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Rising voter turnout shows decline of dynastic politics in Valley: Jitendra Singh

Sanjay Kumar New Delhi, May 21: Union Minister Jitendra Singh said the rise in voter turnout in Jammu and Kashmir is indicative of declining dynastic politics in the Kashmir Valley. Polling for five Lok Sabha seats of Jammu and Kashmir were held in five phases. Voting was held in Udhampur constituency on April 19, Jammu on April 26, Anantnag-Rajouri on May 7 and in Srinagar on May 13. The Baramulla Lok Sabha constituency, which went to polls on Monday, recorded an all-time high voter turnout of 59 per cent. In all phases, a significant voter turnout has been noticed, the minister said, adding that an encouraging turnout of voters was witnessed during voting in Baramulla. Singh said it is a remarkable departure from the times when the people of the Kashmir Valley were constrained to elect their representatives for Lok Sabha and Assembly with a voter turnout of hardly 10 per cent or even less than that. The Union minister of state for personnel accused Kashmir's "dynastic political parties" of not allowing true democracy to usher in the Valley. "For over three decades, elections were held in the shadow of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism. It suited the dynastic regional parties of the Kashmir Valley to get these elections conducted with a limited voter turnout under the fear of guns and manage a majority for themselves," he said. Singh claimed these political parties then allowed terrorism to continue indefinitely "so that their family rule could thrive from generation to generation".

INDIA bloc inching closer to victory with each poll phase: CM Kejriwal

Simmi Kaur Babbar New Delhi, May 21: Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday accused Union Home Minister Amit Shah of referring to the people of Delhi as "Pakistanis" and asserted that they are his family and should not be abused. Addressing a virtual press conference, Kejriwal said with the completion of each phase of the Lok Sabha polls, it is becoming clearer that the Narendra Modi government is on its way out and the INDIA bloc is coming to power on June 4. He said the INDIA bloc would give a stable government to the country. On Monday, Shah and Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath addressed public meetings in South Delhi and East Delhi parliamentary constituencies, respectively. Kejriwal alleged the number of people

who attended Shah's rally was less than 500. "He said the supporters of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) are Pakistanis. I want to ask him that the people of Delhi have the people of Punjab Pakistanis? The people of Gujarat gave us 14 per cent votes. Are the people of Gujarat also Pakistanis? The people of Goa gave us love (and) trust. Are the people of Goa also Pakistanis?" Kejriwal questioned. He said the AAP's panches, sarpanches, mayors and councillors were elected in many parts of the country in the panchayat and municipal elections. "Are all the people of this country Pakistanis? What are you saying?" said the Delhi chief minister. Kejriwal's reaction came in response to a statement made by Shah during his rally a day earlier while seeking votes for his party's candidate in the South Delhi constituency, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri. "Kejriwal and Rahul (Gandhi) have no support in India. Their supporters are in Pakistan," the home minister had said.

formed the government by giving us 62 seats (and) 56 per cent vote share. Are the people of Delhi Pakistanis? "The people of Punjab have formed the government by giving us 92 out of 117 seats. Are the South Delhi constituency, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri. "Kejriwal and Rahul (Gandhi) have no support in India. Their supporters are in Pakistan," the home minister had said.

Money laundering probe: ED raids ex-DPIIT secretary Ramesh Abhishek

New Delhi, May 21: The Enforcement Directorate on Tuesday raided the premises of retired IAS officer and former Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) secretary Ramesh Abhishek as part of a disproportionate assets linked money laundering probe against him, official sources said. The ED case stems from a recent FIR registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against the 1982-batch officer. He was raided by the CBI in February. Abhishek retired in 2019 from the DPIIT (erstwhile Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion). The ED is searching the premises of Abhishek as part of a money laundering investigation, the sources said. The CBI had alleged in its FIR that Abhishek enriched himself "illicitly" after retirement by receiving "huge amounts" as consultation fee from private companies whose matters he had dealt while in service. The CBI and ED have also booked his daughter Vanessa. The retired officer also held the post of chairman, Forward Markets Commission, and the CBI case was booked against him on a reference from anti-corruption ombudsman Lokpal. The Lokpal has alleged that the father-daughter duo received big amounts as professional fee from various entities and organisations with whom the former IAS officer had official dealings as the secretary or the chairman.

UPA I, II completed 2 terms under one PM, Manmohan Singh: Mallikarjun Kharge

Chandigarh, May 21: Reacting to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "five PMs in five years" remark, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday said similar things were said even in 2004 but the UPA government completed two full terms under one PM, Manmohan Singh. Addressing an election rally at Pratapgarh in Uttar Pradesh on May 16, Modi had said the INDIA bloc wanted to make five prime ministers in five years and claimed that it would disintegrate after June 4. Kharge responded by rejecting Modi's claims. "In UPA I and UPA II, we were supported by other parties and we completed full term,"



Kharge told reporters here. For 10 years, there was one prime minister, a person who came from the land of Punjab, ran the country and changed its economy, he said about former prime minister Manmohan Singh. Taking a dig at the BJP, he said, "Whereas they did nothing for 10 years." Accompanied by former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Kharge arrived here after addressing an election rally in Jagadhri in Haryana. On being asked that the ruling party leaders often ask who the opposition "PM face" is, Kharge said, after the polls, the INDIA bloc partners would sit and decide this (if opposition wins the election). He said the BJP has been saying that the Congress or the INDIA bloc does not have a face like Modi. They used to say the same thing in 2004 when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the prime minister, the Congress president said. "After the polls, alliance partners will sit and decide. Like we ran the UPA government, in a similar manner we will do this," he said. Replying to a question, Kharge claimed that the INDIA bloc had gained good ground in the ongoing Lok Sabha election. "Everywhere we are gaining and they are losing. Our alliance will definitely stop the Modi government from coming to power," he said, and added, "The people are fighting against Modi and we are supporting them." Voting for sixth and seventh phases of elections will be held on May 25 and June 1, respectively.

BJP's Abhijit Gangopadhyay appeals to EC to reconsider order debaring him from campaigning

Kolkata, May 21: Hours after the Election Commission debarred him from campaigning for 24 hours, BJP's Tamluk candidate Abhijit Gangopadhyay said he had written to the EC, urging the poll panel to reconsider the decision. Speaking to a vernacular news channel, the former Calcutta High Court judge said he would move the court to quash the order if the EC does not reconsider its decision. "I have written to the EC to reconsider its decision. If the order is not reconsidered, I will move the court at a suitable time to quash the order," he said. The EC on Tuesday censured Gangopadhyay for his comment on West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and debarred him from campaigning for 24 hours. The commission's order would be effective from 5 pm on Tuesday. The EC described Gangopadhyay's remark as a "low-level personal attack", asserting that he violated the Model Code of Conduct (MCC). Gangopadhyay on Monday sent his reply to the show-cause notice issued by the EC for his "undignified" remark against Banerjee. "The commission has carefully gone through the statement made and is convinced that he has made a low-level personal attack and thus violated the provisions of the MCC.

Modi has no inheritance, no heir except people of this country: PM

Navdeep Singh Sahni Patna, May 21: Campaigning in Bihar ahead of the sixth phase of voting, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday addressed rallies in Motihari (East Champaran) and Maharajganj, where he said that had BR Ambedkar not been there, Jawaharlal Nehru would not have implemented the quota for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Against the backdrop of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal saying the PM would retire at 75 and Home Minister Amit Shah would step into his shoes, Modi reiterated that he has no heir or inheritance except the people of this country. "Modi ki koi virasat nahi, mere liye to aap hi meri virasat hain. Aap hi mere waris hain, mera aur koi waris nahi hai (Modi has no inheritance, you are my inheritance. You alone are my heirs, I have no other

heir)," he said in Maharajganj. In Motihari, he said, "Those who brought jungle raj are speaking one lie after another on reservation. The truth is that had there been no Ambedkar, Nehru would not have allowed quota for SC/ST." He added that the first Indian PM even wrote letters to this effect to chief ministers. "Right from Nehru to

Rajiv Gandhi, they were opposed to OBC reservation. Now they (Congress and its allies) are left with only one vote bank," he said. "SC/ST se vote cheen kar vote jihat walon ko dena chahte hai (they want to snatch the quota from SCs/STs and give it to those who do vote jihat)." He said the Constitution does not permit quota on religious grounds, but "these people want to change the Constitution". Invoking Mahatma Gandhi, the PM said he comes from Bapu's birthplace in Gujarat, and has come to Champaran to seek the blessings of people. "Bapu was a great votary of cleanliness. It was only after I, the son of poor parents, came to power that each household got a toilet," he said. Taking a dig at RJD leader Tejashwi Prasad Yadav without naming him, Modi said, "I have heard someone going around, telling people that I would be forced to go on bed rest after 4 June.



BJP latches on to Mamata's Ramakrishna & Sevashram mission

Tejinder Kaur Babbar Kolkata, May, 21: The Trinamool Congress (TMC) and its supreme Mamata Banerjee tried to retrieve the situation on Monday after Prime Minister Narendra Modi joined the offensive over her comment that "a few monks" of the Hindu monastic orders Bharat Sevashram Sangha and Ramakrishna Mission were working against the TMC to help the BJP in Bengal. Earlier in the day, Swami Pradiptananda Maharaj aka Kartik Maharaj, secretary of the Beldanga branch of the Sevashram Sangha in Murshidabad, sent Mamata a legal notice, seeking her unconditional apology for "tarnishing the revered institution's image". Both the Sevashram and the Ramakrishna Mission, founded by Swami Vivekananda, are widely revered across the state, with individuals who have sought diksha (initiation) from either, or having

studied in schools run by them, spread across many families. Addressing a public meeting in Purulia on Sunday, Modi told the people to teach the TMC government a lesson through the ballot box, so that it "does not dare to insult such socio-religious organisations in the future". Accusing the Mamata government of "preferring violence" and "threatening voters" and not caring about "the sentiments of the

people of Bengal", the PM said: "This time, they have crossed all limits. ISKCON, Ramakrishna Mission created by Swami Vivekananda and Bharat Sevashram Sangha are known for their service and morality. They make the country proud... They have stooped so low only to please their vote bank." A senior TMC leader said they were worried about the impact of Mamata's remarks. "The TMC has a strong organisation in the areas that go to polls now. We expect to gain in these phases. Such a statement just before voting will damage our narrative, because both these are popular religious organisations with lakhs of devotees." Modi incidentally claims a close association with the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, and in June 2017, at the death of its head Swami Atmasthananda, had offered his condolences calling it a "personal loss". He posted on X that he had got spiritual guidance from Swami Atmasthananda in Rajkot, Gujarat.

Delhi court frames charges against ex-WFI chief Brij Bhushan in sexual harassment case

New Delhi, May 21: A Delhi court on Tuesday framed charges of sexual harassment, intimidation and outraging the modesty of women against ex-Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh in a criminal case filed by female wrestlers. Singh pleaded not guilty to the charges before Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (ACMM) Priyanka Rajpoot and claimed trial. "Why will I plead guilty when I am not guilty?" Singh said. The court also framed the charge of criminal intimidation against co-accused and former WFI assistant secretary Vinod Tomar in the case. Singh, the sitting BJP MP from Kaiserganj in Uttar Pradesh, was denied ticket to contest the Lok Sabha poll in the aftermath of the sexual harassment allegations against him. The party has fielded his son Karan Bhushan Singh for the seat.

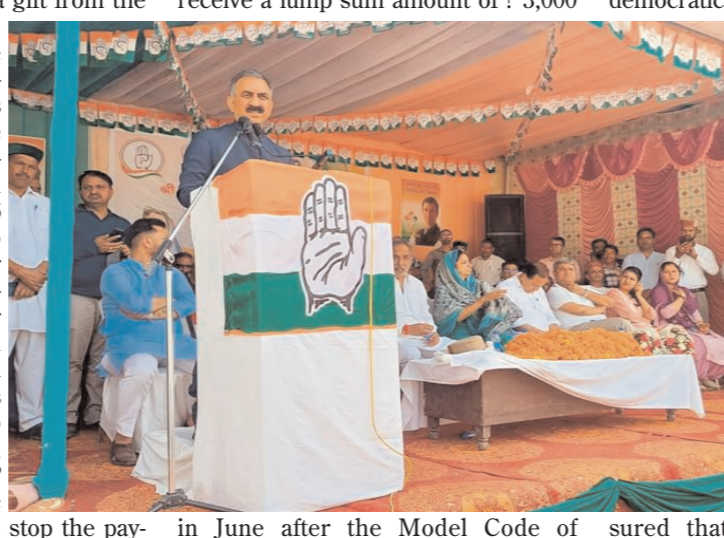
Himachal CM Sukhvinder Sukhu drums up support for Anand Sharma

Naresh Malhotra Chamba, May 21: With the election campaign gaining momentum in the run up to Lok Sabha elections in Himachal Pradesh, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu addressed three back-to-back meetings in Tissa, Salooni and Devi Dehra of Chamba district on Monday to drum up support for Congress Kangra candidate Anand Sharma. Addressing the rallies, the Chief Minister highlighted Sharma's contributions to Himachal Pradesh during his tenure as a Union minister and urged voters to ensure his victory by a substantial margin. Sukhu said as a union minister Sharma brought several development projects and institutes to Himachal like the Central University, the National Institute of Fashion Technology at Kangra, Spice Park in Nadaun and passport office in Shimla. He also pointed out that Chamba Medical College, named after

India's first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, was a gift from the Congress to the people. Sukhu reiterated the state government's commitment to fulfilling its electoral promises. He mentioned that government restored Old Pension Scheme for 1.36 lakh employees and also implemented ₹1,500 per month financial assistance scheme for women. He accused Leader of Opposition Jai Ram Thakur and his team of attempting to halt these initiatives, alleging that the BJP was pressuring the Election Commission to stop the payments to beneficiary women. Despite these challenges, Sukhu assured that the monetary benefits would be dis-

tributed and beneficiary women would receive a lump sum amount of ₹ 3,000 the mandate of the people and the democratic set up claiming that the BJP government will be formed in Himachal on June. He asserted that the people would teach Jai Ram Thakur and his party a lesson and Congress would win all the four Lok Sabha and six Assembly seats. Sukhu emphasized that the people of the state would set an example for the entire country by delivering a strong response to the politics of horse trading. He also accused six Congress ex-MLAs of colluding with the BJP to topple the state government, but reassured that the government would remain stable. Sukhu spoke about the economic challenges inherited from the previous BJP government.

in June after the Model Code of Conduct is lifted. Sukhu criticised Jai Ram Thakur for his confrontational approach, stating that he was insulting



Manish Tewari hits back at Yogi's 'udan khatola' jibe, says what about BJP's Kirron Kher

Chandigarh, May 21: City MP Kirron Kher is the "real udan khatola", while BJP candidate Sanjay Tandon is "double-engine udan khatola," retorted INDIA bloc's Lok Sabha election candidate from Chandigarh, Manish Tewari. INDIA VOTES 2024: Yogi Adityanath calls Rahul Gandhi, Manish Tewari udan khatola He reacted to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's jibe at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and him, calling them "udan khatolas." "The real Udan Khatola was Kirron Kher, who was not seen for 10 years in Chandigarh. Sanjay Tandon was the double engine Udan Khatola who did nothing as BJP Chandigarh President when thousands of internal migrants were brutalised by the BJP and were forced to flee to their villages in UP and Bihar and other places in India," Tewari posted on X in reaction to Yogi's comment made on

Monday. He shared The Tribune report along with this comment. The real Udan Khatola was @KirronKherBJP who was not seen for 10 years in Chandigarh Mr @myogiadityanath @SanjayTandonBJP was the double engine Udan Khatola who did nothing as @BJP4Chandigarh President when thousands of internal migrants were brutalised by @BJP4India & were... Yogi while addressing rally in Maloya said, "They are 'udan khatola', after fighting elections they go missing. The person who not stand with you in difficulty, through thick and thin, cannot respect your heritage, cannot do welfare of poor, do not become a part of sin by electing such representative." In the same breath, the UP CM had praised Tandon and his team for their social work during Covid while adding Rahul Gandhi and Tewari were not here during those troubled times.

