well. In Ayodhya, the grandeur of the new temple failed to resonate with the local populace, which was hurt and disappointed in the aftermath of demolished homes and ruined businesses, and inadequate compensation. The disconnect between the monumental temple inauguration and the pressing concerns of Ayodhya's residents highlights the need for a more balanced approach to governance. In Ayodhya, as in any other region, the electorate seeks more than symbolic gestures; they yearn for substantive change that enhances their livelihood and fosters inclusive growth. The BJP's loss in Ayodhya serves as a caution to political parties across the spectrum: While symbolism may evoke transient fervour, only concrete progress resonates with voters in the long run. The BJP's Ayodhya setback should serve as a wake-up call for all political stakeholders. Furthermore, the Ayodhya episode underscores the crying need for secular governance in a diverse and pluralistic democracy like India. While respecting religious sentiments, the State must maintain a principled stance of impartiality, ensuring that policies and initiatives benefit all citizens irrespective of their faith or belief system. Let us not forget the Constitution drafters wanted that the State must keep its hands off religious matters and, though added later, 'secularism' is still there in the Preamble. Invoking Gods in campaigns is not a done thing. Let Ram remain apolitical, in the name of Ram. Please.

PTI

### PICTALK



Married women tie threads to a banyan tree as part of rituals of 'Vat Savitri Puja', in Ranchi

# Indian voters deliver a resounding verdict



B K JHA

Voters reject Modi's divisive politics, empowering the Opposition to safeguard democracy and reflecting a nuanced view of the ruling party's tenure

India's electorate has delivered its verdict, and the message is crystal clear. The voters have used the ruling party's performance over the past decade as a mirror, reflecting both approval and disapproval. On one hand, they have rejected Prime Minister Narendra Modi's divisive politics. On the other hand, they have empowered the opposition, enabling it to play the role of a robust guardian of democracy. This impartial decision signals that the public is weary of divisive, communal politics and rejects any attempt to split the nation along religious lines. This sentiment is evident in the defeat of the BJP candidate in Ayodhya, a place where the BJP had grand visions of surpassing the 400-seat mark by building the Ram Temple. However, while the electorate has not completely dismissed the BJP, which has ruled the country for the past ten years on a platform of negative politics, it has significantly reduced its stature. The public has made it clear that their primary concern is the nation's welfare, and they will not tolerate the continued burden of rising prices, economic strain, and jobless growth. The opposition's strengthened position in the Lok Sabha elections sends a similar message: the ruling party must not envision a Lok Sabha devoid of a vibrant opposition. The results of this election highlight several key issues, such as the Agnipath scheme for the military, inflation, unemployment, Hindutva, and the narrative of constitutional changes. Throughout the campaign, Prime Minister Modi, despite giving nearly a hundred interviews, avoided addressing these critical issues faced by the public. Meanwhile, the opposition concentrated its narrative on these very concerns. This contrast has shown that no government can keep the populace in an illusory world for long. Ultimately, any government at the Centre or State must measure up to the people's real-life experiences and struggles. By denying the ruling party a clear mandate after ten years of absolute power, the electorate has signalled to both the government and the opposition



that if they do not prioritize public interests, they will not be spared in the future. The results also convey a strong disapproval of derogatory language. The voters have punished those MPs of the ruling party who used unparliamentary language against opponents both in the Lok Sabha and on public platforms. This outcome manifests the public's demand for civility and respect in political discourse. Furthermore, this election has reaffirmed the credibility of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs). Opposing parties, which had been casting doubts on EVMs for the past decade, emerged victorious through the very same machines, suggesting that the allegations were unfounded. However, despite these results, the Election Commission of India (ECI) remains under scrutiny regarding its impartiality. This election became the first in India where the ECI failed to enforce the Model Code of Conduct effectively. Moving forward, it is hoped that the ECI will learn from these results and ensure that future elections adhere strictly to the Model Code of Conduct, without fear or favouritism. The ECI needs to take a page from



THE PUBLIC HAS EXPRESSED THAT THEY ARE NOT SWAYED BY NOISE AND DIVISIVE POLITICS BUT ARE FOCUSED ON TANGIBLE ISSUES AFFECTING THEIR DAILY LIVES

TN Seshan, the former Chief Election Commissioner, who enforced strict adherence to the code in the late 20th century, compelling politicians to use appropriate language and behaviour. The autonomy and integrity of the Election Commission are crucial elements in motivating opposition parties to participate in elections without fear and with impartiality. These are the main pillars that contribute to the credibility of the democratic exercise. The electorate's wisdom in this decision deserves profound congratulations. It has demonstrated a commitment to democracy and a keen understanding of the issues that matter most. The public has expressed that they are not swayed by noise and divisive politics but are focused on tangible issues affecting their daily lives. This election is a testament to the strength of India's democracy, where the people's voice continues to be the ultimate authority. As India moves forward, the onus is on both the ruling party and the opposition to heed this clear mandate. They must address the real issues—economic stability, employment, inflation, and social harmony—over rhetoric and

divisive policies. The electorate's message is unequivocal: governance must be about the people's welfare, and any deviation from this path will not be tolerated. Notwithstanding the results, the stock market's rollercoaster moves in the last few days only reflect India's growth story, which remains intact. Driven by sentiments and global triggers, it will surely take its course towards an upward move, albeit with a few ups and downs. Finally, this election marks a turning point in Indian politics. It is historical in the sense that everyone is happy. The NDA is happy with a clear majority, though the BJP is not. I.N.D.I.A. consolidated its position as a formidable opposition, and Congress is on the revival path. Hence, the General Elections of 2024 are a reminder that democracy thrives on accountability and that the electorate's power is paramount. The people prefer an inclusive and issue-based political discourse. This momentous decision by India's voters is a celebration of democratic values and a beacon for future governance. (The author is a New Delhi-based Senior Journalist. Views expressed are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### OKHLA SANCTUARY FACING CRISIS

Madam — Apropos the news story "Okhla Bird Sanctuary sees over 90 per cent decline in winged guests," published on June 6, this is my response. Reading about the drastic decline in winter migratory water birds at Okhla Bird Sanctuary is deeply troubling. This sanctuary, once a haven for diverse bird species, has seen a staggering 90% drop in bird arrivals over five years. The causes are multifaceted, including climate change, but a significant factor is mismanagement by local authorities. Transforming the sanctuary into an entertainment park has introduced severe human disturbances, disrupting bird habitats.

Additionally, wetland degradation has exacerbated the problem, with water levels dropping and invasive plant species spreading. It's alarming that a sanctuary designated under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 could deteriorate to such an extent. The sanctuary's decline is a stark reminder of the importance of effective environmental management and the dire consequences of neglect. Immediate action is necessary to restore and protect this critical habitat, ensuring it remains a refuge for migratory birds and biodiversity.

Anaya Bhatt | Faridabad

#### ENVIRONMENTAL CRISES DEMAND ACTION

Madam — Apropos the news story "Fight to preserve our fragile ecosystems," published on June 6, this is my response. Reading the daily headlines, one can't help but feel the pressing weight of our environmental crises. Delhi's record-breaking heatwave of over 50 degrees Celsius and the rampant forest fires in Kashmir are glaring reminders of our climate emergency. As politics overshadow meaningful action, forest fires and extreme temperatures devastate wildlife and human communities alike.

In Dehradun, the battle to save 2,000 trees in Khalanga forest from being felled for a reservoir underscores the conflict between development and conservation. Activists advocate for sustainable alternatives,

#### BJP's clean sweep in Delhi



Regarding the news story "Will win Delhi Assembly polls next year, say newly elected BJP MPs," published on June 6, here are my thoughts. The recent Lok Sabha elections in Delhi showcased an impressive clean sweep by the BJP, marking their third consecutive victory in all seven parliamentary constituencies. As an avid newspaper reader, it's striking how the BJP, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, has solidified its stronghold in the national capital. This triumph is not only a testament to the

party's organisational prowess but also reflects the public's endorsement of Modi's governance and policies.

The unity within the INDIA alliance, comprising Congress and AAP, couldn't deter the BJP's momentum. The newly elected MPs' dedication to addressing Delhi's issues, such as water scarcity and slum rehabilitation, is commendable. The emphasis on development, digital inclusivity, and public welfare initiatives resonates well with the electorate's aspirations. The BJP's strategic focus on local issues and promises of concrete actions in the next 100 days, like the introduction of a startup hub and a grievance portal for government employees, showcases a proactive approach. This clean sweep, coupled with the party's ambitious plans, suggests a strong potential for continued dominance in the upcoming Assembly polls.

Anvi Dubey | Dhanbad

stressing the ecological importance of these ancient trees. Meanwhile, the construction of the Delhi-Dehradun Expressway at the cost of 7,500 trees raises questions about our commitment to environmental preservation. Even as the world celebrated Environment Day with the theme "Our land. Our future," the stark realities of deforestation, wildfires, and climate change demand immediate and sustained action. In the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi and James Lovelock, it is time we recognise our intrinsic connection to the Earth and commit to sustainable development, or risk losing our planet's delicate balance forever.

Meera Shukla | Solapur

#### THE CHARM OF SPOKEN WORDS

Madam — Regarding the news story "Virtual communication over spoken words," published on June 4, here are my thoughts. Reading this nostalgic piece brings back a flood of memories. It's touching how the nursery rhyme, modified to include letters, encapsulates the essence of longing and connection that handwritten correspondence provided in the past. In

1974, with the absence of modern communication tools, letters were lifelines, bridging the gap between hostel students and their homes.

The anecdote about the long-distance courtship through letters is particularly poignant. It's a beautiful reminder of how relationships were nurtured with patience and anticipation, each letter carrying the weight of love and longing. This methodical exchange of thoughts served the same purpose as modern-day dating, fostering understanding and connection. As time has marched on, so has the way we communicate. The shift from handwritten notes to digital messages reflects the broader changes in our society. Yet, the essence of meaningful communication remains unchanged. Even amidst technological advancements, the need for personal, heartfelt interaction endures. While we adapt to new forms, the core human desire for connection and validation persists.

Riya Bansal | Jalandhar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## India's green power policies come of age

India emerged as the third largest solar power generator in 2023, thanks to its ambitious policies and regulations



JYOTSNA KHATRI

From the MNRE's Surya-Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana guidelines for residential rooftop solar to the adoption of green energy open access regulations by State regulators for the C&I sectors, proactive efforts are being made across all areas to make RE more accessible and adaptable. Let's delve into a few of the recent government policies, regulatory changes, and judicial interventions that have significantly influenced this evolving sector.



Rules: The GEOA Rules were notified in 2022 to streamline the overall approval process for granting OA. Time-bound processing by bringing uniformity and transparency in the application as well as approval of OA through a national portal has been mandated. Moreover, SERCs have been instructed to implement the GEOA Rules notified by the MoP and align with the State OA regulations. Accordingly, various SERCs including Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana have issued their respective GEOA regulations. **Surya-Ghar:** The primary goal of this initiative is to help provide free or low-cost electricity to 10 million households with up to 300 units of electricity per month by installing rooftop solar. The scheme will be implemented until March 31, 2027.

**State RE Policies:** According to recent reports, Rajasthan is spearheading India's transition to green energy with the production of 39,300 million units of green energy in early 2023-24. Gujarat, the second-largest RE producer, generated 36,184 million units during the same period, marking a doubling of its 2019-20 output and narrowing the gap with Rajasthan's leadership position. **Judicial intervention**

The court's interpretation of the laws and governmental policies wields substantial influence, particularly in cases where legislative ambiguity or changing circumstances exist. In such cases, judicial authorities undertake broad interpretations to enhance the effectiveness of the laws. **Rule of Proportionality:** After a conundrum on the issues surrounding ownership and consumption within captive power plants, the Supreme Court clarified that a captive user has to maintain unitary qualifying ratio throughout the year to meet the captive qualification.

**GIB Order:** The Supreme Court, vide a judgment dated March 21, 2024, recalled its

earlier injunction order dated April 19, 2021, in M.K. Ranjitsinh & Ors. V. Union of India & Ors. whereby it imposed a general prohibition regarding the installation of overhead transmission lines in both Priority and Potential Areas. The court's decision helps stalled projects. Despite progress at the central level, states struggle to follow directives, causing regulatory divergence and exceeding legal boundaries. These discrepancies, exemplified by GERCC imposing restrictions on purchase and sale agreements in captive power transactions and escalating banking charges, are clearly at odds with the GEOA Rules. Therefore, ensuring uniformity in the adoption of laws and conducting thorough discussions and public hearings before formulating regulations are imperative steps to address the concerns of all stakeholders effectively and promote holistic development within the RE sector and its associated aspects.

(The writer is AGM- Legal at AMPIN Energy Transition; views are personal)





## FIRST COLUMN ACTIVE AND PASSIVE ACCEPTANCE

Be grateful with your heart and soul to anyone who offers you anything



RAVI VALLURI

Harilal Gandhi (1888-1948), Manilal, Ramdas and Devdas were the four sons of Gandhiji and Kasturba. However, the children could not accept their father. They resented the fact that the illustrious father did not impart formal education to the children.

Harilal Gandhi, became an alcoholic, an embezzler, known for public drunkenness and destitution, and was an apoState. He converted to Islam and was known as Abdullah Gandhi. Though he loved his parents, he could not accept his father's ideology of parenting.

What do we mean by acceptance? Acceptance in human psychology is a person's assent to the reality or situation, recognising a process or condition (often a negative or uncomfortable situation) without attempting to change it or protest.

A woman is married into a family and brings with her the baggage of her ideology. Similarly, the family she is married into have their own thought process. Are they able to accept the lady?