Close call: Man rescued after 200 feet fall in Maharashtra's Matheran

NAVI MUMBAI. Bhushan Shinde (27), who runs a lodge in Matheran, survived a 200ft fall into a valley in the hill station on Sunday. Shinde was on a short trek from Madhavji point to Khandala point when he slipped and fell into the valley. Twelve rescuers of 'Matheran Sahyadri Mitra Apatkalin Sanstha' along with the local police pulled him out from the valley area after a two-hour operation.

After the fall, Shinde had called his mother from the mobile phone he was carrying with him to inform her about the mishap, but could not give details of his location as the call dropped due to a poor network. His mother assumed that he must have fallen at their business location and asked him to come home. Shinde was rescued after he called his friend, Hrushikesh Koli, son of one of the leading rescue team members Sunil Koli.

Heavy rain lashes Madurai, Ramnad; roads waterlogged

As announced by the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), Madurai received an average of 21.69 mm, while the rain average in Ramanathapuram was 15.09 mm.

MADURAI/RAMANATHAPURAM/DINDIGUL. With heavy rain battering Madurai for the past few consecutive days, issues of waterlogging and rainwater breaching into houses were reported in several regions of the district.

While around 11 cm of rainfall was recorded in Tallakulam of Madurai, 12 cm of rainfall was recorded in Kamudhi of Ramanathapuram. Water logging of up to 3 feet was seen in Managiri area.

As announced by the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), Madurai received an average of 21.69 mm, while the rain average in Ramanathapuram was 15.09 mm. Residents of Managiri said that following the heavy downpour, a massive volume of rainwater breached into the houses, leaving the residents in deep water. Local alleged that poorly maintained canals that drain water into Vandiyur Tank were the reason for water logging issues.



Selvaraj, a resident of Madurai said that during rainy days, severe sewage overflow

affects Sellur, mostly due to the blockage issues in the underground drainage system.

A senior official from the city corporation said, "By night, teams reached the spot and removed the bunds, allowing the rainwater to drain into Vandiyur Tank."

Sporadic rains caused a flash flood in Moongilkadu village of Kodaikanal in Dindigul district. The village, which has about 30 families, was separated from the main road as a river flowing through the village was at spate.

AIADMK leader RB Udhayakumar petitioned the collector stating that the damaged road and poor drain systems are causing major hardships.

"Waterlogging is reported in many areas, especially near the Meenakshi temple. The corporation commissioner and district collector must take action to address the drain issues and road issues," he said.

4 Sri Lankan IS operatives 'planning strike in Gujarat' nabbed from Ahmedabad airport

AHMEDABAD. Four Sri Lankan nationals with alleged ties to the terrorist organization Islamic State (IS) were arrested by the Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) from the Ahmedabad airport late on Sunday. The officers recovered three pistols and 20 rounds of ammunition from an "undisclosed location". ATS officers said the four suspects were planning a suicide attack in Gujarat and were waiting for approval from their Pakistani handler.

Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP) Harsh Upadhyay received intelligence on May 18 about four Sri Lankan nationals, who were IS members, planning terrorist activities in India. The officers said the suspects were expected to arrive in Ahmedabad by flight or train on May 18 or May 19. ATS teams checked flight and train bookings and found that the four had booked tickets from Colombo to Ahmedabad via Chennai under the same PNR. The officers

revealed that they arrived at Chennai airport on May 19 and were scheduled to land in Ahmedabad on Indigo flight 6E 848 at 8.10pm. Led by SPs K Sidharth and K K Patel and DySPs Harsh Upadhyay and Shankar Chaudhary, ATS officers were deployed at the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International (SVPI) airport on May 19. The suspects - Nusrath Ahmed Gani, 33, from Negombo, Sri Lanka, along with Naffan Naufer, 27, Faris Faruq, 35, and Rasdeen Abdul Raheem, 43, all from Colombo, Sri Lanka - were detained on arrival. The suspects, who did not speak Hindi or English, identified themselves through an interpreter. Evidence linking them to IS was found in their possession, including mobile phones with incriminating messages and photos and a Protonmail account with geo-coordinates, said the officers.

Interrogation revealed that they were IS members and followers of



IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. They planned to target Jews, Christians, BJP and RSS members, as well as anyone involved in exploiting and mistreating Muslims, the officers added. Their Pakistani handler, Abu, had allegedly informed them that the location of the weapons

would be shared via Proton Drive and Proton Mail. They were instructed to retrieve the weapons and await further instructions regarding the target and timing of their deployment. A search at the specified location led to the recovery of three pistols and an IS flag. The pistols were Norinco

Type 54 models, with 20 rounds of ammunition marked "FATA", likely made in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Among the four arrested, Nusrath Ahmed Gani had a valid Pakistani visa. The officers further said that the suspects admitted to being former members of the Sri Lankan militant group National Thowheeth Jama'ath (NTJ), banned after the April 2019 Easter bombings. They joined IS in Feb 2024, influenced by Abu, who directed them to carry out attacks in India. They received Rs 4 lakh in Sri Lankan currency for their mission and were willing to become suicide bombers, the officers added. Based on the evidence, the Gujarat ATS charged the four under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), Arms Act, and IPC Sections 120(B) (criminal conspiracy) and 121(A) (waging war against govt of India).

Ariyalur rape case: Kin of victim say justice elusive

ARIYALUR. Seven years after the rape and murder of a 16-year-old pregnant Dalit girl from Ariyalur, only one of the four accused was convicted for rape and murder by the district Fast Track Mahila Court last month.

The verdict has shocked the family members of the victim who expressed their displeasure with the investigation and verdict sentencing the main accused, a Hindu Munnani functionary, to a life term. The family told they would file an appeal in the Madras High Court.

The girl's rape and murder shocked the state when her body was found bound and dumped in a well on January 14, 2017. Her family had reported her missing two weeks earlier but alleged that police had not immediately registered a case. On January 15, 2017, police arrested the main accused, aged 24 at the time, and three of his friends under the POCSO Act and other sections.

Police said the girl, belong to the Paraiyaru community (SC), had been in love with the main accused, who hailed from the neighbouring village, and belongs to the Vanniyaru community (MBC). He raped her multiple times and promised to marry her. When she became pregnant and demanded he marry her, he refused on the basis of her caste.

It was alleged that on December 29, 2016, the youth kidnapped the girl, sexually assaulted and murdered her with the help of a 28-year-old youth, tied her hands with her innerwear and rope, weighted the body with a stone, and disposed of it in a well. His other two friends were accused of helping him destroy evidence.

After protests were held alleging lack of proper investigation in the case, it was transferred to the CB-CID and a special public prosecutor, S Abiraman, was appointed to try the case. The trial began in July 2019. However, the verdict delivered by the trial court judge D Selvam in April 2024 only convicted the main accused under Sections 364, 302 and 201 of the IPC, Section 10 of the POCSO Act 10, and Sections 3(1) (w) (i) of the SC/ST Act. While sentencing him to life and a fine of Rs 52,000, the judge acquitted the other three citing lack of evidence. The court also asked the state to pay Rs 5 lakh to the victim's family. The verdict said the names of the accused should be withheld from publication.

10k US visa slots get filled in 5 mins in Hyderabad

Hyderabad. Over 22,000 candidates qualified for the Telangana Engineering Common Entrance Test (ECET), conducted by the Telangana State Council of Higher Education on May 6. Of the 23,330 who attempted the exam for lateral entry into engineering programmes, nearly 96% qualified in the test conducted across 92 centres in Telangana and 7 in Andhra Pradesh. Officials said 10,800 seats are eligible for fee reimbursement under the convener quota and an additional 14,000 are vacant seats, bringing the total seats to over 25,000 seats this year. "Results were swiftly released, allowing students

ample time for career planning," said Sriram Venkatesh, TSCEH secretary. The next step in the admission process will confirm their admission for their respective courses. "We will now swiftly transfer the results to the commissioner of technical education, who will process the candidatures," Venkatesh added. Female candidates outperformed male candidates by 2%, with ECE being the most popular stream. Notably, in BSc Mathematics, though only 10 out of 48 candidates appeared, all qualified, resulting in a 100% pass rate. SC and ST students also recorded a 100% qualification rate.



Two enthusiastic patients leave hospital for a few hours to vote in Mumbai

MUMBAI. Among the voters at Bombay Scottish School polling centre was Vasant Savarkar (86). What made Savarkar stand out was the fact that he had come to vote straight from a hospital where he had been admitted, still dressed in hospital pyjamas. He had been allowed to leave the hospital for two hours only to vote. His son Shriram Savarkar said, "My father was admitted to the hospital on Saturday as he had breathing trouble and cough. But he insisted on voting. Therefore, doctors at the hospital examined my father before stating he could go and vote, provided he returns. Thereafter, they issued a letter to the election officer stating that he had been released from the hospital for two hours and should be given priority to cast his vote. However, we did not have to show the letter

and they allowed him to vote." Savarkar, who runs a private library called Vasant Vachanaley which has both English and Marathi books, near Shiv Sena Bhavan at Dadar, told TOI: "My oxygen levels had dropped and I had to be admitted to a hospital. But I insisted on voting. Now, I will go back." "My father is not interested in politics but believes voting is his duty," added Shriram.

In Ghatkopar (West), hospitalisation due to low haemoglobin levels did not deter 74-year-old Kusum Gaikwad from voting on Monday. Her daughter, Sujata Sonawane, said Gaikwad had been in Nulife Hospital for five days,



suffering from restless feet and weakness. Despite this, Kusum was determined to vote. "She has been feeling extremely weak and

he said, adding she was likely to be discharged in the evening if her parameters were fine.

fatigued. However, this morning, she insisted on voting. So, I got the doctor's permission, put her in an autorickshaw, and took her to the polling booth.

After she voted, we returned to the hospital, and the doctor restarted her saline drip," said Sujata. Dr Deepak Baid, physician and intensivist at the hospital, said he was inspired to learn that a patient wanted to cast her vote.

"Since she was stable, we allowed her to leave on the condition that she would be back at the hospital," he said, adding she was likely to be discharged in the evening if her parameters were fine.

Ahmedabad, Gandhinagar, Vadodara sizzle with 30°C+ minimum temperature

AHMEDABAD. In Monday, state capital Gandhinagar was the hottest in Gujarat with maximum temperature hitting 45 degrees Celsius followed by Ahmedabad at 44.5 degrees. What's alarming though was that nights too failed to cool the sizzling twin cities as minimum temperatures remained at 31 degrees and 31.2 degrees, respectively.

In Banyan city Vadodara too, heat was relentless all through the day recording maximum and minimum temperature of 44.2 degrees and 31.8 degrees respectively. According to data from India Meteorological Department (IMD), these three cities have not recorded temperatures below 30 degrees for the past four days in a row. Public health experts said that when the maximum temperatures cross 42 degrees and minimum temperatures fail to go down below 28 degrees, it does not allow a specific city or



region to cool down. The residents thus

experience heat stress manifested through fatigue and headache to unseasonal cold, fever, vomiting and diarrhoea. The fact is corroborated by the recent spike in heat-related emergencies by EMRI 108 in Ahmedabad and across Gujarat. Explaining the effect of incessant heat, Prof Dileep Mavalankar, former director of IIPH Gandhinagar and a key figure in formulating Ahmedabad's Heat Action Plan (HAP), said that like maximum temperature, minimum temperature thresholds are equally important.

"HAP warnings are thus including both expected maximum and minimum temperatures," he said. Meltdown Monday: 44.5°C hits Amdavadis hard Amdavadis have been baking in the sweltering heat, as the mercury hovered above 44°C for four days straight. Monday's blistering 44.5°C

marked the city's second-hottest day of the season. Only Gandhinagar sizzled more, hitting a scorching 45°C - the season's highest maximum temperature. The relentless heat wave has turned Ahmedabad into a virtual furnace, with temperatures consistently soaring well above normal. The maximum temperature was 2.5 degrees above normal, while the minimum temperature of 31.2°C was 3.7 degrees higher than normal.

On Monday, the India meteorological department (IMD) issued a heatwave warning for 10 districts in Gujarat, including Ahmedabad, Gandhinagar, Anand, Surendranagar, Banaskantha, Rajkot, Porbandar, Junagadh, Bhavnagar, Surat and Navsari. Four other districts - Patan, Mehsana, Sabarkantha, and Amreli - were also expected to experience moderate

heatwave conditions. The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) under its heat action plan (HAP) warned that maximum temperatures could reach around 45°C, and minimum temperatures could hover around 31°C until May 24. The IMD's national bulletin on Monday also predicted heatwave to severe heatwave conditions in parts of west Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, and northwest Madhya Pradesh.

The city's temperature forecast showed that even at 10.30am, temperatures could reach around 38°C, staying high at around 41.5°C by 6.30pm. Major city roads appeared deserted during the afternoon. Citizens sought relief in cool beverages and ice cream. Social gatherings were often postponed to the evening or night to avoid the intense heat. "What sets this year apart is the sustained heatwave conditions."

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Advocate Pooja Bhaskar Sharma

NEWS BOX

Illegal slums on govt, pvt land? Face legal action

Gurgaon: The district administration has prohibited construction of unauthorised slums on govt and private land in city. An order was issued on Monday by deputy commissioner Nishant Kumar Yadav, exercising powers under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.

These orders will come into effect immediately and remain in force till Sept 30, 2024.

The order highlights that unauthorised slums have been constructed on some private lands in various parts of Gurgaon. The concerned department demolished these slums from time to time, but locals rebuild them and illegally collected taxes from people living in them.

Yadav has issued these orders to prevent risk or danger to human life and property and to prevent disruption of public peace and harmony. Any person found guilty of violating the order will be prosecuted and punished according to law under Section 188 of the IPC. The order was issued in view of recent incidents of fire at unauthorised slums. The decision to prohibit the construction of unauthorised slums is a step towards ensuring the safety and well-being of the citizens of city. We also published the following articles recently

'Unauthorised persons' derail freight train near Russia's VolgogradFreight train carriages derailed in Volgograd region by 'unauthorised persons', blamed on Ukraine, Belarusian man arrested for placing explosives, teenagers charged for sabotage in Moscow, incidents on Baikal-Amur mainline.

India denies Maldives' accusation of 'unauthorised' naval chopper sortieIndian high commission in Male refuted Maldives' accusation of unauthorized sortie by Indian naval chopper, stating Indian military personnel operating helicopters gifted to Maldives made an unnotified trip during former President's administration on May 11, without notifying MNDF110127410

Lok Sabha polls: More than roti-kapda, makaan plans spooking Mumbai slum areasIn Mumbai, the housing crisis persists with ongoing challenges in slum rehabilitation efforts. Legal disputes, political debates, and public concerns shape the complex landscape of affordable housing initiatives

Spent 1.2cr, finish Bhondsi drain work soon, officials told

Gurgaon. MCG is investigating the usage of a partially constructed stormwater drain in Bhondsi village. The corporation has already spent around Rs 1.2 crore to construct 750m of the box-type drain. The total cost of the project is estimated at Rs 2.2 crore, and work has been halted for the past year due to encroachment obstructing the drain's outfall.

The drain's outfall is intended to discharge into a pond, which is currently full of water and lacks any outfall. The matter came to light during the scrutiny of the bills by chief engineer Vishal Bansal. It was during his visit that he found that work was incomplete and there were various discrepancies in the work executed so far.

"The stormwater drain was not required in the first place as the drain already existing in its place could channelise the water. However, now that the funds have been spent and it is imperative to establish a proper final disposal system. The officials responsible have put forth a proposal to connect the stormwater drain outfall to a nearby pond, which would then be linked to another drain under the authority of a different agency. However, the viability of this plan remains to be determined," said an MCG official.

He added, "One potential issue is that the pond in question lacks any further outfall. Moreover, it is crucial to ascertain whether the drain managed by the other govt agency has a suitable outfall or not. The main criticism in this situation is that the officers involved should have conducted a thorough evaluation of the final water disposal from the stormwater drain before proceeding with the project. This oversight has led to the current predicament, where additional efforts and resources may be required to find an appropriate solution." Bansal has now directed executive engineer Sanjeev Kumar to identify the officers responsible for creating the estimate and approving the design and drawing in an irrational manner. Moreover, the chief engineer has discovered inconsistencies in the work executed on the ground, noting that the level of the drain from the road is not consistent at all locations. The officials now have been directed to remove encroachment and complete the construction of the drain and provide a proper outfall.

Playing after 50 years, a celeb show since Nawab Pataudi came for votes

Gurgaon. Yashpal Arora was a huge fan of his cover drive and her smile. So, when Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi and wife Sharmila Tagore came to the city asking for votes, he was one of the first to reach the ground where the cricketer-actor couple were to hold a rally. It's taken more than 50 years for elections in this constituency to take another celebrity turn. There are two in fact, this time, appealing to different personalities and different generations. Bollywood star-turned-politician Raj Babbar (71) is the Congress candidate. Singer-rapper Rahul Yadav aka Fazilpuria, half Babbar's age, is representing JJP.

'Tiger Pataudi' came to the election scene in 1971 when Rao Birender Singh formed Vishal Haryana Party after parting ways with Congress and asked the then Indian cricket team captain to contest on a party ticket. Singh, who wielded considerable clout in the Ahirwal region of south Haryana, was hoping to cash in on support from Muslim and Yadav communities. And since Nawab Pataudi was already a national sports icon, he was thought to be the ideal candidate. Old timers recalled MAK Pataudi went from village to village in his limousine, and where the road was bad, would switch to a jeep. If the terrain was tough even for the jeep, he would ride a camel. He was accompanied by Sharmila, who had already delivered hits like 'Aradhana' and 'An Evening In Paris'. Like in cricket stadiums, huge crowds would gather to catch a glimpse of them.

Woman bludgeoned lover to death; held

Gurgaon. Nitu wanted to get rid of Vicky due to his "interference in her personal life". So, "in a fit of rage", the 34-year-old woman bludgeoned her 28-year-old lover to death at his house in the Gurgaon Sadar area early on Saturday. She also stole the victim's mobile phone to mislead cops, but was arrested on Sunday night. Nitu, who is from Bairampur, had been in a relationship with Vicky, a pet care clinic worker, for the past five years. On Friday night, she met Vicky at his house in Kacchi Colony at Tikri along with her brother. Nitu's brother and Vicky had a few drinks. "Under the influence of alcohol, Vicky used objectionable language while referring to Nitu's family members following which an argument broke out between them. In a fit of rage, Nitu attacked Vicky on the head with a blunt kitchen object and killed him during the early hours of Saturday. After committing the murder, she picked up Vicky's cell phone and fled from there."

A woman from the neighborhood noticed that the main door of Vicky's house was open on Saturday morning. She peeped into the house and found Vicky lying

dead. After Gurgaon Sadar police were informed about the murder, a police team reached Vicky's house and the Forensic Science Laboratory and fingerprint teams were called to the spot for the collection of evidence.

Vicky's brother Monu was informed about the murder by the police, and on his complaint, a case was registered under IPC Section 302 (murder) on Saturday. The body was sent for postmortem. Monu told the police that the victim, who had been working as a pet care worker in Gurgaon for the past eight years, had been in a relationship with Nitu for the past five years. Police arrested Nitu from the Ghata area on Sunday night. Gurgaon Sadar inspector Arjun Dev said, "Nitu confessed that Vicky had recently started interfering in her personal life and she wanted to get rid of him. During the early hours of Saturday, Nitu attacked Vicky on his neck and head with a kitchen pan, causing instantaneous death. After committing the crime, Nitu fled with the victim's phone." The accused who was produced before the court on Monday was sent to one-day police



custody. Her brother is on the run, Dev added. We also published the following articles recently Vicky Kaushal vying to another Punjabi track during his workout session wins the internet and serves some Saturday motivation to work out - WATCH video Vicky Kaushal grooves to 'Winning Speech' by Karan Aujla during workout, fans adore him; Katrina Kaif's unseen photos spark pregnancy speculation from London birthday celebrations; Vicky and Katrina kept relationship secret before December 2021 marriage; Vicky's transformation for Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj role 11022876 Katrina Kaif sparks pregnancy rumours as she gets spotted

Inderjit files nomination; assets up 3-fold in 5 yrs

Gurgaon: Senior BJP functionary Rao Inderjit Singh, who is eyeing a sixth term as Gurgaon MP in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, filed his nomination on Monday. Chief minister Nayab Singh Saini, along with MLAs and leaders from south Haryana, accompanied Singh. CM Saini stated that the party is so strong in the Gurgaon parliamentary constituency that no one from Congress is ready to contest, and the party is struggling to announce its candidate. The CM urged voters to turn out in big numbers to ensure bigger victory margins. "Come out in large numbers on polling day despite unfavourable weather conditions and ensure a victory margin of more than eight lakh from Gurgaon," Saini said. Confident about the election outcome, Singh — who won the seat three times as a Congress candidate and since 2014 in BJP colours — also urged voters to ensure his victory by the highest margin in Haryana. "I have carried out several development works in past years and in the coming five years, I will further expedite work on infrastructural projects," he said. Meanwhile, the nomination papers filed by Singh revealed that the assets of the MP and his spouse have increased nearly threefold in the past five years. He has declared joint assets of over Rs 121.7 crore with his wife in his nomination papers, a three-fold rise from Rs 42.1 crore in 2019. The significant increase is attributed to an increase in the amount of bank deposits and appreciation of immovable properties. In the affidavit he filed along with his nomination papers, Singh gave details of his assets and liabilities. In the last decade, the annual income of Singh and his wife has witnessed a marginal increase. Between 2014 and 2019, the MP's annual income increased from around Rs 1.2 crore to Rs 1.6 crore, while that of his wife rose from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 13.4 lakh. In 2023, Singh's annual income was Rs 1.8 crore, while his wife earned nearly Rs 39.2 lakh. In the affidavit filed on Monday, Singh stated he has Rs 2.8 lakh in cash, while his wife has Rs 1.4 lakh. He disclosed deposits in bank accounts and with financial and non-financial institutions of nearly Rs 16.7 crore, up from Rs 5.97 crore in 2019. His wife had deposits amounting to Rs 1.6 crore five years ago, which have now risen to Rs 2.3 crore. In terms of investment in shares and mutual funds, Singh's wife seems to be more interested in the share market compared to her politician husband. In 2019, Singh's investment in shares and mutual funds was Rs 40.8 crore, which remained the same in 2024. His wife, meanwhile, invested Rs 2.7 crore in 2019, which has now increased to over Rs 3.8 crore. A majority of Singh's immovable assets are inherited. In 2019, Singh had immovable assets worth Rs 10.3 crore, out of which Rs 1.8 crore was self-acquired and the remaining inherited. Singh's Hindu undivided family (HUF) had immovable assets of Rs 11.3 crore, out of which Rs 3.5 crore was self-acquired and the rest inherited. In 2024, Singh's immovable properties have a market value of Rs 34.9 crore, of which just Rs 10.2 crore is self-acquired. The HUF has immovable assets of Rs 47.4 crore, out of which Rs 13.9 crore is self-acquired. Singh owns two cars: a Toyota Innova (2015) and a Toyota Camry (2019). No cases are registered against him.

Two in Noida fall ill after eating McDonald's burger, Theobroma bakery cake

NOIDA. The Food Safety and Drug Administration Department (FDA) officials gathered samples from a McDonald's outlet located in Noida Sector 18 and a Theobroma bakery in Sector 104. This action was taken in response to a complaint filed by a consumer who allegedly became ill after consuming food items from these establishments, as stated by officials on Monday. The complaints were submitted through the Food Safety Connect portal, which is operated by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), according to officials. Officials reported that the complaint against the McDonald's outlet in Noida Sector 18 alleged that a consumer became sick after eating a burger and french fries purchased from the restaurant. In response to the complaint, a team from the Food Safety and Drug Administration (FDA), Gautam Buddha Nagar, promptly took action and visited the McDonald's outlet in Noida Sector 18 to collect samples for further investigation. "We got a complaint on the portal against McDonald's.

NAME CHANGE

I, Harpreet Kaur W/o Sandeep Singh Bhatia R/o 52/73 1st Floor, Prabhath Road, Ramjas Road, Karol Bagh Delhi - 110005 have changed my name from Harpreet Kaur to Harpreet Kaur Bhatia for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE

I, Sandeep Singh S/o Manjit Singh Bhatia R/o 52/73 1st Floor, Prabhath Road, Ramjas Road, Karol Bagh Delhi - 110005 have changed my name from Sandeep Singh to Sandeep Singh Bhatia for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE

I, Shivangi Kapoor D/o Raj Kapoor R/o H.No.16, Back Portion, 2nd Floor, Block-3, Ramesh Nagar, Delhi-110015, have changed my name to Shivangi Arora permanently.

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I, Shivangi Kapoor D/o Raj Kapoor R/o H.No.16, Back Portion, 2nd Floor, Block-3, Ramesh Nagar, Delhi-110015, have changed my name to Shivangi Arora permanently.

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NAME CHANGE

I, Rajinder Prasad S/o - Bishram Prasad R/o RZJ-3A/214, West Bagh pur, Sagarpur delhi-110046 have changed my name from Rajinder Prasad to Rajender Prasad for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE

I, Siddharath Sharma, S/o Shri Manoj Sharma, R/o C-42, Gulmohar Park, New Delhi 110049 have changed my name to Siddharth Sharma for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as KAMINI alias KAMINI SOLANKI D/O RAJPAL SINGH W/O Vikram Solanki, House No. 94, Village Matela, Utam Nagar, Matela, West Delhi, Delhi-110059 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as KAMINI SOLANKI.

NAME CHANGE

I, Sandeep Singh S/o Manjit Singh Bhatia R/o 52/73 1st Floor, Prabhath Road, Ramjas Road, Karol Bagh Delhi - 110005 have changed my name from Sandeep Singh to Sandeep Singh Bhatia for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE

I, MUHAMMAD ASHFAQUE S/O JALALUDDIN Residing at H NO-429, GALLI NO-3 CHAUHAN BAN GAR SEELAMPUR DELHI 110053 have changed my name to MOHD ASHFAQ for all future purpose.

NAME CHANGE

I, WARISA W/O MOHD SALEEM Residing at H NO-6A-2223 OLD CT-326/447 GALLI NO-2 CHAUHAN BANGAR SEELAMPUR DELHI 110053 have changed my name to WARISA BEGUM for all future purpose.

NAME CHANGE

I, SANJAY KUMAR WADHWAN S/O MOHAN LAL WADHWAN residing at HOUSE NO 2002 SECTOR 28 FARIDABAD HARYANA-121008 have changed my name to SANJAY WADHWAN for all future purposes

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as YOGESH SINGH S/O SHIVNANDAN SINGH R/O H.No 12 Kh. No. 23/82, Major Bhola Ram Encl., Near Rangli Vihar, Village Pochampur, Dwarika Sector-23, South West Delhi, Delhi -110077 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as YOGESH SINGH.

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as RAMKEWAL S/O RAM PRAKASH, permanent R/o Ghatwasa, Hardoi, Uttar Pradesh-241402, and currently residing at 360, Permandan Colony, Gurudwara ke Pass, New Delhi-110009, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as SHIVANSH SINGH.

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as ASHU AGNIHOTRI S/o VINOD, permanent R/o Tiliya Ghatwasa Harpalpur Sawayajpur, Hardoi, Uttar Pradesh-241402, and currently residing at 360, Permandan Colony, Gurudwara ke Pass, New Delhi-110009, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as CHANDRESH AGNIHOTRI.

NAME CHANGE

I, Debashree Das wife of No. 18003371H Rank-HAV Name- JITENDRA KUMAR DAS presently residing at VPO-KURUDA, TEHSIL-SOKRO, DISTT-BALASORE, ODISHA-756045 have changed my name from DEBASHREE DAS to DEBASHREE NAYAK for all future purposes vide Affidavit Dated 20/05/2024 before Notary Public, Delhi.

NAME CHANGE

I, Chitter Mal Agarwal S/O MAHADEV PRASAD AGARWAL R/O C-107 2ND FLOOR, RIGHT SIDE, DLF BHOUPURA, DELSHAD GARDE, EXTENSION, GAZIYABAD UTTAR PRADESH 201005 have changed my name from CHITTER MAL AGARWAL to CHHITRAL MAL AGARWAL FOR ALL FUTURE PURPOSE.

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as M BRIJESH alias VENKATESH S/O M TUSUWAMI GARG SEELAMPUR DELHI 110053 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as VENKATESH.

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as Pramila Devi alias Priyanka Mishra D/O JAGAT DUBEY W/O: Anjali Kumar Mishra, R/O S-18, Central Public School, Shakarpur, PO: Shakarpur, DIST: East Delhi, Delhi-110092 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as PRIYANKA MISHRA.

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NAME CHANGE

I, SANJIV KUMAR S/O RAMASHRAY SINGH R/o House No. 15, Type-II, North West Moti Bagh, Chanakya Puri, New Delhi -110021 have changed the name of my minor Son SANCHAY aged 14 years and he shall hereafter be known as SANCHAY KUMAR SINGH.

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as RIYAANSH VATNANI S/O SANJAY VATNANI residing at House No. C-104, 4th Floor, Phase -I, Ashok Vihar, North West Delhi, Delhi - 110052 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as RAAJVEER KS VATNANI.

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as MANZOOR BEGUM alias MANZOORAN BEGUM W/O HAMID AHMED residing at House No. F-82 Street No. 3 Chand Bagh, North East Delhi - 110094 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as MANZO-RAN BEGUM.

NAME CHANGE

I, SANJIV KUMAR S/O RAMASHRAY SINGH R/o House No. 15, Type-II, North West Moti Bagh, Chanakya Puri, New Delhi - 110021 have changed the name of my minor Daughter SANVI aged 11 years and she shall hereafter be known as SAAVNI KUMARI SINGH.

NAME CHANGE

I, SANJIV KUMAR S/O RAMASHRAY SINGH R/o House No. 15, Type-II, North West Moti Bagh, Chanakya Puri, New Delhi - 110021 have changed the name of my minor Daughter SANVI aged 11 years and she shall hereafter be known as SAAVNI KUMARI SINGH.

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as Manav alias Manav Simar alias Manav Simar S/O VED Prakash R/O C-194 New Moti Nagar Near Balaji Mandir Ramesh Nagar H.O, West Delhi, Delhi-110015, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Manav Simar.

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as Manav alias Manav Simar alias Manav Simar S/O VED Prakash R/O C-194 New Moti Nagar Near Balaji Mandir Ramesh Nagar H.O, West Delhi, Delhi-110015, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Manav Simar.

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NAME CHANGE

I, SANJEEV SINGH ARNEJA S/O RAMINDER PAL SINGH residing at F

NEWS BOX

Biden, in latest gaffe, says he was US 'Vice President' during Covid-19 pandemic

World US President Joe Biden, during a media briefing on Sunday, asserted he was the "Vice President during the (Covid-19) pandemic. Biden also said during the time, former President Barack Obama asked him to go to "Detroit to fix it". Notably, Mike Pence was the Vice President during the pandemic. When I was Vice President, things were kind of bad during the pandemic," Biden said. "What happened was, Barack said to me, 'Go to Detroit, and help fix it'. Well, the poor mayor, he spent more time with me than he thought he was ever going to have to," he added. In February this year, Biden referred to terror group Hamas as 'Opposition'. The US President was asked about the ongoing hostage negotiations between Hamas and Israel, to which he responded saying, "There has been a response from the opposition." Earlier, Biden, while addressing a crowd in Las Vegas, claimed he met former French president Francois Mitterrand soon after he (Biden) was elected. (Francois Mitterrand died in January 1996.) Biden is already the oldest President to serve in office, and if he were elected to serve another four years, Biden would leave office at the age of 86.