A rich person during the times of Buddha, was desirous of becoming a monk and joining the Sangha. Buddha the Compassionate One, was willing to accept the person in the fold but made it clear that he needs to accept everyone in thought and deed. The wealthy person with all abundance meditated and returned to Buddha and accepted the condition. But added that he could accept everyone save two people. Buddha smiled and said, that the Sangha would make an exception in the case of the individual, that he need not accept 98 persons, but accept only those two individuals. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, elucidates further that there is a concept of active and passive acceptance. In case there is corruption in society, we may just tolerate the corruption and do nothing about it. However, in case of active acceptance, we take a stand.



In our minds, we need to create a space where we are willing to accept all the qualities (be they acceptable or not) of a person. Only through unconditional love can we accept a person. But this is possible only if we can live in the present moment. A meditative mind would be in a State to accept situations, conditions and people. The locale and circumstances keep changing thus our minds should be trained in such a manner, that it is willing to accept those situations. As Buddha says, the only permanent thing in life is its impermanence.

By not accepting people and situations we are only torturing our minds. Our minds need rest and peace. Unnecessary thoughts keep cropping up in our system as to what the other person feels about us without discerning that the concerned individual is not even bothered about what our State of mind is.

To my mind, all religions and faiths need to accept each other to maintain sanity in the world. Political barriers have collapsed with increasing globalisation and technology. The world has become 'flat', thus individuals and nations need to accept all ideologies, to avoid conflict. We need to intellectually and emotionally accept people.

John Lennon penned those iconic lines,

'Imagine there's no heaven

It's easy if you try

No hell below us

Above us only sky

Imagine all the people ....'

"The art of acceptance is the art of making someone who has just done you a small favour wish that he might have done you a great one," wrote Martin Luther King Jr.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

# Rejuvenating Indian social work, culturally



VINEET PRAKASH

Integrating modern and indigenous methods enhances the relevance of Indian social work, providing it with greater depth and effectiveness



Every profession is unique and essential for societal growth and development. Social work, however, carries an added responsibility - to serve people and communities, striving to uplift them. It involves working with people and their surroundings, considering external and internal factors simultaneously. Social work is not just about empathizing with others' circumstances but also about reflecting on potential solutions and alternatives.

In today's India, social work as a profession is emerging as one of the crucial sectors. Over the last decade, this profession has expanded its horizon and established itself across the country. It is encouraging to see a growing number of young professionals choosing this career path. India needs more such young minds and professionals who can work on the ground and formulate policies to address critical societal issues. However, it is essential to question whether we are truly fulfilling this need.

### The Evolution of Social Work: Global and Indian Contexts

Social work as a profession has a rich history globally. It was formalized in the early 20th century with the establishment of social work education programs in universities. The United States and Europe played pivotal roles in the development of social work, focusing on scientific methods and systematic approaches to address social issues.

In India, social work has deep roots that can be traced back to ancient times when the concept of "seva" (selfless service) was integral to societal life. The profession, in its modern form, began taking shape during the colonial period with the establishment of formal training programs. The Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), established in 1936, was one of the first institutions to offer professional social work education in India. Since then, the profession has evolved, adapting to the country's unique social, economic, and cultural contexts.

### The Need for Indianising Social Work Recognising Diversity

India's strength lies in its diversity, with various languages, food habits, cultures, and climates. The country is home to numerous religions, castes, and tribes, each facing unique social issues. Solutions to these problems cannot be one-size-fits-all; they

must be tailored to the specific community and location. India's indigenous approaches have shown success in overcoming tough challenges, and integrating these approaches into modern social work practices can preserve and promote these valuable traditions.

### Influence of Great Reformers

Great social reformers like Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, B.R. Ambedkar, Savitri Bai Phule, Sayyid Ahmed Khan, Pandita Ramabai, Vinoba Bhave, and many others have not only addressed complex issues of their time but also laid down principles that continue to guide us. However, the current syllabus and course content of social work in India reflects more of a colonial-era influence than Indigenous perspectives. It is time to introspect and make necessary corrections. After 75 years of independence, it is imperative to Indianize social work education and practice, ensuring that it is relevant to the Indian context. While the exchange of ideas is valuable, it should be multidirectional, incorporating India's rich social work heritage.

### Historical and Traditional Engagement Areas of Social Work in India

Historically, social work in India has been deeply rooted in community development, public health, education, disaster response and relief, as well as advocacy and human rights, with practices that reflect indigenous approaches. Before independence, the Cooperative Movement emerged as a powerful tool to address rural indebtedness and enhance agricultural practices, empowering farmers through access to credit and collective bargaining power. Post-independence, the Chipko Movement exemplified community-driven environmental activism, with villagers, especially women, embracing trees to prevent deforestation, highlighting the importance of community involvement in sustainable development.

### Integrating Modern and Indigenous Approaches in Social Work for Sustainable Impact

The intersection of modern and Indigenous approaches in social work is vital for creating a sustainable impact in communities. Pre-independence, traditional

healthcare practices like Yoga, Ayurveda, and Unani played vital roles in providing accessible healthcare, particularly in rural areas, with practitioners significantly contributing to community health. Post-independence, the Pulse Polio Immunization Campaign demonstrated effective public health social work, with extensive collaboration between government agencies, NGOs, and local communities playing a crucial role in eradicating polio. In education, pre-independence, the traditional Gurukul system emphasized holistic, value-based education, fostering physical, mental, and spiritual development through personalized learning. Post-independence India has implemented educational initiatives reflecting indigenous social work approaches, such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, and the Right to Education Act, all emphasizing inclusivity and community participation.

Pre-independence, social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar advocated against social evils like sati and child marriage, leading to significant changes in societal norms and practices. Post-independence, the Right to Information (RTI) Movement empowered citizens to hold the government accountable, promoting transparency and good governance. These examples underscore the rich history of social work in India, deeply intertwined with indigenous practices and values, emphasizing community participation, sustainability, and cultural relevance. Integrating these indigenous approaches into modern social work practices can help preserve and promote these valuable traditions while addressing contemporary social challenges.

### Integrating Modern and Indigenous Approaches in Social Work for Sustainable Impact

The intersection of modern and Indigenous approaches in social work is vital for creating a sustainable impact in communities.

Modern methodologies bring innovative ideas and technologies, emphasizing evidence-based practices and data-driven decision-making for measurable outcomes. Indigenous approaches, on the other hand, offer valuable insights rooted in local contexts, emphasizing community participation, traditional knowledge, and cultural relevance for long-term impact and resilience. By integrating these approaches, social workers can leverage the strengths of both, building trust, respecting local traditions, and empowering communities for more sustainable and impactful interventions.

### Proposing "Bhartiya Samaj Karya Diwas": Celebrating India's Legacy in Social Work

Every year, the 3rd Tuesday of March is celebrated globally as World Social Work Day. This year, it was celebrated on March 19, 2024. Given India's long history and significant impact in the field of social work, it is time to consider declaring and adopting a day as "Bhartiya Samaj Karya Diwas," i.e., Indian Social Work Day. This would not only celebrate the legacy of Indian social workers but also promote indigenous practices to serve the people of India better. This will also lead to promoting and recognizing the efforts of local social workers, and they can be role models for others.

Revitalizing social work in India by integrating indigenous approaches and perspectives is not just a necessity but a responsibility. By doing so, we can ensure that social work remains relevant and effective in addressing the unique challenges faced by our diverse society. It is time to revive the Indigenous methods, honour our rich heritage, learn from our great reformers, and adapt our practices to serve the people of India in the most authentic and impactful ways.

(The writer is currently working as an American India Foundation Banyan Impact Fellow; views are personal)



HISTORICALLY, SOCIAL WORK IN INDIA HAS BEEN DEEPLY ROOTED IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH, EDUCATION, DISASTER RESPONSE AND RELIEF, AS WELL AS ADVOCACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS, WITH PRACTICES THAT REFLECT INDIGENOUS APPROACHES

# Modi 3.0: Expectations, challenges and opportunities ahead

The third term will test the mettle of PM Modi because he will be leading a coalition Government for the first time in his political career

The NDA led by PM Modi has registered a modest victory in the general election and it is a historic moment in our parliamentary democracy when a leader won three successive mandates. For record's sake, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and Smt. Indira Gandhi also won three elections and formed the government but this charisma in India of the twenty-first century holds another significance because now our democracy is more mature and information is easily accessible to the masses. While a lot has already been talked about the pro-people measures taken by the NDA government that led to this victory, it is time to focus on what we should expect from Modi 3.0 because this



SHSHANK SAURAV

term is going to define the legacy of PM Modi. The electoral rebound of the Congress-led alliance should not be interpreted as a decline in the personal image of the prime minister. We are living in an era when the brand Modi is more popular than ever before and people are becoming public representatives with the backing of the PM, then he must use his aura and strength to pro-

mote clean politics. There are apprehensions that slowly our democracy will become an aristocracy where people from humble backgrounds will not find a place to stand. This is a phenomenon that we are seeing in South Asia where political representation is becoming like a hereditary lineage. I am not implying that those who are from humble backgrounds have no place in this set-up but it is increasingly becoming difficult for a common man to withstand the money & might of the established political players.

Rahul Gandhi's ideas are a danger to this country and it was good for the country that the divisive agenda of the INDI alliance came out in the open. However, this

country expects a lot from PM Modi. It was an open secret that this battle was fought in the name of Modi and he was the face of the campaign, irrespective of who is the candidate from his party. It would have been great had PM Modi used this opportunity to free our political set-up from the clutches of dynasts and turn-coats. Regional parties have long back become family-owned private limited companies but BJP always stood different from others when it came to politics of ideology and principles. It has more to do with the ideological influence of Sangh over BJP which sets the moral benchmark higher for BJP than other political parties. This election was Waterloo



for many regional parties and some have fared well while others have perished. Number game has put Modi and team in a position where they will have to negotiate with their allies and the bargain is going to be tough. The next government will also test the mettle of PM Modi because he will be

leading a coalition government for the first time in his political career. Compulsions of coalition politics were one of the major reasons behind corruption during UPA2 led by Manmohan Singh. Now BJP has a strong presence in the southern part of India and very soon it may become a dominant player there as well. Though BJP had formed a government in Karnataka on its own, Modi should be credited for transforming it into a Pan-Indian party. However, this election has also given strong signals on the revival of regional outfits. For example, Bihar has given a message that though the voters trust PM Modi BJP needs a strong local face. Creating a strong leadership line at the local

level has yielded dividends in other States and it is high time to replicate this in States like Bihar. BJP central leadership should nurture youngsters who are aligned with the ideology and have competence. Many people are capable and want to enter politics but they are unable because they do not have the required means and connections. Given that Modi might not get a free hand, another point that would need specific attention in Modi 3.0 will be the handling of the issues that are related to core ideology and cultural rejuvenation. We have seen over the past 10 years that nourishing our roots and development can happen simultaneously. Development is an ongoing

process but civilizational damages are irreversible and we have witnessed this in our history. Many issues are in the realm of law and the BJP often rightly accuses Congress of these blunders. If the NDA government survives by 2029 then BJP will complete more than two decades in power since independence and Modi will become longest-serving PM after Jawaharlal Nehru. There are Himalayan blunders and historical injustices that can be annulled by the Act of Parliament and therefore it would be interesting to see how Modi 3.0 prioritises these.

(The writer is a Chartered Accountant and Public Policy Analyst; views are personal)



# Israeli strike kills at least 33 at Gaza school

AP ■ DEIR-AL-BALAH

An Israeli strike early Thursday on a school sheltering displaced Palestinians in central Gaza killed more than 30 people, including 23 women and children, according to local health officials. The Israeli military said that Hamas militants were operating from within the school. It was the latest instance of mass casualties among Palestinians trying to find refuge as Israel expands its offensives in the Gaza Strip. A day earlier, the military announced a new ground and air assault in central Gaza, pursuing Hamas militants it says have regrouped there. Troops repeatedly have swept back into sections of the Gaza Strip they have previously invaded, underscoring the resilience of the militant group despite Israel's nearly eight-month onslaught in the territory.

Witnesses and hospital officials said the predawn strike hit the al-Sardi School, run by the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees known by the acronym UNRWA. The school was filled with Palestinians who had fled Israeli offensives and bombardment in northern Gaza, they said. Ayman Rashed, a man displaced from Gaza City who was sheltering at the school, said the missiles hit classrooms on the second and third floor where families were sheltering. He said he helped carry out five dead, including an old man and two children, one with his head shattered open. "It was dark, with no electricity, and we struggled to get out the victims," Rashed said. Casualties from school strike arrived at the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in nearby Deir al-Balah, which had already been overwhelmed by a stream of constant ambulances since the central Gaza incursion began 24 hours earlier, said Omar al-Derawi, a photographer working for the

hospital. Videos circulating online appeared to show several wounded people being treated on the floor of the hospital, a common scene in Gaza's overwhelmed medical wards. Electricity in much of the hospital is out because staff are rationing fuel supplies for the generator. "You can't walk in the hospital — there's so many people. Women from the victims' families are massed in the hallways, crying," he said. Hospital records and an Associated Press reporter at the hospital recorded at least 33 dead from the strike, including 14 children and nine women. Another strike on a house overnight killed six people, according to the records. Both strikes occurred in Nuseirat, one of several built-up refugee camps in Gaza dating to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation, when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled or were driven from their

homes in what became the new state. Footage showed bodies wrapped in blankets or plastic bags being laid out in lines in the courtyard of the hospital. Mohammed al-Kareem, a displaced Palestinian sheltering near the hospital, said he saw people searching for their loved ones among bodies, and that one woman kept asking medical workers to open the wraps on the bodies to see if her son was inside. "The situation is tragic," he said. An Israeli military spokesman, Lt Col Peter Lerner, said that the army wasn't aware of any civilian casualties in the strike. He said that intelligence indicated that militants had used the school compound to orchestrate some of the attacks on October 7 and that at least 20 militants there were using it currently as a "staging realm" to launch attacks on Israeli soldiers. The military gave no evidence for its claims and released a photo of the school,

pointing to classrooms on the second and third floor where it claimed militants were located. The military said it took steps before the strike "to reduce the risk of harming uninvolved civilians ... including conducting aerial surveillance, and additional intelligence information." UNRWA schools across Gaza have functioned as shelters since the start of the war, which has driven most of the territory's population of 2.3 million Palestinians from their homes. Last week, Israeli strikes hit near an UNRWA facility in the southern city of Rafah, saying they were targeting Hamas militants. An inferno that followed ripped through tents nearby housing displaced families, killing at least 45 people. The deaths triggered international outrage, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the fire was the result of a "tragic mishap." The military said the fire may have been caused by secondary

explosions. The cause of the explosions has not been determined. Israel sent troops into Rafah in early May in what it said was a limited incursion, but those forces are now operating in central parts of the city. More than 1 million people have fled Rafah since the start of the operation, scattering across southern and central Gaza into new tent camps or crowding into schools and homes. Israel launched its campaign in Gaza after Hamas' October 7 attack into Israel, in which militants killed some 1,200 people and took another 250 hostage. Israel's offensive has killed at least 36,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between fighters and civilians in its figures. Israel blames civilian deaths on Hamas because it positions fighters, tunnels and rocket launchers in residential areas. The United States has thrown its weight behind a phased cease-fire and hostage

release outlined by President Joe Biden last week. But Israel says it won't end the war without destroying Hamas, while the militant group is demanding a lasting cease-fire and the full withdrawal of Israeli forces. Far-right members of Netanyahu's government have threatened to bring down the coalition if he signs onto a cease-fire deal. On Wednesday, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, a leading hard-liner, spoke at an annual march through Jerusalem's Old City, saying, "We are delivering a message from here to Hamas: Jerusalem is ours. Damascus Gate is ours" — referring to a main gate into the Arab-majority section of the city — "And with God's help total victory is ours." The annual march commemorates "Jerusalem Day," which marks Israel's capture of east Jerusalem, including the Old City and its holy sites sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims, in the 1967 Middle East war.