Solomon Islands tells Australia it remains partner of choice

SYDNEY. Solomon Islands' newly elected Prime Minister Jeremiah Manele said the Pacific Island nation was ready to discuss "much, much larger bilateral co-operation" with Australia, as the latter's Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles visited on Tuesday.

A security pact struck with China in 2022 by the previous pro-Beijing leader Manasseh Sogavare, who encouraged Chinese infrastructure projects, alarmed Canberra and Washington amid concern over China's naval ambitions in the region.

The Solomon Islands' biggest aid donor, Australia provided policing support for national elections in April. China also has a policing presence on the archipelago, strategically located 1,600 km (990 miles) northeast of Australia. "Australia remains Solomon Islands' partner of choice and I want to see our relationship grow to new heights during my tenure as prime minister," Manele told Marles in his first meeting as leader, the islands' government said in a statement. Marles, who is also defence minister, is on a one-day visit to Honiara, during which he also met Sogavare, the new government's finance minister.

Australia has provided extra budget support of A\$7 million (\$4.66 million), and is in further talks, the statement added, while welcoming opportunities to send more citizens to work in Australia under a labor migration programme. "I am ready to discuss the possibility of much, much larger bilateral co-operation partnerships to fast-track transformational undertakings," Manele said. Such steps would hasten Solomon Islands' efforts to achieve economic, social and security goals, he added.

Australia, New Zealand dollars run out of puff, ponder rate outlooks

SYDNEY: The Australian and New Zealand dollars faltered on Tuesday as momentum from last week's rally seeped away and markets pondered the outlook for steady interest rates at home.

The Aussie drifted off 0.2% to \$0.6654, having repeatedly failed to re-take its recent four-month top of \$0.6714. Support lies under \$0.6650 and around \$0.6630. Sentiment was aided by strength in prices for Australia's major commodities, notably copper where a squeeze on short positions drove prices to all-time highs. The kiwi dollar eased to \$0.6091, and away from last week's one-month peak of \$0.6139. It has support round \$0.6083 and \$0.6031. Australia's central bank on Tuesday released minutes of its last policy meeting where it considered hiking rates again, but decided to hold steady awaiting further data on inflation and consumer spending. "It seems holding for longer is the preferred strategy given soft activity, especially on the consumer side, unless inflation were to surprise sharply on the upside," said Tapas Strickland, head of market economics at NAB.

"We continue to expect a first cut in November given our forecasts for the economy are for subdued demand to see the labour market loosen a little more than the RBA expects in the near term." Investors have already priced out any chance of another hike, but neither do they see much prospect of an early cut with a December move



implied at 50-50. The Reserve Bank of New Zealand (RBNZ) holds its policy meeting on Wednesday and considered certain to hold the official cash rate (OCR) at 5.5%. A Reuters poll of 30 analysts found all expected a steady outcome while the median forecast was for a first easing in the December quarter.

Markets imply a 46% chance of a cut as early as August, with an October easing put at 84%. Those odds narrowed last week when data showed inflation expectations subsiding.

The RBNZ itself has projected no rate cuts until well into next year, and there is a risk it sticks with that outlook in its updated forecasts. "The RBNZ can maintain pressure on inflation, by simply doing nothing, effectively holding the OCR track unchanged," said Jarrod Kerr, chief economist at Kiwibank.

"But we see inflation returning to within the RBNZ's 1-3% target by the September quarter, and continue to expect the next move to be a cut in November once the data confirm it."

Trump's lawyers seek dismissal of hush money case, prosecution concludes arguments

Donald Trump's hush money trial entered its final stretch with the prosecution resting its case late Monday afternoon.

New York. Donald Trump's lawyers asked the judge overseeing his criminal hush money trial on Monday to dismiss the case before it reaches the jury, arguing the testimony of star witness Michael Cohen was not credible given his criminal record and history of lying.

Justice Juan Merchan did not immediately rule on the request, which is routine in criminal trials and rarely granted. But he suggested that savvy jurors would be able to assess the credibility of Trump's ex-fixer's testimony for themselves.

"You said that his lies are irrefutable, but do you think he's going to fool 12 New Yorkers?" Merchan asked Trump lawyer

Todd Blanche, who had sought the dismissal. The exchange came at the end of a day in which questions about Cohen's character were front and centre. At the outset on Monday, Merchan said he expected the two sides to make their closing arguments next week followed by jury deliberations. The first former president to face a criminal trial, Trump has pleaded not guilty to 34 counts of falsifying business records to cover up a \$130,000 (Approximately Rs 1 crore) payment to silence porn star Stormy Daniels, who had threatened to go public before the 2016 presidential election with her account of an alleged sexual encounter - a liaison Trump denies.

Trump, 77, has blasted the trial as a politically motivated effort to hobble his Republican Party campaign to take back the White House from Democratic President Joe Biden in the Nov. 5 election.

Cohen, Trump's estranged former fixer and lawyer, testified that he spoke repeatedly with Trump about the payment to Daniels in the final stretch of the 2016 presidential campaign - a pillar of the prosecution's



case. But Trump's lawyers also got Cohen to admit that he stole money from his former boss because he was angry that his annual bonus fell short of his expectations after he handled the payment to Daniels.

He said he paid roughly \$20,000 in cash in a paper bag to a tech company out of the \$50,000 (Approximately Rs 41.6 lakh) that it was owed and kept the rest. The Trump Organization later reimbursed him \$100,000 (Approximately Rs 83.2 lakh) in total to account for the taxes Cohen would owe. "I just felt it was almost like self-help," Cohen said on the witness stand. As a convicted felon and admitted liar, Cohen, 57, carries baggage as a

witness. Formerly a zealous defender of Trump, he has become a fierce and frequently foul-mouthed critic. "There is no way that the court should let this case go to the jury relying on Cohen's testimony," Blanche said outside the presence of the jury, adding that without Cohen's testimony "there is no case."

Prosecutor Christopher Conroy countered that Cohen's testimony was backed up by documents and other evidence. "The trial evidence overwhelmingly supports each element of the offence," Conroy said. The judge could rule at any time on the motion to dismiss. Earlier, with the prosecution having rested, Trump's lawyers began calling witnesses of their own. One of those witnesses drew a reprimand from Merchan after he expressed dissatisfaction. "If you don't like my ruling, you don't give me side eye and you don't roll your eyes," Justice Juan Merchan told Robert Costello, a lawyer. Costello testified that Cohen told him after a 2018 FBI raid that he did not have any dirt on Trump to offer prosecutors. "He said, 'I swear to God, Bob."

Helicopter crash that killed Iran President caused due to 'technical failure'

World The helicopter in which Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and his Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, along with other officials and crew members were travelling, crashed due to a "technical failure", the Iranian state media reported. Raisi and Amirabdollahian were en route to Iran after their visit to Azerbaijan border where they inaugurated a dam project. Their chopper crashed into the mountainous terrain in northwest Iran's Jolfa and after hours of a massive search operation amid inclement weather, rescue teams spotted the site. No survivors were found.

The sudden demise of two of the most influential figures in Iran came at a time when tensions grip the Middle East. Iranian Vice President Mohammad Mokhber has been named as acting President, with Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, asking him to ensure the election of a new President takes place within 50 days, state media reported. he

Bell 212 aircraft that crashed was developed for the Canadian military in the late 1960s as an upgrade of another aircraft. The model is a two-blade twin-engine medium helicopter with up to 15 seats that first flew in 1968, according to Skybrary, an aviation database. The helicopter was



reportedly US-designed. The US and Israel have remarked that they were not involved in the chopper crash in Raisi. US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin told reporters Monday that America "had no part to play" in the crash and the Pentagon had no insight into the

cause. The Washington Post reported. An Israeli official also said that the Jewish nation was not involved in the death of Raisi. The death of Raisi, who was close to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and seen as his successor, raised concerns about who may replace him. With the demise of the 63-year-old, the prime candidate to succeed Khamenei is his 55-year-old son, Mojtaba. However, there are concerns over the position going to a family member, especially after the revolution overthrew the hereditary Pahlavi monarchy of the shah, The Associated Press reported.

Iran has called for five days of mourning for President Raisi's demise starting from Tuesday all the way through Thursday. However, the public spectre of grief was muted on Monday with most shops open and children attending schools. Later on Monday, hundreds of mourners crowded in Tehran with posters of Raisi and waving Palestinian flags.

'It wasn't us', Israel official says country not involved in Iran President's death

World An Israeli official on Monday stated that the country was not involved in the death of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash. The remarks came amid claims that Mossad was involved in the helicopter crash on Sunday, which killed Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, and six other passengers and crew.

"It wasn't us," news agency Reuters quoted the official, who requested anonymity. The charred bodies of the Iranian president and others were found early Monday morning near the mountains close to the Azerbaijan border after an overnight search. The country then officially declared the death of its leader later today. Attacks and conflicts involving Iran and its proxy groups erupted in the Middle East in the past few months after Hamas attacked

Israel on October 7, which led to a bloodbath in Gaza. Iran supported Hamas in the conflict, and the Tehran-backed Lebanese Shia militia Hezbollah was also involved in direct



conflict with Israel. The "shadow war" between Iran and Israel broke into the open last month with tit-for-tat exchanges of drone and missile fire. However, US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin stated that he did not

have insight into the cause of the helicopter crash that killed Raisi. Austin also said that he did not necessarily see any broader impact on regional security. "I can't speculate on what may have been the cause," he told reporters. Meanwhile, the White House responded that the dead Iranian President had "blood on his hands" for supporting extremist groups in the region. "No question this was a man who had a lot of blood on his hands," White House national security spokesperson John Kirby told reporters, adding that the United States will continue to hold Iran accountable for what he called destabilizing activity in the region.

Iran's Supreme Leader Khamenei announced Mohammad Mokhber, who was the First Vice President, as the interim president. A high-level probe has also been started into the incident.

Gaza attack 'not genocide', Joe Biden reaffirms 'ironclad' support for Israel

Washington. US President Joe Biden strongly defended Israel on Monday, saying Israeli forces are not committing genocide in their military campaign against Hamas militants in Gaza in a rejection of criticism from pro-Palestinian protesters. "What's happening in Gaza is not genocide. We reject that," Biden said at a Jewish American Heritage Month event at the White House.

Biden has faced protests at many of his events around the country from pro-Palestinian advocates who have labelled him "Genocide Joe" for his steadfast support for Israel. In remarks at the White House event, Biden stressed his belief that Israel was the victim dating back to the October 7 attack on southern Israel by Hamas militants who killed 1,200 people and took hundreds of hostages. He said US support for the safety and security of Israelis is "ironclad". "We stand with Israel to take out (Hamas leader Yahya) Sinwar and the rest of the butchers of Hamas. We want Hamas defeated. We're working with Israel to make that happen," he said.



Negotiations have stalled between Israel and Hamas in trying to gain the freedom of sick, elderly and wounded hostages still held by the militants, but Biden vowed not to give up trying to gain their release. "We're going to get them home, we're going to get 'em home, come hell or high water," Biden said. Biden has also called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, something that he reiterated in his commencement speech at Morehouse College on Sunday. Biden also rejected the International Criminal Court's prosecutor for saying he had requested arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his defence chief over alleged war crimes. The ICC prosecutor on Monday also said he requested arrest warrants for Hamas chief Sinwar and two other Hamas leaders. Biden in recent months has faced growing political pressure from his own party over his handling of the Gaza conflict, as the Palestinian death toll climbed to more than 35,000 people, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, and Israel's siege has created dire humanitarian conditions in the territory.

Britain slammed in inquiry for infecting thousands with tainted blood and covering up the scandal

LONDON. British authorities and the country's public health service knowingly exposed tens of thousands of patients to deadly infections through contaminated blood and blood products, and hid the truth about the disaster for decades, an inquiry into the UK's infected blood scandal found Monday.

An estimated 3,000 people in the United Kingdom are believed to have died and many others were left with lifelong illnesses after receiving blood or blood products tainted with HIV or hepatitis in the 1970s to the early 1990s. The scandal has been the deadliest disaster in the history of Britain's state-run National Health Service since its inception in 1948.

Former judge Brian Langstaff, who chaired the inquiry, slammed successive governments and medical professionals for "a catalog of failures" and refusal to admit responsibility to save face and expense. He found that deliberate attempts were made to conceal the scandal, and there was evidence of government officials destroying documents. "This disaster was not an accident. The infections happened because those in authority - doctors, the blood services, and successive

governments did not put patient safety first," he said. "The response of those in authority compounded people's suffering."

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak apologized to the victims and said the report's publication marked "a day of shame for the British state." Campaigners have fought for decades to bring official failings to light and secure government compensation. The inquiry was finally approved in 2017, and over the past four years, it reviewed evidence from more than 5,000 witnesses and more than 100,000 documents.

Many of those affected were people with hemophilia, a condition affecting the blood's ability to clot. In the 1970s, patients were given a new treatment that the UK imported from the United States. Some of the plasma used to make the blood products was traced to high-risk donors, including prison inmates, who were paid to give blood samples.

Because manufacturers of the treatment mixed plasma from thousands of donations, one infected donor would compromise the whole batch.

The report said around 1,250 people with bleeding disorders, including 380



children, were infected with HIV -tainted blood products. Three-quarters of them have died. Up to 5,000 others who received the blood products developed chronic hepatitis C, a type of liver infection. Meanwhile, an estimated 26,800 others were also infected with hepatitis C after receiving blood transfusions, often given in hospitals after childbirth, surgery or an accident, the report said. "I am truly sorry," Sunak told a packed and silent House of Commons. "Today's report shows a decades-long moral failure at the heart of our national life. From the National Health Service to the civil service to ministers in successive governments, at every level, the people and institutions in which we place our trust failed in the most harrowing and

devastating way." He vowed to "right this historic wrong" and said details of a compensation package, expected to total 10 billion pounds (\$12.7 billion), would be announced Tuesday.

The report said many of the deaths and illnesses could have been avoided had the government taken steps to address the risks linked to blood transfusions or the use of blood products. Since the 1940s and the early 1980s it has been known that hepatitis and the cause of AIDS respectively could be transmitted this way, the inquiry said.

Langstaff said that, unlike a long list of developed countries, officials in the U.K. failed to ensure rigorous blood donor selection and screening of blood products. At one school attended by children with hemophilia, public health officials gave the children "multiple, riskier" treatments as part of the research, the report said.

He added that over the years authorities "compounded the agony by refusing to accept that wrong had been done," falsely telling patients they had received the best treatment available and that blood screening had been introduced at the earliest opportunity. When people were found to be infected.

Kerala: Sudhakaran started bomb culture in Kannur says EP Jayarajan

Jayarajan said DCC general secretary Narayanan Kutty had told a media that Congress workers had made three different varieties of bomb.

KOZHIKODE . CPM state committee member P Jayarajan has said that the party workers who were killed while making country bombs at Chettakkandi in Kannur district in 2015 are indeed martyrs and will be considered in the same way in future too. In a Facebook post on Monday, Jayarajan said that it was KPCC president K Sudhakaran who started bomb culture in Kannur.

The post appeared after the decision to erect a memorial for party workers Subeesh and Shyju created a row. UDF had alleged that it is CPM's usual practice to disown incidents of political violence initially and erect memorials when the controversy subsides. UDF leaders said the CPM will do the same for the party worker who was killed in a bomb-making incident in March.