## Houthi rebels unveil solid-fuel 'Palestine' missile

Dubai (AP) — Yemen's Houthi rebels have unveiled a new, solid-fuel missile in their arsenal that resembles aspects of one earlier displayed by Iran that Tehran described as flying at hypersonic speeds. The rebels fired its new "Palestine" missile, complete with a warhead painted like a Palestinian keffiyeh checkered scarf, at the southern Gulf of Aqaba port of Eilat in Israel on Monday. The attack set off air raid sirens but caused no reported damage or injuries. Footage released by the Houthis late Wednesday showed the Palestine being raised on what appeared to be a mobile launcher and rising quickly into the air with plumes of white smoke coming from its engine. White smoke is common with solid-fuel missiles. Solid-fuel missiles can be set up and fired faster than those containing liquid fuel. That's a key concern for the Houthis as their missile launch sites have been repeatedly targeted by US and allied forces in recent months over the rebels' attacks on shipping through the Red Sea corridor.

One such strike hit the Houthis even before they were able to launch their missile. For their part, the Houthis described the Palestine as a "locally made" missile. However, the Houthis are not known to possess the ability to manufacture complicated missile and guidance systems locally in Yemen, the Arab world's poorest country, which has been gripped by war since the rebels seized the capital, Sanaa, nearly a decade ago. The Houthis have, however, been repeatedly armed by Iran during the war despite a United Nations arms embargo. While Iran claims it doesn't arm the Houthis, ships seized by the US and its allies have found Iranian weaponry, missile fuel and components on board. Iranian media reported the launch of the Palestine and described it as locally manufactured, citing the Houthis. However, design elements on the missile resemble other missiles developed by Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard. That includes one called the Fattah, or "Conqueror" in Farsi.

## Israeli settlers in West Bank were hit with int'l sanctions

AP ■ SOUTH HEBRON HILLS

For weeks after being sanctioned by the United States, Yonon Levi struggled to pay the bills, living at his farming outpost atop a hill in the occupied West Bank. But the Israeli settler's problems didn't last. When the banks froze his accounts, his community raised thousands of dollars for him, and Israel's finance minister vowed to intervene on sanctioned settlers' behalf. Two months after sanctions were issued, Levi was granted access to his money. "America thought it would weaken us, and in the end, they made us stronger," Levi, 31, told The Associated Press from his farm in the South Hebron Hills — one of dozens of unauthorised settlement outposts dotting the West Bank. Levi is among 13 hard-line Israeli settlers — as well as two affiliated outposts and four groups — targeted by international sanctions over accusations of attacks and harassment against Palestinians in the West Bank. The measures are meant as a deterrent, and they expose people to asset freezes and travel and visa bans. But the measures have had minimal impact, instead emboldening settlers as attacks and land-grabs escalate, according to Palestinians in the West Bank, local rights groups and sanctioned Israelis who spoke to AP. Sanctions prohibit financial institutions and residents in the issuing country from providing funds to a person or entity. In some cases, property is seized. Even though Israeli banks aren't obliged to freeze accounts, many do so to maintain relations with banks — particularly for US sanctions — and avoid risk. But for sanctioned settlers, the implications didn't last long, with communities donating money and holding fundraisers making tens of thousands of dollars. And Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, a far-right settler leader, said he'd "take care of the issue" of people being sanctioned, Levi's father-in-law, Noam Federman, told AP.

Smotrich said in a text-message statement that sanctions are "a grave mistake by the Biden administration." He didn't address questions about whether he intervened directly to unfreeze settlers' accounts. But he said his actions to develop settlements are authorised, and the government is working with "our friends in the US" to cancel or reduce sanctions. Israel seized the West Bank, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip in the 1967 Mideast war. Some 500,000 Israelis have settled in the West Bank, the international community largely considers their presence illegal. But under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition — the most right-wing in Israeli history, with settlers themselves in key positions — expansion has been turbocharged. Palestinians say expanding Israeli outposts are shrinking their access to land, and settler violence against them has soared since Hamas' October 7 attack that sparked the war with Israel. Land seized through unauthorised outposts has more than doubled since the war started, according to settlement watchdog Kerem Navot. Palestinians living in small hamlets ringed by hilltop outposts say they fear it's just a matter of time until they're forced to leave their homes. US officials have repeatedly raised concerns about surging settler violence, with President Joe Biden saying it had reached "intolerable levels" when announcing sanctions. Israel has said it's calling for settlers to stand down and investigating violence. But rights groups accuse the government and army of complicity with the settlers. In March, even the Israeli army complained about the extent to which the government intervenes on settlers' behalf. An internal document, seen by AP and published by The New York Times, said the army is routinely denied authorisation to act against illegal building by Israelis and regularly authorized to act against Palestinians.

## South Africa's ANC leans toward 'unity' govt

AP ■ CAPE TOWN

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and other senior officials of the African National Congress party were in a critical meeting Thursday to decide if they should formally propose a "unity" government bringing in all major parties to solve a political deadlock in Africa's most industrialised country before a June 16 deadline. A government of national unity, which ANC officials said is the first option on the table, evokes South Africa's transition from apartheid's white minority rule to a democracy in 1994. Then, new President Nelson Mandela brought political opponents — including the last apartheid leader — into his first government to foster unity in a fractured country. While that was a remarkable act of reconciliation by Mandela, the ANC's hand has been forced this time after last week's election removed its 30-year majority and ensured it has to work with others to form a government. ANC had held a comfort-

able majority ever since the end of apartheid, but won just 40% of the vote in this election, although it remained the largest party. "We want to bring everybody on board," ANC Secretary-General Fikile Mbalula said of the unity government proposal. He said the ANC meeting, which would decide whether to back that idea over a narrower coalition with one or two parties, was likely to last all day. An agreement of some sort needs to be in place by June 16, the deadline for South Africa's new Parliament to sit and elect a president. South Africans vote for parties and they get seats in Parliament according to their share of the vote. Lawmakers then elect the president and while Ramaphosa is still expected to be the candidate for president in a government involving multiple parties, it needs to be formalized. ANC would need help from others to reelect him given it has lost its parliamentary majority. Ramaphosa, 71, is seeking a second and final term.

South Africa is seeking to minimize any uncertainty through what promises to be a complex process that is likely to run well into next week. It is keeping South Africans on tenterhooks at one of the most important times in their young democracy. The unity government now appeared a more likely scenario than a direct coalition between the ANC and the main opposition Democratic Alliance, or DA, party, which gained the second largest share of the vote with nearly 22%. More than 50 parties contested the election with at least eight of them receiving significant shares of support. They range from the centrist DA, viewed as a business-friendly party, to the far-left Economic Freedom Fighters, or EFF, which wants to nationalize parts of the economy, including South Africa's important gold and platinum mines and the central bank. There is also the new MK party of former President Jacob Zuma, which has said it won't negotiate while Ramaphosa is ANC leader, a position largely

driven by Zuma's animosity toward the man who replaced him as president. Any unity government plan from ANC would still have to be taken to those other parties, some of whom are more opposed to each other than ANC. DA has pledged never to work with EFF or MK, for example, and there are clear divisions to overcome. There's a split also within ANC, which isn't completely behind the unity government possibility. Mbalula said that he expected debate and disagreement in Thursday's meeting and it would likely last all day. The meeting is of the ANC's National Executive Committee, a body of more than 80 senior party members that includes Ramaphosa as ANC leader. It decides the party's direction. While ANC's top leaders are seen to be open to a direct coalition with DA, grassroots party members have opposed that, sometimes with racial undertones that are often not far from the surface in a country that still wrestles with its history of brutal segregation.

Some ANC supporters and allies, like the national congress of trade unions, have cast the white-led DA as a party that prioritizes the interests of South Africa's white minority over Black people, who make up more than 80% of the population. DA has denied that characterisation and pointed to its large numbers of Black support, reflected in the fact that it received the second-highest number of votes across the country. Political analyst Asanda Ngoasheng said the inclusive national unity government plan was "the safest option" for ANC to shore up its own base given it was reeling from its worst election result, and also avoid the economic uncertainty that might come with a narrower coalition with the Marxist EFF party. "I think a government of national unity with multiple parties in collaboration... is the best way and I think it is the smart decision," she said on the Newzroom Afrika news channel.

## Philippine fishing boat blast kill six crew members

AP ■ MANILA

At least six crew members of a fishing boat were killed when an explosion and a fire hit their vessel at sea off a central Philippine province, coast guard officials said on Thursday, adding six others were rescued. Surviving crew members, including the skipper of the F/B King Bryan, were still being treated at a hospital or were too traumatized to tell investigators what set off the explosion and fire onboard the vessel Wednesday night off Naga city in Cebu province, coast guard officials said. One of the injured crewmen was in critical condition at a hospital in Cebu, the coast guard said. The wooden-hulled boat, which had bamboo outriggers, apparently developed engine trouble before an explosion and a fire engulfed the vessel, injuring crew members and forcing oth-

ers to jump into the sea in panic. A passing tugboat helped put out the blaze and a coast guard search and rescue operation was launched, coast guard officials said. Sea accidents are common in the Philippine archipelago because of frequent storms, poorly maintained boats, overcrowding and spotty enforcement of safety regulations. In December 1987, an overcrowded ferry, the Dona Paz, sank after colliding with a fuel tanker, killing more than 4,300 people in the world's worst peacetime sea disaster regarded by some as Asia's Titanic.

## Sudanese RSF paramilitaries clash with army, leaving at least 100 dead

AP ■ CAIRO

At least 100 people were killed, and dozens were injured after the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces attacked a village in Gezira province in Sudan on Wednesday, officials said. Women, children, and elderly were among the victims in the attacks by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on Wad al-Noura village in Gezira, Mini Arko Minawi, the governor of Darfur province, said on X, formerly Twitter. A grassroots group set up to protect residents in Wad Madani, the capital city of Gezira, said late Wednesday on social media that the paramilitary force, which has been fighting the Sudanese army for over a year, used heavy artillery to besiege and attack the village. The Madani Resistance Committee, which



has been threatened and attacked by the RSF in the past, accused the paramilitaries of looting Wad al-Noura in the midst of the attacks, which, it said started Wednesday morning. The RSF claimed in December that it had seized control of Wad Madani, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) southeast of the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, and a haven for



hundreds of thousands of people displaced by fighting. The resistance committee said the RSF invaded the village, displacing residents, including women and children, to other parts of the district of al-Manaql. The Sudanese transitional government in a statement on its Telegram channel condemned the attacks and called for the international

community to hold the RSF accountable. "These are criminal acts that reflect the systematic behavior of these (RSF) militias in targeting civilians, plundering their property, and forcibly displacing them from their areas," said the media office for the Transitional Sovereignty Council, which was set up after the ouster of longtime president Omar al-Bashir in 2019. The RSF alleged on X late Wednesday that the Sudanese military planned to attack its troops in Jabal al-Awliya, in the west of al-Manaql district, by mobilizing Sudanese armed forces in three bases. The Associated Press couldn't verify this allegation. The paramilitary group said it attacked three camps west, north and south of Wad al-Noura, clashing with the Sudanese army.

## Sunita Williams, Butch Wilmore test Starliner manual piloting capability

PTI ■ HOUSTON

On the way to the International Space Station aboard Boeing's Starliner spacecraft, Indian-origin astronaut Sunita Williams and her colleague Butch Wilmore tested out a unique capability of the spacecraft on orbit — manual piloting. Williams flew to space for the third time on Wednesday along with Wilmore, scripting history as the first members aboard Boeing's Starliner spacecraft on a 25-hour flight to the International Space Station (ISS). Williams, 58, is the pilot for the flight test while Wilmore, 61, is the commander of the mission. Although the spacecraft is usually autonomous, the crew used the hand controller to point and aim the spacecraft during about two hours of free flight demonstrations. During a far-field demo, they pointed

Starliner's nose toward the Earth so that its communications antenna on the back of the Service Module was pointed at the Tracking and Data Relay satellites. They then moved the Starliner so that its solar array pointed at the sun to show they could charge the internal batteries if ever needed, Boeing said in a statement. Next, they swung Starliner around and pointed the nose away from Earth to look at the stars. This was to show they could manually use the star trackers in the VESTA system to establish their attitude in space in case all three flight computers were to ever go out or be turned off at the same time. Then, they manually sped Starliner up and then slowed it down, which slightly raised and then lowered their orbit. This was to show that the crew could manually break away from the space station orbit during rendezvous, if necessary.