Jayarajan said DCC general secretary Narayanan Kutty had told a media that Congress workers had made three different varieties of bomb. "Police records say that it was Kolengarath Raghavan who was the first person to be killed in a bomb attack and that was carried out by Congress workers," Jayarajan said.

Listing the names of CPM workers killed in the attack by the political rivals, Jayarajan said there has been 'peoples resistance' against such attacks. "But media always portrayed it as Marxist violence" Jayarajan said, adding that the CPM has decided that political clashes in Kerala need not continue.

Instead of festive celebrations marking the dam's golden jubilee, there is a palpable sense of anger among the farmers and the residents here against the authorities for turning a blind eye to the occasion.

MYSURU. May 20 marked a significant milestone in the history of Karnataka's agriculture landscape. It was the 50th anniversary of Kabini Dam's construction and operation. However, what should have been a day of celebration has turned into a moment of disappointment for the local community as the authorities have neglected this historic occasion, failing to organise any commemorative events or functions. Though the work on constructing the dam commenced in 1959, it was completed in 1974, and on May 20, 1974, the Kabini dam began its vital role in transforming the agricultural landscape of the region as water was released into the



Kabini left bank canal for the first time, bringing immense relief and joy to farmers. Instead of festive celebrations marking the dam's golden jubilee, there is a palpable sense of anger among the farmers and the residents here against the authorities for turning a blind eye to the occasion. The State Government's apparent oversight has not gone unnoticed, with many farmers disappointment. Forget developing the region, the least we were expecting from the government or authorities was a celebration to honour this milestone. Kabini Dam is our lifeline," says Kumara, a resident of Beechanahalli. The lack of acknowledgement from the authorities has left many questioning the government's commitment to supporting and preserving such vital infrastructure. "Successive governments announced that HD Kote town and the Kabini region would be

developed using a special grant. In the budget, a botanical garden at the Kabini dam site was also announced on the lines of the Brindavan Gardens in KRS but remained only on paper. The local MLA, too, announced last year that the golden jubilee would be planned, the dam would be developed, and it would be a yearlong celebration. It only remained as a promise, and nothing progressed thereafter," says Sunil, a resident of Bidarahalli. Meanwhile, a retired staff member of the dam revealed that all the details regarding this were provided to the officials as well, but they have not taken things seriously. When The New Indian Express asked an official from the Water Resources Department for not holding any event to celebrate the occasion, the officer, on condition of anonymity, said that they had not received any directives from the government in this regard.

This colony near Mattancherry is a melancholic ode to Mehboob



KOCHI. Established 20 years ago, Mehboob Park Colony in Kunnumpuram near Mattancherry, is named after the legendary playback singer H Mehboob, whose songs continue to enchant us even today.

Mehboob was born in Pattalam nearby, and grew up in this region of Kochi. Mattancherry and Fort Kochi have several Mehboob fan clubs, and annual programmes are run to honour 'Bayi', known for songs such as Akaale aaram kaividum from the film 'Jeevitha Nouka' and Manennu vilikkila from 'Neelakuyil'.

Notably, Mehboob's songs were later remixed and featured in Malayalam films such as 'Usthaad' (1999), 'Annayam Rasoolam' (2013), and 'ABCD: American-Born Confused Desi' (2013). Originally a barren landmass, it was initially converted into a children's park (Mehboob Park) before being turned into a colony, says former mayor K J Sohan. Hence the name Mehboob Park Colony.

The place provided a community for people previously affected by homelessness and economic struggles. There are 68 families residing here. A K Abu, one of the colony's early inhabitants, says, "Most of the community's founder population belonged to the canoeists' community who migrated from the Vanam colony due to financial and economic debts and insecurities." Currently, the inhabitants, including men and women, engage in daily wage occupations such as construction work, housekeeping, etc., to make a living.

Each colony resident occupies a 300sq.ft space and is responsible for paying their taxes and bills, except for water, which is provided free of charge by the government. Hassina Faizal, a fellow colony resident, says, "The members reside under the guidelines of a drafted contract, which restricts them from leaving and selling their property." Even though the implementation of this colony initially provided solace to many in the area, a surge in population, lack of space and modern facilities have created a tumult of woes.

Polling stations at housing societies draw huge crowds in Mumbai

MUMBAI. The EC's initiative to have polling booths inside big housing societies in this LS election turned out to be a success. Residents of Navjivan Society at Mumbai Central were elated as 61% of them exercised their franchise after booths were set up in a ground-floor community hall on the society's premises. A society officer-bearer said this time, most society members, including those bedridden, managed to vote thanks to EC's initiative. The society has 2,998 registered voters, of which 1,830 (61%) cast their votes.

"In the past, we faced difficulty in ensuring that 50% of the society members voted. But this time it's at an all-time high," said Satish Bokadia, secretary of Navjivan Society. He added, "Many elderly people in the society came down to vote. It was an overwhelming response from all residents, and we request the EC to follow the same procedure during next elections."

Navjivan is one of the 86 polling stations established on private premises across Mumbai. As many as 150 polling stations were set up on private premises in Mumbai, Thane and Pune, with multiple polling stations on the same premises.

Some societies such as Presidential Towers in Ghatkopar West also saw a positive response. "There were four booths set up here, mainly in the parking lots, with a covered area outside in the compound for people to stand in proper queues. It was a massive crowd in the morning, and we had voters from three nearby high-rise buildings (societies) as well," said a resident. Organisers had arranged for mineral water and buttermilk to beat the heat, and refreshments such as biscuits for nearly 8,000 voters here, with many first-time voters and also senior citizens heading for the booth within the premises.



In Thane, at Eden Woods Complex, residents were

enthusiastic about casting votes close to the doorstep, boosting turnout. "We were thrilled to have a booth within our complex," said Dr Vinit Valanju, a resident. Another complex where voting was held was Happy Valley CHS. Shailendra Chikhalkar, a resident, said, "For the first time, we have a polling centre, and have seen 70-80% turnout."

Hepatitis A claims third life in Ernakulam

KOCHI. The death toll from hepatitis A in the district has risen to three with the passing of 51-year-old Karthyayani on Monday. A resident of the 11th ward of Vengoor grama panchayat, Choorathodu, Karthyayani was undergoing treatment at the Kottayam Government Medical College Hospital. Earlier on May 7, Jolly Raju, another resident of Vengoor, also fell victim to hepatitis A. An official said that another hepatitis A-related death was reported in a neighbouring village.



Meanwhile, the number of confirmed hepatitis A cases has now surged to 229 in Vengoor, with 33 patients currently undergoing treatment, said Silpa Sudheesh, panchayat president. The spike in cases is part of an unusual surge seen across the state this summer, attributed to contaminated food and water sources. This year alone, Kerala has reported a staggering 5,918 suspected cases, 2,116 confirmed cases, and 15 deaths from hepatitis A.

With a month passed since the outbreak, affected residents find themselves grappling with financial strain. The local authorities and organisations have rallied to provide financial aid to the families of people affected by the disease, particularly those with members hospitalised. "Over the past few days, we've conducted door-to-door fundraising efforts. Additionally, numerous non-governmental organisations, individuals, and associations have extended their support. We aim to distribute aid to affected families this week," said Silpa. The panchayat reported the first case of hepatitis A on April 17 and more cases were reported in the next week.

A high view of the world around from Nadukani

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. The Malayalam flick Shutter has lines as these in one of its songs: "Nadukani churathinte nerukayil nimmukonden Naadu kaanaan varumo nee thathamme Swantham naadukaanan varumo nee thathamme."

The Nadukani Churam mentioned in the song a significant jungle tract that links Kerala and Tamil Nadu, probably akin to the famed Thamarasseri Churam of Malabar. There is an interesting anecdote on its discovery, which apparently facilitated travel to the Nilgiris. William Campbell, a British government public works officer, unearthed the pass, aided by a tribesman and a pet dog. The story goes that the British officer and his team got lost in the dense jungles of Tamil Nadu, in the area the tribals referred to as 'Nadukani'.

The name eventually came to stay and now, the pass that links the forest tracts is known as 'Nadukani Churam'. Several such places bear the name 'Nadukani' in the Kottayam, Idukki, and Thiruvananthapuram districts of Kerala, signifying the essence of the name carries more than just the place identity and suggesting a cultural connect. In Thiruvananthapuram, Nadukani is a beautiful spot on a hill, steadily becoming a tourist stopover.



According to Kattakode Thankachan P, a resident and panchayat member, there are two tales about how the name 'Nadukani' originated. "The place was inhabited by the Kani tribes. Hence the name Nadukani. Another folklore suggests that it is an uphill spot from where we can see the whole of Thiruvananthapuram, including Ponnudi and the international airport. Hence, the spot got the name 'Nadukani' to mean the place from where the entire 'naadu' is visible. The aforementioned song also

points to a place at a considerable height, offering a panoramic view of the 'naadu'. Incidentally, the strategic location led to ideas on developing the place as a tourist spot. "During the UDF government, Rs 27 lakh was granted to develop Nadukani as a tourist destination under the rural tourism scheme," says Thankachan.

"Although the subsequent government did not follow up on the project, we are now working to revive it in collaboration with the panchayat and the tourism department. The comprehensive plan includes ambitious features like a glass bridge to enhance the site's appeal." Historians hold different opinions on the origins of Nadukani. According to historian Vellanad Ramachandran, "the name originates from the word 'nadu' or 'naduka', which 'mean to plant'." "When we observe the surroundings from the spot, we see expanses of paddy fields and agricultural lands. This landscape likely inspired the name 'Nadukani,' meaning 'the place where we can see the agricultural lands'," he says.

"There was a Buddha temple on the way to the Nadukani hilltop. While Buddhism has many different lineages, the two main branches are Theravada and Mahayana, with Vajrayana being part of Mahayana. Arya Manjushri Mula Kalpa, written in the 6th-7th century, was the ritual manual of Vajrayana. There is only one manuscript of the book, and that was found in old Travancore. "Archaeologists found many sculptures of animals made in mud from Nadukani. In Vajrayana, also known as Manthrayana, the Buddha is seen as a protector of animals.

213 families got new homes 5 years ago, but no official order yet

Without allotment orders, these families have not received Rs 5,000 per family issued as shifting allowance and a monthly subsistence allowance of Rs 2,500 for one year that are usually provided under the ICRERP resettlement package.

CHENNAI. At least 213 families resettled in Perumbakkam under the Integrated Cooum River Eco Restoration Project five years ago are yet to get allotment orders for the houses they occupy.

Without temporary or permanent allotment orders, these families have not received Rs 5,000 per family issued as shifting allowance and a monthly subsistence allowance of Rs 2,500 for one year that are usually provided under the ICRERP resettlement package.

The Information and Resource Centre for the Deprived Urban Communities (IRCDUC) which undertook a rapid assessment to identify these families has urged the Tamil Nadu Urban Habitat Development Board (TNUHDB) to provide the pending allowances with interest. While the IRCDUC estimates around 1,000 families may have been denied the allowances due to the lack of allotments, they were able to track only 213, the report said.

The families resettled from NN Nagar (Navalan Nedunchezhiyan Nagar), Kakkann Street, Amma Nagar, SM Nagar (Sathyavani Muthu Nagar), and Pallavan Nagar were the 'left-out' families who were not included in the initial



enumeration at the time of eviction. Since they were allotted housing later than most, they received tokens, a handwritten slip with the house number, name of the allottee and the seal of the assistant engineer of the city corporation, and not allotment order. These families are also not provided fans and lights that usually come with the resettlement package under ICRERP and are left out of livelihood restoration programmes like employment linkages and skill training provided by the

TNUHDB. The lack of allotments even after five years results in the families living in fear of losing their houses at any time. "In a few blocks these families also pointed out that they are also not recognised and included by residents welfare association because they are referred to as 'temporary' families. They are never included or provided opportunities to become members or office-bearers of the association," the report said. In addition, these families are also

dealing with mounting electricity bills since the billing name specifies the designation of TNUHDB engineer and not the names of allottees. Without being able to pay EB bills, bills have piled up. When contacted, a TNUHDB official said they are awaiting enumeration details from the corporation to verify whether these people were residents of the evicted areas. "We will process their allotments once the verification is done and disburse the allowances," the official said.

Hindu-Muslim binary looms large

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi said last week: "If I do Hindu-Muslim, I won't be fit for public life." He was commenting on the Election Commission of India's (ECI) notice to the BJP president on Modi's statement at a recent election rally in Rajasthan, where he said that the Congress was intending to snatch the assets accumulated by his supporters over the years (including their wives' mangalsutras) to redistribute the wealth among 'infiltrators' and their 'large families'. Every citizen of our great country knew who the PM was referring to. Caught in a bind, he said he was referring to the 'poor' of India when he talked of those with large families. But he refrained from explaining his simultaneous reference to 'infiltrators' when he spoke about the Robin Hood tendencies of his political enemies. He had crossed the limits set by the ECI's model code of conduct and this was a possible escape route he was trying to explore. In politics, some lies are to be expected. The problem arises when lies get rolled out every day, especially during election rallies. Take Modi's statement that he would not be fit for public life if he encouraged the Hindu-Muslim divide. Then what is the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) that he and Amit Shah boast about, if not an attempt to divide? Last week, we were regaled with the news of the first beneficiaries of the CAA.

A family of Gujarati Hindus, settled in Pakistan's Sindh province, had applied for and succeeded in receiving citizenship in India. How was it any different from the million Hindus from Sindh and elsewhere in Pakistan who had crossed over the years to be with their co-religionists? Did any of them face rejection? It would be surprising if even a single instance of such rejection were quoted.

The CAA is a political ploy to demonstrate that the government is out-and-out pro-Hindu, which the BJP dispensation led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee was not. I do not see any motive for introducing the CAA except to needle the minority Muslims and tell them that they are not wanted in Bharat. Hindus crossing over from Pakistan, both West and East, were always welcomed. Why is the BJP trying to prove that it was otherwise, when it was not? I am happy that Modi clarified in his defence of his Rajasthan speech that large families are to be found largely in poorer households, irrespective of the faith of the couples involved. I hope his clarification is read and believed, particularly by his followers in Gujarat. I had a friendly altercation with them in March 2002, some 15 days after the Godhra train incident and the riots that followed all over that state. I had gone to Ahmedabad to find out from my former police colleagues why they had failed to control the rioters. In 1985, I had headed the Gujarat Police for four months. The officers in charge in 2002 had worked as my juniors and knew what had to be done to control communal conflagrations. Gujaratis have been my friends since my school and college days in Mumbai. The Gujaratis of Ahmedabad were well disposed towards me. I was invited to dinner by a respected doctor. He had two dozen couples as guests. After dinner, we sat down to discuss the happenings in Ahmedabad. It was soon apparent that communal passions predominated at that dinner. The more vociferous of the guests asserted that every Muslim had four wives and, of course, four or more children from each wife. I asked if in Gujarat there were four million Muslim women for the million Muslim men living there. Of course, my question stumped them, but it did not stop a chorus of voices from asserting the veracity of the original claim. I pointed out to them that in Kerala, with a 27 per cent Muslim population, the community's reproductive rate was reportedly no higher than that of Hindus or Christians because there was 100 per cent literacy among women and their men were gainfully employed in West Asia. I cannot claim they were convinced. Communal passions were too high at the time of my visit. If Modi really means what he says, he should convince his followers in his own state and other states of India that large families are a corollary of poverty and illiteracy, especially among womenfolk. Religion cannot be blamed for that.

Use the power of the ballot to bail out democracy

The tragedy of contemporary India is the closing in of the Indian mind through stories of manufactured enmity.