Finally, the crew manually pointed Starliner in the orientation needed for entry into the Earth's atmosphere, just in case they had to do that manually. During that manoeuvre, they again pointed the solar array at the sun to try a different method of confirming they could manually charge the batteries. There is more manual piloting to come for this "pilot's spacecraft" with Wilmore and Williams on docking day, June 6. The Starliner spacecraft, dubbed Calypso, has been developed by Boeing, under a contract from NASA. It has run into several delays and glitches in its developmental process. Moments before lift-off, Commander Wilmore called out to thank all those who had worked to make the mission possible. Alluding to past difficulties, he said: "When the going gets tough - and it often does - the tough get going, and you have."

## UN says quarter of world's children under 5 have severe food poverty

AP ■ KALTUNGO

The 9-month-old twins cried nonstop and tugged at their mother, seeking attention but also food. They had received little in the past 24 hours, and there were signs of deeper hunger in the heads too big for their tiny bodies. "Not much milk comes out," said their 38-year-old mother, Dorcas Simon, who struggles to breastfeed and has three other children. She laughed, as if to conceal the pain. "What will I give them when I don't have food myself?" Here in northern Nigeria, where conflict and climate change have long contributed to the problem, her twins are among 181 million children under 5 — or 27 per cent of the world's youngest children — who live in severe food poverty, according to a new report Thursday by the UN's children agency. The report, which focused on nearly 100 low- and middle-income countries,

defines severe food poverty as consuming nothing in a day or, at best, two out of eight food groups the agency recognises. Africa's population of more than 1.3 billion people is one of the most affected mainly due to conflict, climate crises and rising food prices. The continent accounts for one-third of the global burden and 13 of the 20 most affected countries. But it has also recorded some progress, the report said. The percentage of children living in severe food poverty in West and Central Africa fell from 42 per cent to 32 per cent over the last decade, it said, noting advances including diversified crops and performance-based incentives for health workers. In the absence of vital nutrients, children living with "extremely poor" diets are more likely to experience wasting, a life-threatening form of malnutrition, the agency known as UNICEF said.

"When wasting becomes very severe, they are 12 times more likely to die," Harriet Torlesse, one of the report's authors, told The Associated Press. In several Nigerian communities like Kaltungo in the northeast where Simon lives, UNICEF is training thousands of women in how to boost their families' nutrient intake with cassava, sweet potato, maize and millet grown in gardens at home. More than a dozen women gathered this week in Kaltungo's Poshereng village to learn dozens of recipes they can prepare with those foods which, in the absence of rain, are grown in sand-filled sacks that require little water. Mothers in Nigeria also face the country's worst cost of living crisis. Growing food at home saves money. Aisha Aliyu, a 36-year-old mother of five, said her latest child "used to be skinny but is growing fatter" because of what

they now grow at home. Hauwa Bwami, a 50-year-old mother of five, nearly lost her grandchild to kwashiorkor, a disease with severe protein malnutrition, before the UNICEF training started a year ago. Now she grows enough food that she sells to other women. Kaltungo is in a semi-arid agricultural region where climate change has limited rainfall in recent years. Some children have died of acute malnutrition in the past because food is scarce, said Ladi Abdullahi, who trains the women. The training "is like answered prayers for me," Simon said in her first time with the group. But it can be a painful lesson. Another trainee, Florence Victor, 59, watched helplessly as her nine-month-old grandchild succumbed to malnutrition in 2022. Malnutrition also can weaken the immune system over time, leaving children vulnerable to diseases that can kill.

## 4 killed, 27 hurt after trains collide in Czech Republic

Prague (AP) — A passenger train collided head-on with a freight train in the Czech Republic, killing at least four people and injuring 27 others, officials said on Thursday. Interior Minister Vit Rakusan said the crash took place late Wednesday night in the city of Pardubice, about 100 kilometers (62 miles) east of Prague. The high-speed passenger train belonged to the private RegioJet company. Rakusan said none of the injured was in life-threatening condition. Rescuers said 380 passengers were on board the train heading for the city of Kosice in eastern Slovakia and further to Chop across the border in Ukraine. At least two Ukrainian women died in the crash, Ukraine's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.



# Ukraine hits Russian oil facilities

## President Zelenskyy joins leaders at D-Day events in France

AP ■ KYIV

Ukrainian drones struck an oil refinery and a fuel depot in Russian border regions, officials in the targeted areas said Thursday, in Kyiv's ongoing effort to disrupt the Kremlin's war machine and as Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy sought further Western support in Europe's biggest conflict since World War II.

Zelenskyy was due to join world leaders, including US President Joe Biden, at D-Day commemorations in France on Thursday. On Friday, he was due to meet with French officials. Zelenskyy's trip came a day after Russian President Vladimir Putin warned that Russia could provide long-range weapons to other countries so that they could strike Western targets. That threat came after NATO allies said they would allow Ukraine to use weapons they deliver to Kyiv to attack Russian territory.

Ukraine's army is fighting to hold back a recent Russian push in eastern areas that seeks to exploit Kyiv's shortages of ammunition and troops along the roughly 1,000-kilometre



(620-mile) front line after more than two years of war. Dmitry Medvedev, deputy head of Russia's Security Council, said that Putin's comments Wednesday in St. Petersburg, Russia, amounted to "a quite significant shift in our foreign policy." "Let the US and its allies feel the impact of direct use of Russian weapons by others," Medvedev wrote on his messaging app channel. Putin deliberately didn't name potential recipient countries of Russian weapons, Medvedev said. They could go to anyone

who considers the US and its allies their enemies, he said. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Thursday the use of Western weapons against Russia "can't be left without consequences, and those consequences will certainly follow." Putin claimed that using some Western-supplied weapons involves military personnel of those countries controlling the missiles and selecting targets, and therefore he said that Moscow could take "asymmetrical" steps elsewhere in the world. The US military said that it

doesn't control the missiles it provides to Ukraine or the targets, and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Thursday that the alliance has no plans to deploy forces to Ukraine. "We are focusing on how we can establish a stronger framework for our support, with an institutionalised framework for the support to Ukraine and how to establish an agreed long-term financial commitment to ensure that we stand by Ukraine for as long as it takes," Stoltenberg said in Finland. An overnight drone attack hit

the Novoshaktinsk refinery in Russia's Rostov region and started a fire, Rostov Gov. Vasily Golubev said. Firefighters had to pull out briefly because of a second attack, he said. The extent of the damage to the facility wasn't immediately clear. Golubev said that there were no casualties. In Belgorod, another border region, a drone hit an oil depot overnight, Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said. It caused an explosion and a fire in one of the oil reservoirs. The blaze was quickly extinguished and there were no casualties, Gladkov said. It wasn't immediately possible to verify the reports. Refineries, fuel depots and oil terminals have been targets of increasingly sophisticated Ukrainian drone attacks that have reached deep into Russia. The attacks deny Moscow revenue, and Western sanctions have added to the pressure on Russia's energy sector. Russia, meanwhile, has been attacking Ukraine's energy infrastructure and causing widespread power outages. The apparent goal is to sap public morale and affect military manufacturing plants.

# Lanka SC reverses Sirisena's decision to grant pardon to murder convict

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lankan Supreme Court on Thursday reversed former president Maithripala Sirisena's decision to grant a presidential pardon to a murder convict and ordered him to pay compensation to the victims in the case. The three-member bench said his 2019 decision to grant a pardon to convict Shramantha Jayamaha was unconstitutional. Jayamaha in 2005 beat to death Yvonne Jonsson, a 19-year-old Swedish woman holidaying in Sri Lanka, at a high-rise apartment here. The court was told that her skull was fractured into 64 pieces. Jayamaha was earlier imprisoned for 12 years but he later appealed to the higher court which rejected his plea and sentenced him to death. This was again reaffirmed by the Supreme Court in 2014.

Sirisena had in 2019 granted him pardon a few days before resigning from the post of president ahead of the presidential election. The court ordered Sirisena to pay SLRs 1 million each to the petitioner who filed the case and the parents of the victim. The court also ordered the convict to return to prison to serve his sentence. He is



thought to be currently overseas. Sirisena, since April, has been facing a stream of cases over his leadership of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). He is barred from functioning as the party leader. In 2022, he was ordered by the court to pay SLRs 100 million to the victims of the 2019 Easter Sunday suicide attacks. He was found guilty of the criminal negligence for inaction to prevent attacks despite pre-intelligence warnings. So far, he has only paid a

part of the court-ordered compensation. His successor, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, granted a presidential pardon to another murder convict who was a political associate, which was also quashed by the highest court. Rajapaksa is also asked to appear in court over another pardon granted by him. Under Article 34 of the Constitution, Sri Lanka's presidents are empowered to grant pardons subject to a procedural process.

# Japan, US, S Korean coast guards hold joint drill off Japan's coast

## China concerns rise

Tokyo (AP): Japanese, US and South Korean coast guard vessels conducted their first three-way drill on Thursday off Japan's coast as the countries strengthen their maritime ties in response to increased assertiveness by China in pressing its territorial claims. Skirmishes between Chinese and Philippine coast guard vessels have escalated in the South China Sea, triggering fears that the disputes could escalate to an armed conflict between China and the United States, a longtime ally of the Philippines. Thursday's joint drill followed an agreement by the leaders of the three countries last August to enhance security cooperation to safeguard peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific. Patrol vessels from each country and two helicopters joined search and rescue operations in waters off the northern coast of Maizuru in Kyoto prefecture, based on

a scenario of rescuing crew members from a South Korean ship that caught fire after colliding with another boat, the Japanese coast guard said. Japan in recent years has significantly reinforced its defenses in southwestern Japan, including Okinawa and its outer islands that are considered strategically key in response to growing Chinese assertiveness and tensions around Taiwan, a self-governed island claimed by Beijing. Coast guards from Japan, the United States and South Korea signed an agreement last month to work together to preserve maritime resources, counter illegal fishing, conduct search and rescue operations and improve maritime law enforcement capabilities in the region. China routinely sends coast guard vessels into waters surrounding disputed islands controlled by Japan.

# Netherlands kicks off 4 days of EU elections

AP ■ THE HAGUE

Polls opened in the Netherlands on Thursday to kick off four days of voting in European Union parliamentary elections across the 27 member states that are expected to deliver gains for the hard right. Estonians can cast their ballots across six days that started on Monday, but the Netherlands is the only EU country to start its single-day vote so early, followed by Ireland on Friday and the rest of the EU nations over the weekend. Europe-wide results will be announced Sunday night after all member states have completed voting. The Dutch voting comes six months after Geert Wilders' far-right Party for Freedom sent shockwaves around Europe by becoming the biggest party in the Dutch national parliament. Polling suggests Wilders will build on that popularity and set the tone for much of the bloc. Since the last EU elections five years ago, populist, far-right and extremist parties are leading governments in three EU nations, are part of governing coalitions in several others, and appear to have surging public support across the continent.



The EU elections are the world's second-biggest exercise in democracy behind the election in India, and the stakes are high. Almost 400 million voters will be electing 720 members of the European Parliament from beyond the Arctic circle to the edges of Africa and Asia. They will have an impact on issues ranging from global climate policies and defense to migration and geopolitical relations with China and the United States. Since the last European elections in 2019, war has broken out on the fringe of the bloc following Russia's invasion of

Ukraine, a country that desperately wants to join the EU. A founding member, the Netherlands was long unwavering in its support of EU policies. Research from the Clingendael think tank, though, suggests dissatisfaction with the EU among Dutch people, and that while most believe that the Netherlands should remain in the bloc, many also believe it should be more self-sufficient. While many voters are predicted to lurch to the right, the Christian Democrat-dominated European People's Party led by European Commission

President Ursula von der Leyen, is currently the EU legislature's biggest bloc and is bound to be the coalition kingmaker when the dust settles on the election results. In the Netherlands, Wilders' PVV could build on its domestic success and surge, possibly overtaking the combined Labour Party and Green Left. Labour topped the Dutch EU Parliament election in 2019 with 19 per cent of the vote for six seats while the Greens took 11 per cent and three seats. Wilders' party at the time only managed 3.5 per cent and no seats. Wilders and one of his likely coalition partners, the Farmer Citizen Movement, are popular among farmers in the Netherlands who have staged regular protests to call for an easing of EU legislation they say is crippling their livelihoods. Wilders has in the past called for the Netherlands to leave the EU as Britain did, but his party's manifesto for the election starting Thursday makes no mention of a so-called Brexit. Instead, it urges voters to back the PVV so it can change the EU from within, similar to plans of many other hard right parties across the bloc.

The number of members elected in each country depends on the size of the population. It ranges from six for Malta, Luxembourg and Cyprus to 96 for Germany. In 2019, Europeans elected 751 lawmakers. Following the United Kingdom's departure from the EU in 2020, the number of MEPs fell to 705. Some of the 73 seats previously held by British MEPs had been redistributed to other member states. The lawmakers, known as Members of the European Parliament of MEPs, can vote on a wide range of legislation laws relating to climate, banking rules, agriculture, fisheries, security and justice. They also vote on the EU budget, which is crucial to the implementation of European policies, including, for instance, the aid delivered to Ukraine. After the election, MEPs will elect their president at the first plenary session, from July 16-19. Then, most likely in September, they will nominate the president of the European Commission, following a proposal made by the member states. In 2019, von der Leyen narrowly won a vote to become the first woman to head the institution.

# Wickremesinghe opens political office as he eyes Sri Lankan presidency

Colombo (PTI): Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe on Thursday opened his political office here, signalling that he may contest the next presidential election scheduled to be held later this year. The office opening in Colombo's posh residential area of Flower Road at Cinnamon Gardens was graced by Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena and several senior ministers. Wickremesinghe, 75, hasn't made any public statement on his bid for re-election. Since mid-July 2022, he has been serving the balance term of the ousted president Gotabaya Rajapaksa. The next presidential election is to take place between mid-September and mid-October. Wickremesinghe, who was prime minister when Rajapaksa was ousted through public agitation on the streets which lasted months successfully steered the country through the economic crisis which was blamed on the rule by the Rajapaksa family.

# Sharif in Beijing for talks with Xi to seek more investments

PTI ■ BEIJING

Visiting Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has reached Beijing for talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping and other leaders to elevate all-weather bilateral ties and prospects of more aid and investments to bail out his cash-strapped country from the current economic crisis. Sharif, on a five-day official visit to China since June 4, toured the southern high-tech city of Shenzhen on Wednesday and addressed the investors meeting. During his stay here, Sharif will meet Xi, Premier Li Qiang and other leaders, Pakistan's state-run APP news agency reported. He will also attend a Pakistan-China Friendship and Business event and have meetings with the CEOs of leading Chinese companies working on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects. Several MoUs between the two countries on cooperation in various fields are likely to be signed, the report said. Cash-strapped Pakistan's econ-



omy is facing severe headwinds, and it has formally requested the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the next bailout package between USD 6 billion and USD 8 billion with the possibility of augmentation through climate financing. In his address to the investors meeting in Shenzhen, Sharif assured full security to the Chinese personnel from the recurring terrorist attacks targeting them. 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. Addressing the Pakistan-China Business Forum, Sharif assured all-out facilitation to Chinese investors and security of Chinese individuals, projects, and investments in Pakistan.

He said his government had taken various measures to ensure fool-proof security to protect the lives of Chinese workers in Pakistan. "I will spare no effort to protect the lives of Chinese workers and assure and guarantee that we will provide them security more than our children. This will never happen again," he said. Referring to the March terrorist attack in Besham in Pakistan, in which five Chinese personnel and their Pakistani driver were killed, he said it was one of the saddest days of his life when the whole nation felt saddened. The latest was the March suicide attack in Dasu in which five Chinese nationals and a Pakistan driver were killed. Pakistan paid USD 2.58 million as compensation to the families of those killed in the attack. 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).

# King Charles III honors generation that fought, died and waited for freedom

AP ■ VER SUR MER

King Charles III came to northern France on Thursday to honour the 22,442 British troops who died in the Battle of Normandy. He also came to honour a generation. It is a generation that sacrificed and fought and died and waited through five long years of war, then sent its youngest and bravest to claw their way onto the Normandy beaches and battle through machine-gun fire and artillery blasts to begin the D-Day invasion of Nazi-occupied Europe on June 6, 1944. It is also a generation that is quickly passing into history, with the youngest D-Day veterans now nearing their 100th birthdays. That is a reality the king knows firsthand after losing his mother and father, both World War II veterans, over the last three years. So, Charles on Thursday said thank you, perhaps for the last time, to old soldiers and their missing comrades during ceremonies at the newly complet-



ed British Normandy Memorial overlooking the beaches where UK soldiers landed 80 years ago. He said that while the number of living veterans was dwindling, "our obligation to remember what they stood for and what they achieved for us

all can never diminish". "Eighty years ago on D-Day, the 6th of June 1944, our nation - and those which stood alongside it - faced what my grandfather, King George VI, described as the supreme test," Charles said. "How fortunate we were, and the entire free

world, that a generation of men and women in the United Kingdom and other allied nations did not flinch when the moment came to face that test." The British ceremony featured performances by singers including Tom Jones, as well as testimony from D-Day veterans. Queen Camilla was seen wiping away a tear as actor Martin Freeman read memories of 99-year-old Joe Mines, recalling that "I was 19 when I landed, but I was still a boy". Charles, 75, shrugged off his own recent cancer diagnosis to attend the ceremony for British veterans, even though he chose to skip the larger international ceremony a few miles away. Prince William, the heir to the throne, will stand in for the king at that event near Saint-Laurent-sur-Mer, joining heads of state and veterans from around the world to mark the anniversary. The king is slowly returning to public-facing duties after being sidelined for three months following his cancer diagnosis.

# Tornadoes touch down across US, killing toddler and injuring five

Livonia (US) (AP): A tornado killed a two-year-old boy and injured his mother Wednesday when a tree fell on their house in suburban Detroit, while emergency workers in Maryland were responding to reports of collapsed structures with people trapped inside after a tornado there. Officials in Livonia, Michigan, said in a post on the city's website that

the quick-developing tornado struck several neighbourhoods in the city on Wednesday afternoon. A massive tree was uprooted and fell onto the family's house and through the roof, landing on a bed where the woman and her 2-year-old were sleeping, officials said. Crews worked for nearly an hour to remove the roof and parts of the tree and

then lift the tree to get the victims out. The toddler was pronounced dead at the scene, officials said. The mother was transported to a local hospital in critical condition. A 2-week-old sibling who was in a crib in a separate room was not injured but taken to a hospital for an evaluation, Livonia Fire Department Chief Robert Jennison told WDIV-

TV. "This is a terrible tragedy for our community," Mayor Maureen Miller Brosnan said in the statement. "Our hearts are broken, too, and we send our deepest sympathies." The city of Livonia activates warning sirens based on notifications from the National Weather Service or tornado reports, officials said. However, Livonia Emergency

Preparedness Director Brian Kahn said in the statement that the city did not receive any advance warning from the agency or others. A representative from the weather service called it a spin-up storm that didn't show up on their radars in enough time to issue a warning, according to city officials. The National Weather Service in Detroit confirmed

on the social platform X Wednesday night that an EF1 tornado with a peak wind speed of 95 mph (153 kmh) moved through Livonia. The agency said the twister travelled a path spanning over 5 miles (8 kilometers), uprooting and damaging trees and damaging some houses. In Maryland, emergency workers responded to reports that peo-

ple were trapped inside structures that collapsed after a tornado was spotted in the area during rounds of strong storms Wednesday night. A tornado was spotted in a suburban area of Montgomery County northwest of Washington, the National Weather Service said in a social media post warning people in the area to take cover.

**PARADIPPOR T AUTHORITY**  
SHORT e-TENDER CALL  
NOTICE (TCN) No.-FA/EDP/  
POS-06/2023/99 / 05/06/2024  
Name of the Work: "Facility Management of Integrated Port Operation System (POS) and SagarSetu". Estimated cost: Rs. 1,51,53,037/-. Last date & time of submission of bid: dt.12.06.2024 upto 17.00 Hrs. Refer our website for details: https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app  
Dy. Director, EDP Cell, F&A  
PPA/PR/08/2024-25 dt.05.06.2024



# Stock markets extend rally to second day on easing political worries

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Stock markets rallied for the second straight day on Thursday with the benchmark Sensex jumping nearly 693 points on easing political worries as the ruling NDA set in motion its government formation efforts.

Regaining the 75,000 level, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 692.27 points or 0.93 per cent to settle at more than week high of 75,074.51. During the day, the barometer soared 915.49 points or 1.23 per cent to 75,297.73.

The NSE Nifty climbed 201.05 points or 0.89 per cent to 22,821.40 with 38 of its constituents ending with gains. Intra-day, it rallied 289.8 points or 1.28 per cent to 22,910.15.

Key indices Sensex and Nifty had plunged by nearly 6 per cent on Tuesday due to below-expectation results of Lok Sabha polls. Investors lost a record Rs 31 lakh crore in a single day due to market meltdown. The indices recovered more than 3 per cent on Wednesday with NDA allies affirming their support to BJP to form the new government. In two days of gain, investor wealth has recovered by around Rs 21 lakh crore.

"The benchmark indices maintained their positive momentum, as the new coalition is about to swear in, which is predicted to be a stable government," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said.



However, anxiety persists over the new Cabinet being put in place and policy measures expected to be announced in the coming budget, Nair said adding that "the market is awaiting fresh signals from the RBI's comments on liquidity". Realty, IT, and oil & gas shares led the recovery while FMCG and healthcare witnessed profit booking. Among the 30 Sensex companies, Tech Mahindra, HCL Technologies, State Bank of India, NTPC, Infosys, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Consultancy Services and Wipro emerged as the biggest gainers.

Hindustan Unilever, Asian Paints, Mahindra & Mahindra, Nestle, IndusInd

Bank and Sun Pharma were among the laggards. "It appears that markets have adjusted to the recent election results, and stability on the global front is further boosting positivity," said Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd. In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge jumped 3.06 per cent, while midcap index climbed 2.28 per cent. All the indices ended with gains, with realty soaring 4.85 per cent, industrials jumping 3.69 per cent, power by 2.87 per cent, IT by 2.86 per cent, utilities by 2.52 per cent and energy by 2.34 per cent. As many as 3,009 stocks advanced while 834 declined and 102 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is poised to form the government at the Centre for a third consecutive term after the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) won the majority in the just-concluded parliamentary polls. In Asian markets, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled with gains while Shanghai ended lower. European markets were trading with gains. US markets ended in positive territory on Wednesday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.09 per cent to USD 78.43 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 5,656.26 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

# Sebi issues financial disincentives guidelines for bourses, other MIs for surveillance lapses

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi on Thursday came out with a framework on "financial disincentives" for stock exchanges and other market infrastructure institutions for their lapses in detecting abnormal or suspicious trading activities to safeguard the interest of retail investors.

The amount of financial disincentives for surveillance-related lapses would be determined on the basis of the total annual revenue of a Market Infrastructure Institution (MII) — stock exchange, clearing corporation and depository — during the previous financial year and the number of instances of such lapses during the financial year. The new framework will be applicable from July 1, 2024, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a circular.

"The general objective of surveillance by MIIs is thus to monitor the market to detect and deter manipulation or abusive trading that affects the integrity of the market, and to provide information that supports the regulator's enforcement actions," Sebi said.

Market surveillance by MIIs includes monitoring the day-to-day activities in the market, reporting abnormal or suspicious activities, and monitoring the conduct of market intermediaries through the generation and processing of alerts, seeking trading rationale, and carrying out snap analysis. Surveillance-related lapse includes any lapse observed in the discharge of surveillance activities, any



inadequate reporting or non-reporting of surveillance-related activity and failure to implement the surveillance measures in the prescribed time as well as any delay in implementing them or only partially implementing them.

With regards to the amount of financial disincentives, Sebi said that if the total annual revenues of an MII is less than Rs 1,000 crore, there would be a fine of Rs 25 lakh at the first instance of surveillance-related lapse, Rs 50 lakh on the second instance and Rs 1 crore for the third instance onwards. In case the total annual

revenue of an MII is between less than Rs 1,000 crore and up to Rs 300 crore, then a penalty of Rs 5 lakh, Rs 10 lakh and Rs 20 lakh would be levied on the first, second and third instance, respectively. Similarly, if the revenue is less than Rs 300 crore, a fine of Rs 1 lakh, Rs 2 lakh and Rs 4 lakh would be levied for the first, second and third instances of surveillance-related lapse, respectively.

The regulator said that the framework of financial disincentives for surveillance-related lapses would not be applicable in instances wherein it has a market-wide impact or caused losses to a large number of investors or affected the integrity of the market. Additionally, the guidelines will not be applicable for matters that are procedural in nature. After the identification of surveillance-related lapses at MIIs, Sebi will provide an opportunity for the concerned MII to make its submissions. The submissions would be considered by the regulator before imposing any fine. In case of imposition of penalty, the amount would be credited by the MII concerned within 15 working days to the Sebi's Investor Protection and Education Fund.

Also, the regulator has directed MIIs to disclose the details pertaining to financial disincentives on their websites and in their respective annual reports.

# Over USD 23 billion of sustainable infra projects identified

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 69 sustainable infrastructure projects worth over USD 23 billion of investment opportunities were identified at the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) clean economy investor forum meet in Singapore, according to a statement.

The statement of Singapore's ministry of trade and economy, which hosted the meet, out of the 69 projects, 20 investment-ready projects worth about USD 6 billion were presented to investors at business matching sessions.

Remaining projects worth about USD 17 billion were also identified as potential investment opportunities in future. The forum brought together about 300 participants from the Indo-Pacific region's top investors, cutting-edge project proponents, innovative start-up entrepreneurs, ministers and senior government officials.

The Indian delegation was led by Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal.

Organised by Singapore's ministry alongside the 13 other IPEF partners, the forum aims to facilitate high-quality business and capital matching and build connections between the public and private sectors through insightful conversations with expert panelists. It is a key initiative to advance the objectives of the IPEF Clean Economy Agreement, by mobilising financing in support of the development and deployment of clean energy and climate-friendly infrastructure and technologies in the IPEF economies.

The 14-member IPEF (Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity) bloc was launched jointly by the US and other partner countries of the Indo-Pacific region on May 23, 2022, in Tokyo. Together, they account for 40 per cent of the world's economic output and 28 per cent of trade. The framework is structured around four pillars relating to trade, supply chains, clean economy and fair economy. India has joined all the pillars except the trade.

Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, the US, and Vietnam are members of the bloc. "A total of 69 sustainable infrastructure projects amounting to over USD 23 billion of investment opportunities were identified at the Investor Forum," the statement said.

All IPEF partners were invited to nominate sustainable infrastructure projects through a process facilitated by PwC Singapore. The 20 investment-ready projects are in diverse areas including industrial parks, special economic zones, energy, agriculture and aquaculture, waste management, water and transport sectors, and were nominated by Brunei, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand.

# AC sales may touch new record of 14 million units annual sales in 2024: CEAMA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The blistering heatwave this year has skyrocketed the demand for room air-conditioners across the country, expecting a record annual sale of around 14 million units, according to the Consumer Electronics and Appliances Manufacturers Association.