WHAT is at stake in the 2024 elections? A great deal because for the past 10 years, the spectre of autocratisation, a process that whittles away the substance of democracy while retaining the façade, has been hanging heavily over our heads. Autocrats have done away with substantive democracy. More troublingly, they have cynically provoked intense polarisation among a people who had re-learned to live together. In the process, we bear witness to the death of the spirit of democracy, ie solidarity. In the heyday of Communism, solidarity referred to fellow feeling among the working classes. Today, the sentiment is important if we want democracy to survive. Solidarity, or its cousin fraternity, is enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution. Consider the tasks that the Constitution makers had to confront. A people who had been divided along lines of politicised religion had to accept each other as fellow citizens in a democratic political community. They had descended to the lowest level of humanity during the Partition. The makers of the Constitution tried to introduce a modicum of sanity in the charged atmosphere. They brought to the forefront the normative precepts of political theory — freedom, equality, justice and fraternity — in the Preamble. Indians who were in thrall of religion were offered an alternative: solidarity, which is important for at least two reasons.

One, democracy falters if people do not care about others, about their ill health or poverty, or if a particular community is subjected to rampant injustice. Without solidarity, we become a bunch of rights-bearing, self-interested individuals. Without solidarity, we will continue to live in Hobbes' state of nature, isolated and cut off from the virtues that make us complete as human beings. Two, history shows that when people come together in shared webs of solidarity against oppression, they move the proverbial mountain. They dislodge regimes that claim to rule by divine right. They dismantle powerful imperial empires. They challenge

governments that abuse power merely by assembling on the streets, as they did in 1989 in Eastern Europe. In Iran, women called out patriarchy by publicly cutting off a lock of their hair. Germans brought down the Berlin Wall. In doing so, they have passionately and courageously propelled solidarity as the centrepiece of the political agenda. It is not surprising that autocrats, who are in the

different context. Perhaps, it is easier to inflict violence on people when they have become faceless. They are simply a part of a group that has been vilified through the politics of hate.

The deleterious consequences of right-wing majoritarianism are clear. Slurs that, till 10 years ago, were confined to the subconscious have been catapulted to the forefront of the political agenda and

public sphere. We, the people of India, gave to ourselves a Constitution that created a democratic political community. We, the people of India, have been once again divided by cynical power politics. This is the tragedy of contemporary India: the closing in of the Indian mind through unbelievable stories of manufactured enmity. And we, passionate defenders of democracy, justice, freedom, equality and solidarity, are suffocated when the ruling class casts a pall of fear over the country and when our fellow citizens suffer. Philosopher Brahm Prakash, author of *Body On The Barricades*, writes that at least some of us are feeling suffocated by the situation shaping Indian society. We are feeling barricaded, chained in our bodies and spaces. I am looking for

words and phrases to describe the times we are living through. For me, no other words match the potential and vulnerability of 'I can't breathe'. I am looking for a figurative image that can capture this situation in body and action. The image I see is that of the body on the barricades.

A caveat is in order here. Power that stifles democracy is constantly stalked by Goddess Nemesis, who punishes hubris. The 'significant other' of power is resistance. Resistance does not refute the legitimacy of the state; it rejects the idea that laws are justifiable simply because they have been enacted by the government. In the Gandhian sense, resistance is justified by the belief that ordinary human beings have the moral competence to protest against unjust laws. In solidarity, we protest, we march and we sing revolutionary songs for the sake of democracy and justice. Above all, we vote — one of the most potent weapons of resistance, provided it is used for democracy.



business of accumulating power, try to divide people. There is nothing quite as awesome in history as the spectacle of masses without leaders or organisations spontaneously arising to defy unjust laws. Defiance takes other forms — we have the vote. We do not need to cut off the King's head, as in the French Revolution. We need to use the vote prudently. Why is our vote significant? In 2014, a sizeable number of Indians put their trust in Narendra Modi. His charismatic personality was extensively written and spoken about. Charisma in excessive doses can, however, be hazardous for democracy's health. Consider the relentless targeting of the Muslim minority in peculiarly uncivil terms. This is accepted because the leader is charismatic. So, our Muslim fellow citizens have neither names nor distinct biographies; neither worthwhile belief systems nor languages. The minority is just a sack of potatoes and a mash of potatoes, as Karl Marx had once remarked in a

Phase V poll

Amid campaign heat, real issues eclipsed

AS voters head to the polling stations today in the fifth phase of the seven-phase Lok Sabha elections, they will determine the fate of 695 candidates vying for 49 seats across six states and two union territories, including Ladakh. With this phase, 428 seats would have been covered, leaving 115 for the final two phases. Key candidates in this round include the BJP's Smriti Irani (Amethi) and Rajnath Singh (Lucknow) and the Congress' Rahul Gandhi (Raebareilly).

The long-drawn-out polls being held amid a heatwave might be causing ennui, but the campaigning has been anything but dull. Political parties have gone all out to capture voters' attention, often drawing the ire of the Election Commission of India (ECI). Prime Minister Narendra Modi has sought to clarify his remarks about Muslims, suggesting that the reference to large families pertained to



poorer sections of society. Meanwhile, Sam Pitroda of the Congress resigned, following a backlash over his

allegedly racist comments. In West Bengal, BJP candidate and retired judge Abhijit Gangopadhyay received a show-cause notice from the ECI for his derogatory comments about CM Mamata Banerjee. The Aam Aadmi Party is in turmoil over allegations levelled by its Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal against Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar, allowing the BJP to capitalise on the controversy. And then there was Kangana Ranaut.

As a result, several key issues that impact the lives of citizens have been overshadowed. Political rhetoric has increasingly steered clear of a meaningful debate, focusing on personal attacks and inflammatory statements. This trend is eroding the integrity of the democratic engagement, undermining the voters' capability to make informed decisions.

External affairs add spice to Amritsar contest

Without bilateral talks, the idea of reopening the land route for trade is a pipe dream.

IF there are a fistful of Lok Sabha constituencies in India where election campaigns overly emphasise external affairs, Amritsar leads them. This is more pronounced in the 2024 contest — four-cornered — than in the previous two parliamentary battles from Amritsar, which this columnist has observed.

Gastronomy is fundamental to the good life in Amritsar. The 2019 contest, among other things, enhanced the international culinary profile of the city, much to the delight of the Punjabi diaspora worldwide. Soon after that election, Hardeep Singh Puri, who contested unsuccessfully from this constituency, was appointed Minister of State with independent charge of Civil Aviation. He recast the in-flight menu of Air India — then a government undertaking — to include Amritsari kulcha. It turned out to be hugely popular on Air India's long-haul flights, which served full meals.

Emirates, one of the most popular airlines in the world, noticed the development. Not to be left behind, this flag carrier of the UAE, posthaste got its flight kitchen conceptualisers to taste Amritsari kulcha. Emirates has been far more discriminating than Air India in its choice of food and does not hesitate to copy successful experiments by other airlines, especially in its business and first-class cabins. Finding approval after quick but rigorous vetting by the airline's multinational chefs, this signature Amritsari dish was soon on the in-flight menu of the global airline headquartered in Dubai. Emirates also added Amritsari chhole to its breakfast menu. The core passenger revenue of Emirates is owed to flyers from the sub-continent, of which India is at the top. Punjabi and Malayali cuisines are potentially big draws for ethnic Indian passengers. Dishes like Amritsari kulcha have made the grade in this respect,

but cuisine from Kerala, like appam or puttu, is yet to be on the dining menus of global airlines.

The jewel in the crown of such internationalisation of Amritsar's foodie culture was when The Oval, among the world's most highbrow sporting venues, served Amritsari kulcha in the press box at the 2019 ODI World Cup, jointly hosted by England and Wales. The ingenious move of serving this desi preparation during the June 9 India-Australia match proved so popular that on June 27, the Old Trafford stadium in Manchester served Amritsari chhole for breakfast during the India-West Indies match. Edgbaston, a cricket ground in Birmingham, also served Amritsari kulcha during the India-England match on June 30. The foreign policy exceptionalism of candidates of all parties who are traditionally in the fray in Amritsar would surprise — even shock — practitioners of diplomacy in New Delhi, both in Chanakyapuri, the national capital's diplomatic enclave, and the South Block, seat of the Ministry of External Affairs. This election is no different. All candidates in the current election are promising that India-Pakistan trade through the Attari-Wagah land route would be resumed. This is of critical importance for farmers, small and medium enterprises and exporters in Amritsar district. How they will do it is not clear because India's policy is that terror and bilateral talks cannot go hand in hand. Without bilateral talks, the idea of reopening the land route for trade is a pipe dream. Of the four main candidates in the contest, Taranjit Singh Sandhu, the BJP's nominee, is more practical. Without waiting for the reopening of border trade, he is looking at Dubai as a re-export destination for goods from Amritsar that are in demand in Pakistan. For many decades, Dubai has

been a transit point for Indian goods like sugar and processed rubber products like truck tyres to Pakistan.

It is perhaps a reflection of the globalisation of Amritsar's aspirations that two of the four candidates put up by the political parties that matter in Punjab have been non-resident Indians (NRIs.) It was the same in the Lok Sabha election five years ago. MA Yusuf Ali and Mukesh Aghi are not in the electoral fray in Amritsar, but their names are often



heard not only in the urban segment of this Lok Sabha constituency but also in the border village of Attari. In last year's Forbes list of billionaires, Ali was ranked 27th among the richest Indians. Anticipating another term of the Narendra Modi government, Ali is a regular caller on the BJP's Sandhu. Ali's Lulu Group, with an annual turnover of \$8.4 billion, according to Forbes magazine, has

established a footprint in Punjab since 2019 in meat processing, agriculture value chains and real estate, including a mall and hypermarkets. Ali has put all his eggs in Sandhu's basket in this election because he anticipates the BJP candidate to be a bridge between Amritsar and New Delhi, irrespective of whether Sandhu wins or loses. Aghi is the President of the Washington-based US-India Strategic Partnership Forum, which is committed to promoting business relations between the two countries. Aghi, several NRIs from Amritsar and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries recently set up the Viksit Amritsar Initiative. It has raised \$100 million for startups and human development-focused enterprises in Amritsar. Elected to the 16th Punjab Vidhan Sabha from Ajnala, near Amritsar, Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal, the incumbent Minister for NRI Affairs and AAP's Lok Sabha nominee from Amritsar, gave up his American citizenship to plunge into state politics. To be precise, therefore, he was a Person of Indian Origin for consular purposes, an enlargement on an ethnic Indian's NRI status. Puri and Sandhu were NRIs in the technical sense, since they lived in the US as government servants, posted to New York and Washington. Because the deepest aspirations of the people of Amritsar have an international dimension, most of Dhaliwal's speeches in the ongoing campaign are about NRI affairs. Punjab is the only state that has a legally constituted NRI Sabha registered under the Societies Act. Last year, Dhaliwal announced that the state government had decided to hold regular elections to this representative organisation of Punjabis living abroad and returnees to the state.



Female pet

owners may be less likely to die of stroke

Can pets be good for your health? Possibly yes, a study suggests. U.S. women over age 50 and generally healthy were less likely to die of

cardiovascular events like stroke if they had a cat or dog, the researchers found. After accounting for the increase in physical activity required of dog owners, owning a cat

instead of a dog was still tied to a lower risk of death from stroke. The researchers studied almost 4,000 adults age 50 and older without major illnesses who

participated in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) in 1988 to 1994 and who reported their pet ownership. Participants also answered questions about physical activity, weight and height, cigarette smoking and other health risk factors. More than half were overweight or obese. About 35 percent of people owned a pet, most often a dog. Pet owners tended to be younger, more often were married, and more often were white. According to the National Death Index, as of 2006, 11 of every 1,000 non-pet owners had died of cardiovascular disease, compared to about 7 of every 1,000 pet owners. Specifically for stroke, male pet owners were just as likely to have died, but female pet owners were about 40 percent less likely to



blood pressure as well," said senior author Jian Zhang of the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health at Georgia Southern University in the U.S.

"I strongly believe that putative benefits of keeping a dog have not yet fully translated into reality, and we found that pet owners did not walk pets, certainly, dogs, more often than others," Zhang said. "This explains why owning a dog did not reduce CVD mortality among dog owners."

Cat owners may have a personality that protects their hearts, rather than cats actually having a concrete effect on heart health, he said.

"We are short of overall assessment of the associations of companion animals with human health, and our study should not be interpreted to encourage more people to own pets, either dog or cat," Zhang said. "Pets are good, but have to be kept responsibly."

"In my study, there was a tendency for pet owners to have a higher risk of dying," said Dr. Richard F. Gillum of Howard University College of Medicine in Washington D.C., who was not part of the new study but did study the same NHANES surveys.

Most findings show no association between pets and survival, he said.

"Data from NHANES are really inadequate to settle the question, since one can only determine there was a pet in the household, but not the number of pets or whether the study participant was the owner, cared for it or interacted with it," Gillum said. "So we need to wait for better studies before making any firm conclusions about pets and survival among their owners."

"Even if there were a reduction of death from stroke among women with cats, of what importance is that in public health terms if they are just as likely to die as other women, just from another cause," he said.

have died of stroke. Most of this association was driven by cat ownership, according to results in High Blood Pressure and Cardiovascular Prevention. "Anecdotally, we believe that walking a dog is good for heart, reducing life pressure and

Pamper your pets with these pro tips

Our pets are an integral part of our families and deserve all the special care that we can provide. And that is the primary reason why we need to take our pets for regular check-ups at veterinary clinics that are qualified and equipped to give them all that they need. We spoke to pet-care professionals in the city, to list out some special pro tips that can help your four-legged friends...

Ensure they stay well-hydrated
Pratapsinh Gaekwad, who is extremely passionate about animals and also owns a specialty pet-care clinic, says, "Ensure that your dog stays hydrated by adding extra water to some meals, in order to increase the



water content. Flavouring their water with some chicken broth may encourage them to drink more as well.

Give them ice-cubes to snack on
Ice cubes make tasty zero calorie snacks for dogs, and you can always jazz them up by making flavoured ones by freezing some chicken broth in an ice cube rack, suggests Gaekwad.

Deal with osteoarthritis
Hannah Victoria Myburgh, head nurse at a South Mumbai veterinary hospital says, "For the older patients who suffer from osteoarthritis and creaky joints, green lipp mussel extract is a fantastic natural analgesic. Adding glucosamine chondroitin supplements into the diet really helps with the maintenance of healthy joints and bones."

Be consistent with feeding regime
It is important to try and be consistent with your feeding regime — two meals a day, at the same time every day, with no snacks, should be sufficient.

Use palatable probiotics
Avoid curd as many patients can be slightly lactose intolerant and this can actually irritate the gut when had in large quantities, suggests Hannah. She adds, "A couple of teaspoons a day can be used as a probiotic but actually goat's yogurt or kefir are better and more palatable."

Get a dental check-up done
Opt for a full dental scale and polish to make gnashers sparkle. Gaekwad adds, "This is not just a cosmetic procedure, a full examination of all the teeth is undertaken, assessing all the gum margins. Removing plaque which is basically bacteria and sugar will help reduce systemic disease."

Give them supplements
"Supplements such as coconut oil are fantastic for your pet's coat and joints. They have a good ratio of omegas so really help nourish the skin, heart muscle and joints as well," says Hannah.

Dealing with heat stroke
Exercise is very important for pets but it is essential to not overdo it in the summer months. Heat strokes can be serious. Keep walks early in the morning before 8 am and late in the evening after 7 pm. Signs of heat stroke include lethargy, vomiting, disorientation and in extreme cases, collapse. The first thing to do is cool down with towels soaked in room temperature water. Immediately after, pay a visit to the vet.

Keep in mind
Take personal grooming seriously. Get a mani-pedi for your pets — get their nails clipped. Get a de-worming done prior to a vacation. Vaccinating against infectious diseases such as rabies, leptospirosis and canine distemper not only protects yourself but also your fellow canine companions.

A typical Indian wedding has day-long ceremonies and even longer guestlists running into hundreds

-Mind you, they are people who are close to the family and cannot be ignored. However, things are changing now as couples are choosing to have intimate celebrations with only a chosen few present on their special day. These millennials prefer to curb the unnecessary costs to avoid burdening their families. Instead, the money saved is spent on more constructive investments like a house or travelling together to their dream destination. If you are one of those planning to have a wedding celebration that is private, here are a few things to keep in mind...

BOOK A SMALL VENUE
When you have a small venue and people come to know about it, they will understand that you want to avoid a crowd. It is a subtle hint to those who expect to be invited for it, that you are not ready to host a big wedding.

KEEP THE RITUALS SIMPLE
Most Indian weddings have elaborate rituals - sangeet, mehendi, haldi among other things. It is better to keep things simple by focusing only on the main wedding rituals or else design them as per the size of the venue as you don't want to make your guests feel uncomfortable.

HOME IS THE BEST
The most comfortable option is to get married in a cosy home.

If your house is not big enough, you can always ask a friend who has a bigger house to help you out. An attached terrace always works best. This also makes sure that you're not in a situation where you have to

explain about restricting the celebration to immediate family and close friends. After the wedding rituals, make sure to take everyone out for an elaborate lunch or dinner to avoid unnecessary speculation.

HAVE MULTIPLE CELEBRATIONS
Everyone expects a huge reception after the wedding, but if you don't want to have that either, opt for small multiple celebrations. You and your spouse can have separate office parties, while you can also plan one each with extended families from both the sides.

Millennials prefer intimate

Weddings to grand bashes



Friends can be combined or given separate parties depending on how you both want it. However, ensure that both of you attend all these parties.

GO UNCONVENTIONAL
However, if you cannot

see a large number attending it. Avoid that and half the crowd goes out of the list. Go for a destination wedding, which invariably means that the celebration is a small, intimate affair; it also limits the number of guests you want to invite. This kind of wedding allows you to give personal attention to all your guests, as well as provide you with enough me-time.

having a wedding in the same town, try to hire a stand-alone bungalow instead of the typical hall or hotel set-up. Look for a farmhouse located on the outskirts of the town you stay in. It will give you lots of space and at the same time be a close-knit affair.



PLAN AN OUT-OF-TOWN WEDDING
Sometimes having a wedding at the place you reside in, will

After "Slip Of Tongue", BJP Leader Sambit Patra's "Upvaas" Vow As Atonement

New Delhi: BJP leader Sambit Patra finds himself in the eye of a political storm after calling Lord Jagannath a devotee of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in what he claims was a "slip of tongue" while talking to the media after the PM's roadshow in Odisha's Puri yesterday. The comment on Lord Jagannath, a revered deity in the ancient town, has ignited a fierce backlash from the BJP's political rivals, especially Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's Biju Janata Dal (BJD).

Sambit Patra has now announced a period of "upvaas" (fasting) to atone for the flub.

In his clarification, he refers to the sweltering heat and noise following PM Modi's roadshow. Mr Patra said he had aimed to highlight PM Modi's devotion to Lord Jagannath but mistakenly stated, "Jagannath is Modi's bhakt." The comment, captured on camera, immediately provoked outrage from multiple quarters.

Today, a statement made by me had created a controversy. After PM Narendra Modi's

roadshow in Puri, I gave byte to many media channels and everywhere I said the same thing, that PM Narendra Modi is an ardent devotee of Mahaprabhu Jagannath... In the end, when another channel took my byte, it was extremely hot, crowded and noisy. Unknowingly, while giving the byte, I said the opposite, that Mahaprabhu is a devotee of PM Narendra Modi. This can never be true, and a person in his senses can never say such things that god is a devotee of a human. I have made this mistake unintentionally. I know some people must have been hurt but even god forgives mistakes made unintentionally... I need to seek forgiveness from Mahaprabhu Jagannath for this slip of the tongue and I have decided to do a 'upvaas'," Mr Patra said.

The reaction from Naveen Patnaik was swift and sharp. The Odisha Chief Minister condemned Mr Patra's statement in a scathing social media post, saying that such remarks insult the sanctity of 'Mahaprabhu' Jagannath and hurt the sentiments of millions

of devotees. He urged the BJP to refrain from dragging the deity into political discourse, a sentiment echoed by other opposition leaders. "Mahaprabhu Shree Jagannath is the Lord of the Universe. Calling Mahaprabhu a bhakt of another human being is an insult to the Lord. This has hurt the sentiments and demeaned the faith of crores of Jagannath bhaktas and Odias across the world," Mr Patnaik wrote.

The controversy quickly gained momentum, with leaders from various parties joining the chorus of condemnation. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi criticised the BJP's perceived arrogance, suggesting that such statements indicate a dangerous level of self-aggrandisement within the party. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal echoed these sentiments, calling Mr Patra's statement a height of arrogance and an "insult to God." The Congress, BJD, and AAP capitalised on the uproar, with the Congress demanding an



apology from Prime Minister Modi himself. "Sambit Patra, who is immersed in Modi Bhakti, should not have committed this sin. Narendra Modi should apologise for this disgusting statement," stated the Congress's official communication.

Amid the escalating backlash, Mr Patra took to social media to clarify his statement. He explained that it was an inadvertent slip of the tongue, a mistake made under the strain of the

moment. "I gave a number of bytes today to multiple media channels... by mistake during one of the bytes I pronounced just the opposite. I know you too know and understand this. Sir, let's not make an issue out of a nonexistent issue. We all have a slip of the tongue sometimes," Mr Patra wrote directly to Chief Minister Patnaik, seeking to defuse the situation. Despite Mr Patra's apology, opposition parties remained unyielding. The Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) lodged a formal complaint, alleging that Mr Patra's statement was a deliberate attempt to insult religious sentiments. They accused him of violating the model code of conduct and called for strict action. This controversy unfolds as Odisha heads into a crucial phase of the elections, with Patra's gaffe potentially influencing voter sentiment. The BJP, which is striving to make significant inroads in the state, now faces the challenge of mitigating the fallout from this incident.

36 Flamingos Found Dead In Mumbai, Hit By Incoming Emirates Flight: Report

Mumbai/New Delhi: About 36 flamingos were found dead in Mumbai yesterday reportedly after being hit by an Emirates aircraft. The aircraft collided with the flock moments before its landing at the Mumbai airport, a Times of India report said. The return flight - bound for Dubai - was cancelled late last evening, showed the plane tracking website Flightradar24 that shows real-



time commercial flight tracking information on a map. The Forest Department officials rushed to the site and recovered the mutilated remains after the locals alerted a wildlife group about spotting the dead birds in Ghatkopar area.

Officials found the area littered with bird carcass. Broken pieces of wings, claws and beaks were scattered all over. "The carcasses have been sent for an autopsy to find the exact cause of their death," said Pawan Sharma, founder of the Resqink Association for Wildlife Welfare (RAWW). Mumbai-based environmentalist Stalin Dayanand told NDTV that the incident calls for an investigation. "There should be a criminal investigation into this incident. It doesn't seem like a freak accident to me," said Mr Dayanand.

Case Against Indore Man For Alleged Online Sexual Abuse Of Australian Girl

New Delhi: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered an FIR against a man from Indore in a case of online sexual abuse and intimidation of a minor girl from Australia, the agency said in a statement on Monday. According to CBI officials, the case was registered against him based on inputs the CBI received through Interpol. "It was alleged that the accused befriended the said minor girl on a social media platform Instagram. During a conversation with the said minor girl, he allegedly groomed her into sending him, her objectionable images and videos," they said.

As per officials, "It was further alleged that over a period of time when the said minor girl was reluctant to share images and videos, the accused started threatening her that he would release her images and videos to her



friends and family members, as a result, she continued to share the videos and images under duress. "Later, the victim blocked the accused on the said social media platform. However, the accused again contacted the said minor girl over WhatsApp to further intimidate her," they said.

CBI developed the inputs by utilizing its expertise to geolocate the accused to zero in on the accused's exact whereabouts and also to gather evidence. Searches were conducted at the premises of the accused which led to the recovery of incriminating materials like computer hard disk, mobile phone etc. An investigation is underway, and further details into the matter are awaited.

"Phones Of My Family, Supporters Being Tapped", Alleges HD Kumaraswamy

Bengaluru: Former Karnataka Chief Minister and JD(S) second-in-command H D Kumaraswamy on Monday alleged that 40 phones including his own and those of his family members and supporters are being tapped. Even as he made an appeal to his nephew and Hassan JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna to come back to the country, Mr Kumaraswamy accused the government of spying on himself and his family. Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar and Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara dismissed the allegation as baseless and a means to gain publicity.

Our phones are being tapped. I know it. Forty phones of people around me are being tapped. Whatever discussions are happening on phone are being monitored. H D Revanna's phone is also being tapped," Mr Kumaraswamy alleged. Mr Revanna is H D Kumaraswamy's brother who



was released on bail in kidnapping and sexual assault cases. The JD(S) 'first family' is in trouble after a huge cache of explicit videos showing many women being sexually assaulted and filmed allegedly by Prajwal became public. Prajwal, grandson of former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda and son of Revanna, is hiding in a foreign country as the Karnataka government formed a Special Investigation Team to probe the case. The 33-year-old JD(S) leader is the NDA's Lok Sabha candidate

from Hassan, against whom an arrest warrant has been issued by a court. Interpol has also issued a Blue Corner Notice seeking information on his whereabouts. Mr Kumaraswamy appealed publicly to his nephew to return to India and cooperate with the investigation. "Come back to India and cooperate with the investigation. How long this 'police and thief' game will go on? Your grandfather always wanted you to grow politically. If you want to honour his reputation, then come back to India," he said. He added that he has asked his brother Revanna to help bring back his son. Mr Kumaraswamy, who is the JD(S) state president, claimed that if he knew beforehand about the explicit videos and sexual assault cases, he would not have allowed him to flee the country. He also apologised to the victims of the sexual assault case.

"Will Observe Fast": Sambit Patra Expresses Regret Over His Remark On Lord Jagannath

Bhubaneswar: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Sambit Patra, who was in the soup for his 'controversial' remarks relating to Lord Jagannath, cleared the air around his statement, saying that he was apologetic for his 'slip of the tongue', and that he would offer penance in the name of Lord Jagannath as an apology.

Mr Patra, the BJP candidate from Puri Lok Sabha seat, landed in a row in Odisha on Monday after he told a local news channel that "Lord Jagannath is a devotee (bhakt) of Prime Minister Narendra Modi." He later described it as a "slip of the tongue." Speaking to ANI about the remark Monday night, Mr Patra said, "Today one of my statements has become controversial. It was when Prime Minister Narendra Modi's roadshow came to an end in Puri and I was giving out bytes to several media channels."

"I had given out bytes to almost 15-16

channels wherein I was repeating that Prime Minister Modi is an ardent devotee of Maha Prabhu Jagannath Ji. Even as the Chief Minister of Ahmedabad and even before that, PM Modi used to regularly visit and offer prayers at Lord Jagannath temple there in Ahmedabad," Mr Patra said. Adding further, Mr Patra said, "I was repeating the same to every channel when a media person came to me for a byte. It so happened that amid a lot of people, hot weather, and noise, I unknowingly said just the opposite of what I had been saying all along. I mistakenly said that Lord Jagannath is a devotee of PM Modi." "This is not possible; no person in his right mind can say that God is a devotee of any human being. The mistake happened unknowingly while giving out bytes to a channel. I agree that the sentiments of some people have been hurt due to my statement, but even the

lord forgives a person for committing a mistake unknowingly," said Mr Patra. He further clarified, "It was never my intention to commit this mistake, but still because Mahaprabhu Jagannath is the Lord of the Universe and I am an ardent devotee just like the hundreds and thousands of Odias, I feel I should convey my apology and offer penance to the Lord for a 'slip of the tongue' that occurred unknowingly." "Hence, I have decided to observe fasting as an apology," said Mr Patra. BJP candidate Sambit Patra inadvertently kicked off a row on Monday after he mistakenly said that "Lord Jagannath is a devotee (bhakt) of PM Modi." "Lakhs of people have gathered to see Modi. Lord Jagannath is a devotee (bhakt) of Modi, and we are Modi's family. This is an unusual sight, and I am not able to control my emotions. I think it is a historic day for all Odias," Mr Patra said.

Probe agency NIA charges Bihar resident in 2019 Surat fake currency case

New Delhi: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Monday filed a chargesheet against an accused in the 2019 Surat Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN) case. The central anti-terror probe agency charged Abdul Gaffar, alias Gaffarbai, a resident of Bihar's Katihar, for being involved in a criminal conspiracy, along with several others, for the circulation and distribution of fake currency in Gujarat. Gaffar had been on the run since 2019 and was arrested on February 22, 2024, in Ahmedabad, the agency said.

Besides working as an agent for various fake currency smugglers in the current case, Gaffar was also convicted in two previous cases of fake currency trafficking, according to officials. He was sentenced to three years of rigorous imprisonment and a penalty by an Economic Offences Court in Muzaffarpur in 2015. Upon his release, Gaffar got involved in the present case, the agency said. In



June 2019, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) in Surat had arrested one Vinod Nishad from the Surat Railway Station with fake currencies worth Rs. 2,00,000 in Rs. 2,000 denominations. The receiver, Mahefuz Shaikh, was also arrested later. The case was later handed over to the NIA considering the national security ramifications. The NIA filed its first chargesheet in the case in 2019, and Vinod Nishad and Mohammad Mahefuz Shaikh were subsequently convicted to 7 years of imprisonment and fined Rs 10,000 each in 2022. However, Abdul Gaffar had continued to abscond until his arrest three months ago. According to NIA investigations, Abdul Gaffar had purchased Rs 2,00,000 worth of fake currency from one Hafeez, alias Malda, and sold it to Vinod Nishad in exchange for Rs 88,000 in genuine currency. The fake currency then reached Mohammad Mahefuz Shaikh for circulation among the general public of Gujarat. Investigations to trace other absconding accused are in progress.

Severe heatwave in Delhi, parts of north India, Madhya Pradesh for next 3 days

The Delhi Police has seized the DVR of CCTV cameras installed inside Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence in connection with its probe into the "assault" on the party's Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal.

New Delhi: As temperatures in several parts of Delhi breached the 47 degrees Celsius mark on Monday, the weather department has said heatwave to severe heatwave conditions very likely in parts of Punjab, Haryana-Chandigarh-Delhi, west Rajasthan, a few pockets of east Rajasthan, west Uttar Pradesh and isolated pockets of west Madhya

Pradesh until Friday (May 24). Heatwave conditions were also likely in parts of east Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, east Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Gujarat, Saurashtra and Kutch until May 24, it said.

The Palam station, near the international airport, recorded a maximum temperature of 48.4 degrees Celsius on May 26, 1998. Palam has records dating back to 1956. The searing heat pushed the city's peak power demand to its highest for May, while the Delhi government directed the schools that have not closed for summer vacations to do so with immediate effect. Gautam Buddh Nagar recorded a maximum temperature of 45.6 degrees Celsius on Monday and predicted a heat wave for the next four days. The district's administration announced summer vacations for students of classes 9 to 12 across all schools in Noida and Greater Noida amid severe heatwave conditions.

Temperatures remained above 45 degrees Celsius in large parts of Rajasthan, Haryana, Chandigarh and Uttar Pradesh,



affecting daily life as many chose to remain indoors in the afternoon. In Madhya Pradesh, Ratlam and Nowgong recorded a maximum temperature of 45.5 degrees Celsius, followed by Datia at 45.2 degrees, Khajuraho at 44.8 degrees, and Gwalior at 44.7 degrees. Earlier, the weather department

had warned of extreme heat in India during the April-June period, coinciding with the seven-phase Lok Sabha elections that end on June 1.

The threshold for a heatwave is met when the maximum temperature of a weather station reaches at least 40 degrees Celsius in the plains, 37 degrees in the coastal areas, and 30 degrees in the hilly regions, and the departure from normal is at least 4.5 notches. A severe heatwave is declared if the departure from normal exceeds 6.4 notches.