The industry had "record-breaking figures" for sales of air-conditioners in May and expects a surge of 30 to 40 per cent in volume growth in summers alone, Consumer Electronics and Appliances Manufacturers Association (CEAMA) President Sunil Vachani told PTI. Soaring temperatures and heat waves have now made AC a "quintessential requirement" for households across urban areas, he said.

The Indian AC market is also evolving helped by energy-efficient models that are suitable across income brackets and by investment by the companies in indigenous manufacturing units of components.

"As the market evolves, we expect annual sales volumes to be around 14 million units, highlighting the sector's robust expansion," Vachani said. The Indian residential AC market is expected to be around 10-11 million units, in which brands like Voltas, LG, Hitachi Johnson, Lloyd,



Panasonic, Daikin, and Godrej compete. The country has witnessed a record temperature this season when the mercury has even crossed a record of 45 degrees Celsius at some places, including Delhi-NCR. Appliance makers such as Voltas, LG and Haier have reported around two-fold growth in volume sales year-on-year in May, faced challenges from delays in installation and filling up replenishing inventories of hot-selling energy-efficient models.

"The soaring temperatures, the highest that the country has witnessed in decades, have boosted demand for cooling solutions, with May alone seeing record-breaking figures. We anticipate this momentum to continue, projecting 30-40 per cent growth in volumes for the summer alone," Vachani said. According to Vachani, the industry is setting up indigenous manufacturing units of components under the

PLI scheme, which has also helped to meet this rising demand. Haier Appliances India President NS Satish said over the years, with the temperature reaching extreme levels, especially in the summers, there has been a consistent demand for efficient, smart and high-quality air conditioning. "Based on last year's trends and current consumer behaviour, we anticipate a strong demand for cooling appliances this summer. From March to May, AC sales increased by 103 per cent and Refrigerator sales increased by 30 per cent compared to the same period last year," he said. The company expects 35-40 per cent growth in the sale of ACs and 30 per cent in refrigerators. "We anticipate an overall double-digit growth in the cooling appliances category, reaffirming our commitment to superior products and customer satisfaction," he said.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee depreciated 5 paise to settle at 83.49 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday due to foreign capital outflows and rising crude oil prices overseas.

Forex traders said a weak American currency and firm trend in the equity markets supported the local currency even as investors remained concerned ahead of the RBI's monetary policy decision to be announced on Friday. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.40 and touched the intra-day low of 83.50 against the greenback during the session.

The local unit finally settled at 83.49 (provisional) against the American currency, down 5 paise from its previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee settled 7 paise higher at 83.44 against the dollar.

According to Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, the rupee depreciated due to a surge in crude oil prices and selling pressure from FIIs (foreign institutional investors). However, a weak US dollar and positive tone in the

# Rupee falls 5 paise to 83.49 against US dollar



domestic markets supported the rupee at lower levels.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on worries over rising crude oil prices, and as FIIs continue to sell in the markets. However, positive tone in the domestic markets as NDA is expected to come back to power for the third consecutive term, raising optimism over policy continuity may support the rupee at lower levels," Choudhary said, adding that "USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.20 to Rs 83.80". Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading

0.03 per cent lower at 104.18. Analysts attributed the weakness in the dollar index to a sharp fall in US Treasury yields after the latest data showed job growth in May was slower than estimated, raising expectations of an interest rate cut by the US Federal Reserve.

Market participants are likely to take further cues from the weekly employment data and trade balance numbers to be released later in the day. Besides, the decision of RBI's rate-setting panel is likely to impact investor sentiment, they added.

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of RBI on Wednesday started its three-day deliberations to decide

the next monetary policy. Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das will announce the outcome on Friday.

"The Reserve Bank of India is set to keep its repo rate at 6.5 per cent at its June 7 review. The policy is turning more restrictive as cooling inflation pushes up real rates, hurting growth," said Amit Goel, co-founder and Chief Global Strategist at Pace 360. He further said the RBI's record dividend payment of Rs 2.1 lakh crore to the government for FY24 may alleviate concerns about the growth outlook.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, advanced 0.31 per cent to USD 78.65 per barrel. On the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 692.27 points, or 0.93 per cent, to close at 75,074.51. The broader NSE Nifty rose 201.05 points or 0.89 per cent to 22,821.40. Foreign investors were net sellers of Indian equities on Wednesday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 5,656.26 crore on a net basis. FIIs bought shares worth Rs 21,012.72 crore and sold equities worth Rs 26,668.98 crore in the cash segment.

# Gold climbs ₹680; silver rallies ₹1,400

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices jumped Rs 680 to Rs 73,500 per 10 grams in the local market on Thursday amid a jump in the precious metal rates internationally, according to HDFC Securities.

The yellow metal had closed at Rs 72,820 per 10 grams in the previous session. Silver also rallied by Rs 1,400 to Rs 93,300 per kg against Rs 91,900 per kg in the previous session.

"Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 73,500 per 10 grams, up by Rs 680, taking bullish cues from the overseas market," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC



Securities, said. In the global markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,360 per ounce, up USD 28 from the previous close. A pullback in the US Treasury yield and mixed US macroeconomic data led to an uptick in gold prices. The

European Central Bank is likely to cut interest rates on Thursday in its policy meeting, which could support gold prices, Gandhi said. Silver also trading higher at USD 30.30 per ounce. It had settled at USD 29.75 per ounce in the previous close. "Gold and silver prices gained as bond yields fell after weaker-than-expected US private payrolls data bolstered expectations that the US Federal Reserve would cut interest rates later this year. "Further, downbeat US ADP non-farm employment data increased the possibility of the rate cuts which supported bullion prices," Rahul Kallantri, Vice President of Commodities at Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

# 13 IPEF members ink clean, fair economy agreements; India to sign after domestic approval

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Thursday said 13 IPEF (Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity) bloc members have signed fair and clean economy agreements, while India will ink the deal after getting domestic approval.

"India did not formally sign these agreements as domestic approval processes are still underway and will be completed after the formation of the new government," the commerce ministry said in a statement. The government formation process in the country is on as the Lok Sabha elections got over this week. These agreements, talks for which concluded in November last year, were

signed in Singapore. Trade ministers and senior officials of the 14 member countries have gathered in Singapore for the ministerial meet. The Indian delegation was led by Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal. The 14-member IPEF bloc was launched jointly by the US and other partner countries of the Indo-Pacific region on May 23, 2022, in Tokyo. Together, they account for 40 per cent of the world's economic output and 28 per cent of trade. The framework is structured around four pillars relating to trade, supply chains, clean economy and fair economy. India has joined all the pillars except the trade. Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, the

Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, the US, and Vietnam are members of the bloc. On November 14, 2023, the IPEF declared a substantial conclusion of negotiations for a Clean Economy, Fair Economy, and the overarching agreement on the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity. After that, the IPEF partners completed a legal review of the text for these agreements and domestic approval processes.

"Today, IPEF members signed these agreements which are first-of-their-kind approaches to addressing 21st-century challenges and strengthening economic engagement across a critical region. India actively participated in the signing

proceedings and the ministerial deliberations," it said.

These agreements will enter into force after at least five IPEF partners complete their internal legal procedures for ratification, acceptance or approval. Agreement on a clean economy intends to accelerate efforts of IPEF partners towards energy security and transition, climate resilience and adaptation, GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions mitigation; find/develop innovative ways of reducing dependence on fossil fuel energy; promote technical cooperation, workforce development, capacity building, and research collaborations; and collaborate to facilitate

development, access, and deployment of clean energy and climate-friendly technologies.

This agreement will facilitate investments, concessional financing, joint collaborative projects, workforce development and technical assistance.

Further, the agreement on fair economy intends to create a more transparent and predictable business environment which can spur greater trade and investment in the markets of member countries; enhance efforts to prevent and combat corruption by strengthening anti-corruption frameworks, support efforts to improve tax transparency and exchange of information for tax purposes between competent authorities.



# Tall order for Praggnanandhaa as he takes on Caruana in penultimate round

PTI ■ STAVANGER (NORWAY)

Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa will take on Fabiano Caruana of the United States in the ninth and penultimate round of Norway chess tournament now underway here. It's been an event of ups and downs for the Indian super-talented as he won two games under Classical and two matches under Armageddon to reach the third spot with just two rounds to come. The highlight has been his two victories in Classical over world No. 1 Magnus Carlsen of Norway and No. 2 Caruana earlier in the tournament and the downside has been three losses under Armageddon. Carlsen, on 14.5 points, leads the fray with three victories in the Classical and he is followed by American Hikaru Nakamura who is a full point behind. Praggnanandhaa, on 12 points, is third in the standings ahead of Firouzja Alireza of France who has 11 points. Caruana, on nine points, is the next in



standings ahead of World champion Ding Liren of China, who seems poised to finish last. While it looks like a direct contest between Carlsen and Nakamura for the top spot, Praggnanandhaa would like to hold on to his new status of world No. 10 that he achieved with some handy rating gains thus far. In the final round, post his game against Caruana, Praggnanandhaa is set to

meet Nakamura and two draws will likely attest his place in the top-10 world rankings. Carlsen has to meet Alireza in the next round followed by Caruana in the finale, and the only person who can overtake him is Nakamura who still has a terribly off-form Ding Liren of China in the next round as white. In the women's section, Wenjun Ju is ahead on 14.5 points and has a 1.5 points

lead over Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine. R Vaishali and Tingjie Lei of China share the third spot on 11.5 points apiece. Koneru Humpy is a distant fifth on 8.5, having a 2.5 points lead over last placed Pia Cramling of Sweden. In the penultimate round, Vaishali will take on Lei as black, while Humpy has the white pieces against Ju. Muzychuk meets veteran Cramling who has done decently being 61 years. Things are unlikely to change much in this section unless Humpy can find her magical touch and beat Wenjun in the \$1,61,000 prize-money event. Pairings (Round 9): Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 9) vs R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 12); Firouzja Alireza (Fra, 11) vs Magnus Carlsen (Nor, 14.5); Hikaru Nakamura (Usa, 13.4) vs Ding Liren (Chn, 14.5). Women: Tingjie Lei (Chn, 11.5) vs R Vaishali (Ind, 11.5); Koneru Humpy (Ind, 8) vs Wenjun Ju (Chn, 14.5); Pia Cramling (Swe, 5.5) vs Anna Muzychuk (Ukr, 13).

# Sarabjot shoots gold at Munich World Cup

PTI ■ MUNICH

Sarabjot Singh on Thursday opened India's account at the ISSF World Cup here with a gold medal in the men's 10m air pistol event, emerging triumphant in a field that featured a reigning world champion and a four-time Olympian. The 22-year-old Indian shot 242.7 in the eight-man final, leaving behind his nearest competitor Bu Shuaihang of China by 0.2 points. Germany's Robin Walter won bronze. Sarabjot had on Wednesday shot a top score of 588 to qualify for the decider. The final had in its line-up the reigning world champion Bowen Zhang of China and four-time Olympian Yusuf Dikec of Turkey, besides Bu and Walter. Under the circumstances, Sarabjot delivered a fine pillar-to-post victory for his second individual ISSF World Cup medal, after his breakthrough gold last year in Bhopal. The young Indian was the strongest off the blocks shooting three high 10s off his first five single shots to take an early lead. His consistent shooting



continued and he never gave up the lead until Walter caught up with him at the end of the 14th single shot. A clutch 10.8 for his 15th looked to have settled the final as Walter wilted with an 8.6. After Zhang bowed out in fifth, Walter upset Dikec for the bronze. Going into the final two shots, 1.4 separated Sarabjot from Bu, who was till then enjoying the chase as the pressure told on Sarabjot. In the end, Sarabjot, who had

topped the selection trials for the Paris Olympics, did well to hold on for a morale-boosting win. Sarabjot had won a bronze in 10m air pistol event at the Asian Shooting Championships 2023 in Changwon and had secured the first pistol quota for India in the Paris Olympics. At the Asian Games last year, Sarabjot won the gold medal with the men's 10m air pistol team and silver in the 10m air pistol mixed team event.



# Chhetri dedication, ability to evolve set him apart: Nabi

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Former India midfielder Syed Rahim Nabi on Thursday heaped praise on Sunil Chhetri, who is retiring from the international game after Thursday's World Cup qualifying round match against Kuwait, saying the records set by the iconic footballer will be difficult to surpass. He, however, hoped that someone in future will fill the boots of Chhetri. "The records that he (Chhetri) has set, surpassing that will be very difficult," Nabi told PTI at the East Bengal club ground a few hours before the all important match at Salt Lake Stadium. "Bhaichung (Bhuttia) filled the boots of the great IM Vijayan, Sunil filled Bhaichung's boots, someone will fill his (Chhetri's) boots but what he has done," said Nabi, who had played many matches together with Chhetri in the national team.

# Andreeva reaches French Open semifinals at age 17



AP ■ PARIS

With the insouciance of a 17-year-old having the time of her life in Paris, Mirra Andreeva says she and her coach work out a game plan before a tennis match — and then she forgets all about that, preferring to just wing it. Seems to be working out fine so far: The unseeded Russian is the youngest Grand Slam semifinalist in more than a quarter-century. Playing in only her sixth major tournament, Andreeva got past an ill No. 2 seed Aryna Sabalenka 6-7 (5), 6-4, 6-4 at the French Open on Wednesday. Next, on Thursday, Andreeva goes up against another surprising player: No. 12 Jasmine Paolini, a 28-year-old Italian who reached her first major semifinal by defeating No. 4 Elena Rybakina 6-2, 4-6, 6-4. "I always play the way I want to play. We have a plan with my coach for the match, but after, I forget everything, and when I play a match, I don't have any thoughts in my head," said the 38th-ranked Andreeva, who is based in Cannes and coached by 1994 Wimbledon champion Conchita Martinez. "So maybe I would say that my strength could be that I just play how I want to play and I do whatever I want to do." Words many the parent of a teenager probably has heard at home. The other matchup Thursday will be No. 1 Iga

Swiatek against No. 3 Coco Gauff. Swiatek is seeking her fifth Grand Slam title and fourth in Paris; Gauff won the U.S. Open last September and was the runner-up to Swiatek at Roland Garros in 2022. They both won singles quarterfinals on Tuesday. Gauff, with Katerina Siniakova, and Paolini, with Sara Errani, also are into the semifinals in doubles; Andreeva withdrew from that event before her quarterfinal scheduled for Wednesday. Andreeva's success at her age is not unprecedented. But it's been a while. She is the youngest Grand Slam semifinalist since Martina Hingis at age 16 in 1997. You need to go even farther back to find a younger player who eliminated a woman ranked No. 1 or 2 at Roland Garros: 1990, when Monica Seles — like Hingis, now a member of the International Tennis Hall of Fame — was 16 when she beat Steffi Graf in the final. "I would say that I am almost like a normal teenager, because I still have to do my school that I don't like to do. I watch a lot of TV series in my spare time. I watch Netflix. I sometimes spend too much time on my Instagram," Andreeva said. "But maybe what makes me a little different is that, I don't know if I can say that I'm mature, but I feel myself a mature person, and I feel that I know what I'm doing."

So even if she and Martinez go over strategy ahead of time, those tactics are not necessarily implemented. According to Andreeva, she figures things out from shot to shot. "I decide: Well, what should I do? Should I go down the line or should I do cross? Should I do a drop shot. Should I do a lob?" said Andreeva, whose sister, 19-year-old Erika, lost to Sabalenka in the first round last week. "That's sometimes not really good, because I have a lot of decisions in my mind." She has yet to win a tour-level title of any sort and is competing in only her fifth Slam tournament. Sabalenka, meanwhile, is a two-time champion at the Australian Open, including in January, and had won the first 23 Grand Slam sets she played in 2024 until dropping two in a row against Andreeva. Dealing with a stomach illness, Sabalenka was visited multiple times by a trainer and doctor and often clutched at her midsection. There were plenty of momentum shifts, and the outcome felt in doubt until the very last game, when Andreeva broke with a beautiful lob that Sabalenka didn't even move to try to get to. "If we look back," Andreeva said later, "I wouldn't expect myself (in the semifinals)." Had Sabalenka and Rybakina won, this would have been only the second time in the professional era, which began in 1968, that the women seeded 1-4 all advanced to the semifinals in Paris. The other was way back in 1992. But Paolini and Andreeva prevented that. With Jannik Sinner into the men's semifinals, it is the first time an Italian woman and Italian man both have appeared in the final four at the same Grand Slam tournament in the same year. It's quite a moment for their country in tennis: On Monday, Sinner will become the first man to be No. 1 in the ATP rankings.

PTI ■ MANCHESTER

The talent drain at Paris Saint-Germain over the past 12 months was unprecedented in the world of soccer. Now the French club is looking to the future and an end to its age of excess. "It is a new era of PSG," president Nasser Al-Khelaifi said. "All respect to Messi, Neymar, Kylian. We know what they've done for the club. "It was very important to have them all. I wish them all the best for their new challenges, but as a club, for sure, I think the star is the collective." Time will tell how PSG's post-Galactico era will work out. But the signings of Messi, Neymar and Mbappe ultimately failed to achieve the Qatar-backed club's overriding ambition of conquering Europe. For all of PSG's dominance of the French league — winning it in 10 of the last 12 seasons — it has reached just one Champions League final since being bought by Qatar Sports Investments in 2011. A procession of icons has gone through the club in that time from David Beckham to Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Angel di Maria and Sergio Ramos. Yet the Champions League has so far remained out of reach. Even Messi couldn't change PSG's fortunes, despite ending his own search

# PSG banking on new direction after Mbappe's move to Real Madrid



for the World Cup title in 2022 in his final year in Paris. So it is perhaps understandable that Al-Khelaifi is looking to go in a different direction, having spent a record \$262 million on Neymar and \$190 million on Mbappe in one spectacular offseason in 2017. Messi was a free agent from Barcelona, but the combined salary for all three was a reported \$152 million

annually, plus bonuses. For all of that exorbitant spending, PSG has watched on as Madrid has continued to dominate the Champions League, winning the trophy in six of the last 11 seasons. Abu Dhabi-backed Manchester City, which like PSG, has used its newfound riches to shake up the traditional order of European soccer's elite, won the Champions

League for the first time last year. PSG's so-called shift started last year following the exits of Messi to Inter Miami and Neymar to Saudi-team Al-Hilal. Mbappe's departure was also anticipated. Not that it is shopping in the bargain basement, having spent around \$500 million on new players over that period. Randal Kolo Muani was signed for 95 million euros (\$103 million); Goncalo Ramos was 65 million euros (\$70 million) and Ousmane Dembele was 50 million euros (\$54 million). More signings will come during this offseason. Bradley Barcola, another signing last year, and Warren Zaire-Emery are emerging French talents. Zaire-Emery was a graduate from the club's academy and after building a state of the art training center, PSG hopes more will follow. While the wait for European success goes on, PSG's new-look team won the domestic league and cup double last season and was a beaten semifinalist in the Champions League.

# Zverev reaches his fourth consecutive French Open semifinal as trial proceeds

AP ■ PARIS

Alexander Zverev beat Alex de Minaur 6-4, 7-6 (5), 6-4 on Wednesday night to reach the French Open semifinals for the fourth year in a row. Zverev extended his current winning streak to 11 matches, including a title on clay at the Italian Open last month, and his victory over the 11th-seeded de Minaur at Court Philippe Chatrier moves him into a matchup against two-time Roland Garros runner-up Casper Ruud on Friday. The fourth-seeded Zverev is competing in Paris as a court proceeding continues in his home country of Germany, connected to accusations of physical abuse by a former girlfriend of his. Zverev said he never thought it was a possibility he wouldn't be able to play in the French Open

because of the court case. "No, they made it very clear from the beginning that I don't have to be there. I think everything is going accordingly. Everything is going OK from my side and from my point of view," he said. "There's nothing else to say." The other men's semifinal Friday is No. 2 Jannik Sinner, who won the Australian Open in January, against No. 3 Carlos Alcaraz, who owns two major trophies. None of the four men left in the bracket has ever won the French Open, and this will be the first title match in Paris since 2004 without at least one of Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic or Roger Federer. The women's semifinals Thursday are No. 1 Iga Swiatek vs. No. 3 Coco Gauff, followed by No. 12 Jasmine Paolini vs. 17-year-old Mirra Andreeva. Djokovic was the defending



men's champion but withdrew from the tournament on Tuesday because of an injured right knee, allowing the man he was supposed to play in the quarterfinals, Ruud, to advance. Djokovic will be replaced by Sinner at No. 1 in the ATP rankings on Monday.

Zverev is trying to win his first Grand Slam title. So is No. 7 Ruud, who lost in the finals at Roland Garros in 2022 (to Nadal) and 2023 (to Djokovic) and at the U.S. Open in 2022 (to Alcaraz). "I'm happy to be in another semifinal," said Zverev, who is 0-3 at that stage in Paris. "Hopefully, I can win one." He lost to Dominic Thiem in the final of the 2020 U.S. Open and won a gold medal in singles at the Tokyo Olympics three years ago. After eliminating 14-time champion Nadal in the first round, Zverev was coming off a pair of five-setters in the third and fourth rounds. This victory was far less complicated, although it could have been far more difficult than it was: de Minaur was one point from tying things at a set apiece while Zverev served

down 6-5 in the second. But Zverev fought that off. In the ensuing tiebreaker, de Minaur pulled out to a 4-0 lead, before Zverev collected seven of the next eight points. The third set appeared to shift Zverev's way for good when de Minaur double-faulted to get broken and fall behind 4-2. When Zverev served for the victory at 5-3, however, de Minaur used a delicate drop volley to break and extend the match. It wouldn't last much longer, because Zverev broke right back to end it. All in all, it was not a particularly clean match. They combined for more than twice as many unforced errors (101) as winners (48). "Had my chances. Probably should have taken that second set," de Minaur said after the end of his best run at the French Open.

# Man City: How Premier League rule change could alter the face of English soccer

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester City's reported legal action against the Premier League has the potential to change the face of English soccer. At a time when the most popular league in the world is trying to clamp down on out-of-control spending, the removal of its Associated Party Transaction (APT) rules could pave the way for never-before-seen excess and, it's feared, ultimately kill competition. City is already England's most dominant team of recent times, having won six of the last seven leagues and an unprecedented four in a row. Backed by the ruling family of Abu Dhabi, it is one of the richest clubs in the world and has spent exorbitantly on star players like Erling Haaland and Kevin De Bruyne. If

restrictions over its spending powers were relaxed, City's dominance is only likely to grow, with fewer rivals able to compete. APT EXPLAINED: The league introduced APT rules in December 2021 after Newcastle was bought by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund. The rules dictate that commercial deals with organizations linked to a club's ownership represent "fair market value." Regulations prevent clubs from artificially inflating deals to gain an "unfair advantage over domestic competitors." One of City's main sponsors is Abu Dhabi-based Etihad Airways. Saudi-backed Newcastle is sponsored by Saudi firm Sela, which is owned by the PIF. It is reported that City claims it

is the victim of "discrimination." WHAT'S NEXT?: An arbitration hearing is reportedly due to start on Monday and will last for two weeks. If APT rules are proved to be unlawful and scrapped, there is the potential for sponsorship deals to be vastly inflated going forward without regulation from the league. The concern is the possibility that clubs could take advantage of commercial deals with companies linked to their owners and, if abused, that could artificially distort revenues. That would be a problem for the league's profit and sustainability regulations (PSR), which are designed to control spending in relation to revenues and currently allow clubs to make losses of up to 105 million pounds (\$133



million) over a three-year period. In its most extreme case, without regulation, a club could hypothetically set the value of sponsorships at any figure that would allow it to meet PSR requirements.

CITY CHARGES: City has been accused by the league of more than 100 alleged rules breaches including financial wrongdoing. If upheld, it could face a fine, points deductions or even expulsion from the league. City denies the charges. City was banned from European competition by governing body UEFA in 2020 for breaching its Financial Fair Play rules, including "overstating its sponsorship revenue." The ban was

overturned on appeal at the Court of Arbitration for Sport. COMPETITIVENESS: The Premier League's competitiveness is among the main reasons why it is so popular around the world and earns billions of pounds in broadcast revenue. At a time when even mega-rich rivals like Manchester United are struggling to compete with City, a strengthening of its already vast spending powers runs the risk of widening the gap between the top and the rest. Top-flight clubs meet on Thursday for their annual general meeting where, among other issues, a spending cap will be discussed to help increase the competitiveness of the league. They will be given the chance to trial an "anchoring" system, which will limit clubs to

spending only a multiple of the combined prize money and cash from TV rights earned by the last-placed team in the league. That could reduce the potential spending power of the clubs with the biggest revenues and richest owners. PSR REFORM: The anchoring principle, if approved, would be part of new financial rules which are set to replace the existing profitability and sustainability regulations from the 2025-26 season. After a tightening of regulations, Everton and Nottingham Forest were handed points deductions this season for breaching financial rules. Clubs will discuss at the AGM the possibility of raising the amount of losses permitted to 135 million pounds (\$173 million) over a three-year period.



# Ponting on talent rich India's global trophy drought

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
The all-conquering Australia under Ricky Ponting's leadership knew the art of peaking at the right time in global events and the two-time World Cup-winning captain reckons India will need to do the same besides overcoming some mental demons to win an elusive ICC trophy. Cricket's powerhouse India, who last won an ICC trophy in 2013, began their T20 World Cup campaign on an emphatic note in New York on Wednesday, beating Ireland by eight wickets. Speaking to PTI from New York, the 49-year-old Australian great said India are well-placed to end their barren run in ICC events and need to find a way to deal with the enormous pressure that comes with representing a cricket-crazy nation. "You've got to try and keep a clear mind where you can focus on the task at hand rather than thinking too far

ahead or worrying about any sort of external pressures," said Ponting. "There's no doubting the talent (in India squad), but we also shouldn't forget that the World Cups are not easy to win. There are all the best players in the world together at one time in different contrasting conditions. "So look there's definitely a mindset thing to it. How you deal with pressure, how you cope with pressure, how you think your way through certain situations is the difference between winning and losing a T20 game," said Ponting, who led Australia to ODI World Cup titles in 2003 and 2007 besides winning the trophy as a player in 1999. Ponting stressed on the importance of raising the game in the back half of the tournament. "...One thing you know about World Cups, you have to have your best players playing well at the right time. Australian teams are playing their best cricket right at the back half of

the tournament and peaking again at the right time in a major event," he said. Six months ago, Australia peaked at the right time to lift the ODI World Cup trophy under Pat Cummins' captaincy. The Rohit Sharma-led India are among Ponting's top four teams in the ongoing showpiece as they have all bases covered. Opening with Virat Kohli, which was the case against Ireland, is a no brainer for Ponting and he would also want to see more of Kuldeep Yadav, who was not picked for the opening game. India may not have the power-hitters that Australia, England and South Africa possess but Ponting believes they have enough for the conditions in the Caribbean where the knockouts will be held. "I mean, it's not so much about power hitting, it's about strike rates as well," he said when asked if India did not match up to rival teams in the striking department.



"If you look at the strike rates of the Indian batters, they'd probably match up pretty well against players from other countries. I know Australia will have Marsh and Stoinis and Maxwell and Cameron Green and these sort of guys

in the middle order there, and South Africa will have Stubbs, Klassen and David Miller. "So they have got a lot of power, but then you look at the Indian lineup, Surya, although he's not an out and out power player, his strike

rate and his scoring ability all around the grounds is as good as anybody in world cricket. "Rishabh Pant is obviously back and coming off of a pretty good IPL as well and hitting the ball beautifully. Then you've got Hardik

Pandya there as well. So, I think they've got enough power and that their batting lineup will look as dangerous as anybody's," said Ponting. Also, for him, it makes sense to open with Rohit Sharma and Kohli throughout the tournament. "What we've seen with Rohit over the last couple of years is that he is playing a lot more of an aggressive role at the top of the order than he probably once did. "Virat is coming off another magnificent IPL opening the batting for RCB, so I would definitely be going that way," said Ponting. It is still early days in the tournament but Ponting would be surprised if India, England, Australia and South Africa don't make the semifinals. "I had Australia, India, South Africa and England will be the four that I'm going to go for in the semi-finals. But South Africa, to me, this World Cup in particular, have got a stronger looking team than they've had in a long time.

"And I think they could be one of the really dangerous lineups as this tournament goes on. But I'd also be very surprised if the winner doesn't come out of those four teams that I just mentioned." Like is often the case, the performance of the spinners towards the business end of the tournament will hold the key and Ponting reckons this is where India are well covered with the likes of Kuldeep, Yuzvendra Chahal, Ravindra Jadeja and Axar Patel in the 15. "A lot of Australia's success as well revolves around how well Adam Zampa bowls. We saw that in the 50-over World Cup and what he's done for the Australian T20 cricket in the last four or five years has been outstanding. "Spin might play a bigger role as the tournament goes on...Wrist spin obviously even more important. "India have got most bases covered there with the two left-arm off spin options and one left arm leg spinner and one right-arm leg spinner," he added.

## Rohit doing fine but NY's drop in pitch faces criticism

**PTI ■ NEW YORK**  
Rohit Sharma's bruised bicep is expected to heal before the game against Pakistan on Sunday but the Nassau County ground's track, which is "bordering on dangerous with huge open cracks", has become a concern for stakeholders of the game trying to sell cricket in America through the ongoing T20 World Cup. India opened their campaign with an eight-wicket win in a low-scoring match against Ireland, who were bowled out of 96 in just 16 overs. Rohit, who scored a half century in the successful chase, was hit on his right bicep by pacer Josh Little and was forced to retire hurt. The ball that struck him suddenly took off from length on a pitch that offered a great degree of uneven bounce. Rishabh Pant was also hit on his left elbow during his 36 not out. "Rohit's injury isn't serious. He himself said that it's a bit sore. He should be okay for Pakistan game (on Sunday) as of now. There are two practice sessions before that," a senior BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity. Injury scare aside, the nature of the pitch, a drop-in one brought from Adelaide specifically for the World Cup, has raised eyebrows. India are scheduled to play two more games at this stadium. Player of the final from India's



2007 T20 World Cup triumph, Irfan Pathan, hardly minced words as he criticised the pitch, calling it unsafe. "Look, we definitely want to promote cricket in America, but this pitch is not safe for players. If we had a pitch like this in India, a match would never be played there again for a very long time," he said on Star Sports. "This pitch is definitely not good. I mean, we are talking about the World Cup here, not even a bilateral series," he asserted. Also unimpressed was former England captain Michael Vaughan. "Trying to sell the game in the states is great... Love it. But for players to have to play on this sub-standard surface in New York is unacceptable... You work so hard to make it to the WC then have to play on this,"

he wrote on his X handle. Rohit was bewildered by the track's behaviour and conceded that he didn't know what to expect from it against Pakistan. The team's batting coach Vikram Rathour was a shade more reticent in his analysis. "It is a challenging wicket as far as batting is concerned but this is what we have. So we need to find ways to deal with that," Rathour said in the post-match press conference, placing the onus on his team to find ways to score. The ICC has not reacted to the criticism so far and the Indian team management is unlikely to file any official complaint. But the displeasure is clear about the nature of the track, which according to some who saw, is "unfit for T20 cricket" and "bordering on dangerous".

"It is actually a very fresh pitch. There is a grass cover but along with it are big cracks. So, it will seam but also take off from length. Now when you have a fresh track like this, you first try out a few games like you do with beta testing of a new app," the source explained. "Then you release it in the market. It is not a T20 wicket and all four tracks look the same," said another source after a first-hand look at the track following the match. May be a roller would even out the cracks but such pitches are known to take time to settle for batting. While Indian pacers literally toyed with a very competent T20 outfit like Ireland, even the biggest fan of Arshdeep Singh wouldn't have imagined that his deliveries would take off like surface to air missiles. "One should be glad that nothing serious happened to Rohit and Rishabh (Pant). They are fine," the source added. However, Ireland's Harry Tector had to undergo a mandatory concussion test after a nasty snorter from Jasprit Bumrah first hit his gloves and then flush on the helmet before Virat Kohli completed the catch. The ICC rules on quality of pitches are quite clear. An assessment would only be done once the tournament is over and if found sub-standard, the track's overall rating would go down.



## Pant will continue at number 3 for India in T20 World Cup: Rathour

**PTI ■ NEW YORK**  
India will continue with wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant at No. 3 in the T20 World Cup following his gritty performance against Ireland, said batting coach Vikram Rathour, who also expressed his delight at having a fully-fit Hardik Pandya back in the fold. Both Pant and Pandya, who returned to top-flight cricket in the IPL, are making a comeback to international cricket after a long gap. The duo delivered the goods in India's eight-wicket thrashing of Ireland in their opening game here on Wednesday. On a challenging pitch with uneven bounce, run-scoring was difficult but Pant unleashed a few stunning shots, including a reverse-scoop over the Irish wicket-keeper's head for a match-winning six in his unbeaten 36.

The Ireland match was Pant's first game for India since December 2022 when he was involved in a horrific car accident. "Yes, he has been batting really well. The two games (warm-up and Ireland) he has played, he has looked really, really good," Rathour told the media after the match here at the Nassau County Cricket Stadium. "Yes, at the moment he is our No. 3 and it helps that he is a left-hander," Rathour added, in a way cementing the combination of skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli at the top. Both Pant and Pandya made their way back into the India squad for the T20 World Cup after proving their fitness and form in the IPL. Even though he did not garner big numbers as an all-rounder in a turbulent season as captain for Mumbai Indians, India chief selector Ajit Agarkar had

said that there is no one in the country who could match Pandya's skills as an all-rounder. On Wednesday, Pandya was quick and precise with his line and length to produce 4-0-27-3 in his first match since October 2023 -- also in a World Cup. Pandya had hobbled off the pitch in Pune playing against Bangladesh after twisting his ankle, which left India without an all-rounder and also disrupting the balance of their playing XI, with incoming Suryakumar Yadav failing to make an impact in the 50-overs quadrennial showpiece. "Hardik looked really good. Hardik has been -- I mean, even in the practice game and even in the practice -- bowling really well," Rathour said. "He looks fit enough to go through four overs and he's been bowling with some pace and some accuracy, so yeah, it's great," he added.

## Australia beat Oman in T20 World Cup



**PTI ■ BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS)**  
Marcus Stoinis smacked a quick-fire unbeaten half-century and claimed three wickets as Australia began their T20 World Cup campaign with a comprehensive 39-run victory against Oman at the Kensington Oval on Thursday. Stoinis helped Australia recover from a top-order slide with a brutal unbeaten 67-run knock off 36 balls to help them post 164/5 in the company of David Warner (56). He then produced figures of 3-0-19-3 as the 2021 champions grabbed two points. Oman tried to take the fight to the opposition but their lack of experience showed as they could manage only 125/9 in 20 overs. Oman were pegged back when Nathan Ellis (2/28) and Mitchell Starc (2/20) struck once each inside the first three overs. Starc produced a vicious inswinger on the third ball of Oman's innings which hit Pratik Athavale (0) on the pads, but Australia were forced to take a DRS review after their appeal was declined on the field. Oman then reviewed unsuccessfully when Ellis pinned Kashyap Prajapati (7) in front of the wickets for the second wicket. Stoinis struck on the final ball of the powerplay to deliver a body blow, removing Oman skipper Aqib Ilyas (18) who looked to counter-attack. Ilyas was caught by Matthew Wade, who was sharp behind the wickets throughout. Stoinis also claimed Zeshan Maqsood (1) when he got the batter caught behind in the eighth over to ensure Australia's dominance in the game. Late in their innings, Ayaan Khan hit an impressive 30-ball 36 with two fours and as many sixes while putting on 37 runs for the seventh wicket to delay the inevitable. After being asked to bat first, Australia put on 164/5 in 20 overs. Stoinis arrested a top-order slide for the Australians after opener Travis Head (12) and skipper Mitchell Marsh (14) were unable to convert their starts. Veteran all-rounder Glenn Maxwell's misery continued with the bat as he was dismissed for a golden duck off Mehran, with Ilyas taking a stunning one-handed grab flying parallel to the ground. Stoinis and Warner put on 102 runs for the fourth wicket from 64 balls after Australia were reduced to 50/3 at one stage and were in need of a revival. Warner played a cautious knock in which he struck six fours and six to make 56 and went past former Australia captain Aaron Finch in terms of getting most runs (3,120) for the country in the shortest format.

**PTI ■ NEW YORK**  
Ireland will bank on their experienced batters Andy Balbirnie, Paul Stirling and Harry Tector to recover from the pummeling given by India and get their T20 World Cup campaign back on track when they face a dangerous Canada here on Friday. Ireland went down by eight wickets against India on Wednesday, while Canada will be eager to recover after a seven-wicket loss to co-hosts USA. Playing in their eighth T20 World Cup, Ireland have often struggled to make an impression in the event despite several of their key players playing in English county. In fact, they have made it to the 'Super 8' only once in 2009. Balbirnie and captain Stirling, who have a combined experience of more than 250 T20Is, were unable to give the side a decent start on a difficult pitch at the Nassau County Stadium, even as rival skipper Rohit Sharma and Rishabh Pant showed the way with their batting master-class while guiding India to a huge win. Tector, a veteran of 77 T20Is, too failed to kick on as Ireland were bowled out for a sub-100 total by the disciplined Indian bowlers, and they require an urgent turnaround. Ireland will be playing their second match at this venue inside two days and they will be keen to execute the learnings from that. World Cup newcomers Canada, on the other hand, too are coming off a big defeat against the United States in a high-scoring Group A match in Dallas. Canada, can, however derive strength from their T20 World Cup Qualifier

## Ireland bank on stalwarts to fire against newcomers Canada



match against Ireland in 2019. In that match, the Maple Leafers inflicted a crushing 10-wicket defeat on the Irishmen. In skipper Navneet Dhaliwal, Canada have a veteran top-order batter who was a part of that 2019 victory, and a lot will be riding on him. Canada will also take heart from the defeat against the USA because they had posted an imposing 194 against them and would look for an encore. **SQUADS (FROM):** 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. Canada: Saad Bin Zafar (captain), Aaron Johnson, Ravinderpal Singh, Navneet Dhaliwal, Kaleem Sana, Dillon Heyliger, Jeremy Gordon, Nikhil Dutta, Pargat Singh, Nicholas Kirton, Rayyan Khan Pathan, Junaid Siddiqui, Dilpreet Bajwa, Shreyas Movva and Rishiv Joshi. Match Starts at 8 pm.

**SCOTLAND VS NAMIBIA:** Namibia were superb in the 'Super Over' win over Oman in their T20 World Cup opener and that trial by fire would have given them the confidence to take on Scotland, who will be playing their

second game here after their opener against England was rained off. The Scots did show their capabilities against the defending T20 World Cup champions, but rain had the last laugh and both teams were forced to share points. While Namibia would rely heavily on veterans Gerhard Erasmus, the skipper, and all-rounder David Wiese, who have been at the forefront of the country's cricketing charge. They are carrying the experience from the two previous T20 World Cups. Additionally, Namibia also have won their last three T20Is against Scotland, something that will give them a positive frame of mind. **SQUADS:** Namibia: Gerhard Erasmus (c), Zane Green, Michael Van Lingen, Dylan Leicher, Ruben Trimpelmann, Jack Brassell, Ben Shikongo, Tangeni Lungameni, Niko Davin, JJ Smit, Jan Frylinck, JP Kotze, David Wiese, Bernard Scholtz, Malan Kruger, PD Blignaut. Scotland: Richie Berrington (c), Matthew Cross, Brad Currie, Chris Greaves, Oli Hairs, Jack Jarvis, Michael Jones, Michael Leask, Brandon McMullen, George Munsey, Safyaan Sharif, Chris Sole, Charlie Tear, Mark Watt, Brad Wheel. Match Starts at 12.30 am.



## Uganda score hard fought win against PNG

**AP ■ PROVIDENCE (GUYANA)**  
Uganda secured its first victory in a T20 World Cup match in a low-scoring thriller against Papua New Guinea at the Providence Stadium here. Uganda dismissed Papua New Guinea for 77 on Wednesday but had to work extra hard for their three-wicket victory, losing its first three wickets by the start of the third over in reply and then slipping to 26-5 before rallying to reach 78-7 with 10 balls remaining. Riazat Ali Shah's 33 was more than double the highest score by any other batter in the match, but he was out with Uganda three runs away from victory. He had two big reprieves —

chopping an inside edge just over his stumps before he'd scored with Uganda on 8-3 and again when he was on 9 and the total at 35-5 when Charles Amini put down a regulation catch in the 9th over. Uganda rallied to set up victory with a 35-run sixth-wicket partnership between Riazat and Juma Miyagi (13) before a runout added an extra element of tension at the end. "First win of a World Cup is a special win for us," Riazat said. "It was not easy to bat on this wicket... Our plan was just to stay in and take our time." **BRIEF SCORES:** Papua New Guinea 77 in 19.1 overs (Alpesh Ramjani 2/17, Cosmas Kyewuta 2/17, Juma Miyagi 2/10, Frank Nsubuga 2/4)