RAIN IN TAMIL NADU

While large parts of northern India were expected to reel under the scorching heat, southern states such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu were drenched by rain on Monday, an indication of the southwest monsoon's onset later this month. According to the India Meteorological Department, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal were very likely to receive isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall until May 21 (today).

Pros and cons of Working abroad



Working in a foreign country is a unique experience filled with new learnings, four professionals from diverse fields, who took up stints abroad before moving back to India, share their experience of working overseas

Aasit Shah

I don't consider any of my experiences in the US particularly appalling. In fact, the US proved to be a great training ground for me. I was working in the Silicon Valley and that favoured me in terms of weather since we had a good number of sunshine days. Dignity of labour is extremely high in the US. Even though there is hierarchy in terms of designations, I loved the personal connect one can have with their seniors. You can walk in and out of your senior's cabin any time. Work-life balance is excellent so much so that sending professional emails on a weekend is frowned upon. Organisations are extremely flexible. There were days when I could work from home. Since the US is considered to be the melting-pot of the world, I got the opportunity to work with people from different migrant communities there. And that was a great learning experience. I didn't miss India much because there are too many Indians around in the valley. So, for me, it was a home away from home!

Pan kaj Khot

Working in the UAE had its own upside and downside. The biggest benefit for me was to receive a tax-free salary, which is very rare. Companies in Dubai ensure that their employees have a perfect work-life balance. A major benefit of working in Dubai is that a number of international organisations have their offices there. So apart from helping you mingle with professionals from different cultures, it also enables you to understand the working styles of different countries. The city is strategically located and has great infrastructure. Restaurants in Dubai offer cuisines from all over the world making the place a gastronomic delight. On the flip side, house rents are too steep. Furthermore, if you don't have any family or friends, it can get boring and

difficult.

Kavita Gupta

When I think about my working stint in the UK, I am filled with mixed feelings. First, I worked for Nokia. The environment there was professional, yet friendly. Flexibility was granted, when required. What I particularly liked was the blurring of hierarchy in terms of accessibility. One could approach one's bosses anytime. Being able to interact with people from different countries was a great advantage too. Work-life balance was perfect and working beyond clocking hours was not appreciated. However, when I moved to another company and got pregnant six months into the job, it didn't go well down with my boss. My profile was changed and I didn't find that fair.

Guatam Parekh

The first thing that really impressed me about Singapore was the minimalistic bureaucracy. Be it taxes of work permit or anything, government authorities are very co-operative. Every job or labour is treated with respect and this takes professionalism in the country to another level. Singapore being a first world country, infrastructure and connectivity are highly developed; both railways and roadways are well connected making travel hassle-free. I was part of the event industry there and the best thing was that clients treated me as their associate and not merely a vendor. It was a ritual for us to take our clients out for dinners post events. Professionally, it was a great bonding exercise. Technology is highly evolved in Singapore, so during events, each department knew their job to the T and that made our work easy. Since the country had professionals from all over the world, I got to learn a lot from people from varied cultures. Finally, Singapore is a welcoming country and doesn't let you feel homesick. My stint there was amazing.



The struggles of a single mother

Mirror writer and single mom Anjana Vaswani chats with three others of her tribe on raising kids alone with one eye on blood pressure.

Two months ago, just days before the final round of admissions to kindergarten and Grade 1 under the Right to Education quota, panicking single mothers flocked to BMC help centres. Their applications had been rejected because the fathers' income certificates were missing. The mothers' certificates weren't acceptable as substitutes.

It made newspaper copy, but ask a single mother, and she'll tell you niggles like these are a regular part of her life. Official paperwork that can be a nightmare in our patriarchal system is just the garnish on a gateaux of stress, guilt, feelings of isolation, stigma and self-doubt. Is her health likely to be impacted negatively in the long run?

The answer though obvious is now confirmed by a study published in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health which assessed over 25,000 women across 15 countries. It focused on women who had children before the age of 18 and also examined, "whether doing it alone is worse in countries with relatively weak social and safety nets."

Vital point, because our social structure may just be our redeemer. Not only does it alleviate the guilt when you leave your child with a grandparent, it allows us time for a fitness routine which, together, may render studies such as these altogether inapposite. This means you don't get to write us off yet.

As I see friends, many, a lot younger than me, negotiating around the rose garden of marriage with aching backs and knees, and thyroid problems (frequently also treating the headaches of family politics), I feel confident that we have at least as good a shot at health and longevity as any of them.

"Suddenly, health became top priority" Anita Kharia, stay-at-home mum My daughters are now 14 and 11, but when I separated, they were nine and six. Since we had lived abroad for a while, moving to Mumbai post-divorce made it more challenging. We were grappling with a whole different culture, for one. I didn't even realise my health was headed downward. At the time, it appeared like a bout of illness. In the first three months, I lost enough weight to drop to an unhealthy size zero. It was only when I ended up fracturing my arm that I



realised my health was crying out for attention.

The consistent aches and pains, I realised, arose partly due to the stress that accompanies moving home, and of course, separating from someone you've been with for 12 years; 14 in my case if I count the courtship. No matter what anyone says, it's scary to be on your own after all those years. You wonder, will I be able to provide for us? Will my children be all right? Seeing my father cry, I remember, was very hard for me - the hurt that the divorce had caused him.

That I returned to a city where my siblings lived meant I could blend easily into their social circle. I found comfort in pouring my heart out to old friends. I sought out self-help literature. Carolyn Myss' Why People Don't Heal and How They Can helped me. There's a comprehensive table in the book that connects ailments to emotional issues.

Interestingly, after the split, since I was aware that I was the only one around for my kids, I began taking my health very seriously. I never missed an annual check-up and exercised regularly. That's a habit that has stayed with me.

"I made a career out of the split" Nivedita Rawal, behavioural psychotherapist Twenty six and pregnant with my second child when my husband sought divorce in 1991, I had hoped then for a reconciliation. It wasn't until 2004 that I finally gathered the courage to confide in extended

family and friends about my single status. Single parenting is the toughest thing I have known, more so in the absence of family support. It was tough being mum and dad. The children's education, wellbeing, happiness. These became priority. Although I had worked in corporate jobs in Singapore, I was uncomfortable with the idea of leaving the kids in the care of a maid. I was petrified of child molestation and other possibilities. So, I decided to pursue psychology and set up a private practice after acquiring a Master's degree and then a Doctorate while the children were still in senior school.

I'd be driving them back and forth from tuitions, I'd supervise their homework, and put up with the occasional last minute requests: "Mommy, I need 20 buttons for art work. Now." I remember running to JW Marriott at 9 pm once to ask if I could buy the needle-and-thread home-kits they offer in guestrooms. I got 10 packets. The rest of the buttons the kids needed came off my shirts.

At one point, I supplemented my income by offering therapy to call centre employees during the graveyard shift. Social life was naturally sacrificed. In the last 23 years, I'd estimate that I must have attended about 10 social events. I did get into a relationship but ended it when I realised that he was not father material. Diwali, Christmas and Easter holidays were spent alone since the kids holidayed with their father.

But, having worked with single mothers who tend to develop acute depression, insomnia, even cancers and metabolic syndrome illnesses linked to diabetes, high blood pressure and heart conditions, I recognised my loneliness. I knew that I had to make a concerted effort to stay fit. I pursued Mallakhambh, yoga and swimming with dedication. It set the tone for the challenges that every day would bring. Yes, I still continue to combat insomnia and some food intolerances. Today, I'm a step-parent too, blessed with four children and two puppies, and have a successful practice that boasts celebrity clientele.

"It's tough to stay fit as a sandwich generation member" Ragashree Porecha, sales professional I kicked off my career with a monthly pay cheque of Rs 3,500 when I got divorced in 1995. It was a huge support to know that my family was there for my daughter. Still, there were heartbreaking moments when she'd complain that, unlike her, other kids always had mommy around. But by the time she got to the third

grade, she began to feel pride in the fact that her mother was a successful professional. Working had other advantages too. My first boss, with whom I worked for 15 years, was a bit of a health nut. She'd insist that I walk to work and back. Having been a juvenile diabetic, this helped me because otherwise, health would not have been priority. I know that, back then, I avoided visiting the doctor as far as possible. Health check-ups were erratic, but the walking kept my blood pressure and cholesterol levels in check. Over the last two years, however, after the demise of my mother, I'm now responsible not just for my daughter but my father too. And with that, my fitness has taken a beating. My blood pressure shot up over the last nine months, and sugar levels were erratic. I've developed hypothyroidism and my shoulders freeze up sometimes. But I know this is temporary. With years of work experience at luxury brands, I hope to have a job waiting for me when I'm able to take it, and I am working on rebuilding my immunity.

Is loneliness making your pets depressed?

Owners of two-and-a-half-year-old Brownie, whose habit of chasing her tail turned into a 24x7 obsession, panicked and took her to a veterinarian. The vet directed them to an animal behaviourist who diagnosed Brownie with boredom and separation anxiety. After months of treatment Brownie's behaviour has turned normal.

Leaving your pets alone at home for long periods, ignoring them or spending insufficient time with them can take a toll on them and cause serious health issues. In recent times many pets have been facing issues of separation anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorders and in extreme cases even self destructive behaviour, say city based pet psychologists and pet behaviourists.

Priti Chauhan, a pet behaviourist and therapist for the last 10 years, said, "Every week I get two to three similar cases. Along with treating the pets, we also counsel the owners so that they do not repeat the same mistakes. In most of these cases the pets get affected due to suffering caused by their owners leaving them alone at home for long durations. Some people even tie them up, confining them to one place and don't keep sufficient drinking water among other things."

Anagha Mali, another pet behaviourist informed, "There are various ways to know if a pet is suffering from these issues. Separation anxiety includes pets refusing to stay indoors, barking

continuously, being destructive including chewing on furniture, soiling the house. In extreme cases pets start hurting themselves by either licking and creating a wound, shadow chasing or tail chasing etc." At times pets can also suffer due to other reasons, explained Priti. "Ensure that the pet is well fed, is done with his daily ablutions and



to smell flowers, leaves, roads etc. That will stimulate his brain," she said. Housewife Aarti Pednekar's case is an example of pets suffering due to other reasons. Aarti, who owns a six-year-old Labrador, Honey, narrated, "Though we are a family of four, Honey is most attached to me and becomes restless if I go out anywhere. Recently when I had gone out of town for a fortnight, she almost injured her front paw by licking it continuously. On consulting a behaviourist we realised she was suffering from separation anxiety. The behaviourist explained how important it is to engage other members of the family in taking care of the pet so that it feels attached to all."

Veterinary surgeon and behaviour counsellor Dr Shivshankar Chikodi, said, "It is good to train your pet if you are going to leave him alone for long hours. The training can ideally start at two years of age. Initially one should start keeping the pet alone for a period of 15 minutes which can gradually be increased to two hours and longer.

Schengen visas to get costlier from June. Here's all you need to know

New Delhi. The European Commission has accepted a proposal to hike Schengen visa fees worldwide by 12%, confirmed Slovenia's Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. The fee for adult applicants will rise from €80 to €90, while the fee for children aged six to twelve will go up from €40 to €45. Additionally, countries that do not cooperate with the EU in readmitting their irregularly staying citizens may see their visa fees surge to €135 or even €180. "The European Commission adopted a decision to increase short-stay Schengen visa (visa type C) fees worldwide by 12 percent. This increase will apply globally starting June 11, 2024," the Slovenian government stated.

This decision follows a scheduled review of EU visa fees that took place in December 2023, which occurs every three years as stipulated by the Schengen Visa Code. The EU attributes the fee hike to inflation and increased



salaries for civil servants. The previous increase in February 2020 saw fees rise from €60 to €80.

The announcement has caused discontent, especially among Turkish citizens who have been anticipating a visa-free agreement with the EU. In 2023, the Schengen Area received over 10.3 million short-stay visa applications, a 37% increase from 2022, though still below the 2019 peak of 17 million applications.

The Schengen Area comprises 29 European countries, including 25 EU member states.

Sensex, Nifty fall in volatile trade as financial and IT stocks drag

NEW DELHI: Benchmark stock market indices opened Tuesday's trading session on a weak note due to losses in heavyweight financial and information technology stocks. The S&P BSE Sensex was trading 194.63 points lower at 73,811.31 at 10:15 am, while the NSE Nifty50 was down 29.80 points at 22,472.20.

Most of the broader market indices also fell sharply as volatility continued to climb amid uncertainty over the Lok Sabha elections. Heavyweight indices such as Nifty Financial Services, Nifty Bank and Nifty IT were trading in negative territory in early trade. However, Nifty Metal provides some support, gaining nearly 1.8%. The top five gainers on the Nifty50 were Coal India, JSW Steel, Hindalco, BPCL and Tata Steel. On the other hand, the top losers were Nestle India, Axis Bank, HUL, Infosys and TCS.

Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said, "Overnight trading was influenced by Atlanta Fed President Bostic's comments on higher future US interest rates, possibly akin to 1990s levels, and a single rate cut in 2024. Vice Chair Barr echoed this, advocating steady rates amid disappointing Q1 CPI data. "Nifty bulls are poised to continue their climb, bolstered by pre-election rallies and a technically strong outlook above key EMAs. Nifty aims for an all-time high of 22,795 and targets 23,000, with options data indicating a 22,000-23,000 trading range," he added. Tapse indicated that today's focus will be on Q4 results from several major companies and the upcoming FOMC Minutes on May 22.

Markets decline in early trade on weak trends from Asian peers, foreign fund outflows

MUMBAI. Equity benchmark indices declined in early trade on Tuesday in line with weak trends from Asian markets and fresh foreign fund outflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 218.11 points to 73,787.83. The NSE Nifty dipped 97.45 points to 22,404.55. Among the Sense components, Nestle, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bajaj Finserv, Axis Bank,



Hindustan Unilever and ICICI Bank were the major laggards.

Tata Steel, Power Grid, Tata Steel and Asian Paints were among the gainers. In Asian markets, Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong were trading lower while Tokyo quoted in the positive territory. Wall Street ended mostly higher on Monday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 92.95 crore on Saturday, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.56 per cent to USD 83.24 a barrel.

The BSE benchmark climbed 88.91 points or 0.12 per cent to end at 74,005.94 in a special trading session on Saturday. The NSE Nifty advanced 35.90 points or 0.16 per cent to 22,502. The National Stock Exchange (NSE) and BSE conducted a special trading session in the equity and equity derivative segments on May 18 to check their preparedness for handling major disruptions or failures at the primary site. Markets were closed on Monday due to the fifth phase of the Lok Sabha elections in Mumbai.

Government begins selection process for new SBI chief

MUMBAI. The government is kicking off the process to select the next chairman of the State Bank Group from Tuesday.

The Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB) is mandated to choose the chairmen and managing directors/ chief executives of public sector financial institutions such as banks, LIC and general insurers. Incumbent chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara's extended tenure is ending on August 28, 2024. He was given a one-year extension last October till he attains 63, which is August 28. He had a three-year term as the chairman. Khara succeeded Rajnish Kumar superannuated in October 7, 2020. The FSIB will begin the two-day meet from May 21 to recommend a candidate for the post of the chairman, an FSIB source told The New Indian Express on Monday. Top SBI management consists of the chairman, which is a fully executive job unlike in other state-run banks where chairmen is non-executive, and four MDs



who are all technically eligible to attend the selection process for the post the chairman, provided they have one year of service left. The second-rung

management consists of about 10 deputy managing directors (DMDs) and dozens of chief general managers (CGMs). DMDs and CGMs are eligible to become

MDs. All heads of SBI subsidiaries like SBI Life, SBI General, SBI Caps and SBI Cards are headed by persons with DMD ranks in the bank. Going by tradition, all four MDs of SBI are eligible for the interviews for chairman's post. The incumbent MDs are CS Setty, Ashwini Kumar Tewari, Alok Kumar Choudhary and Vinay M Tonse. But Choudhary is not eligible given that he is scheduled to retire on June 30. The FSIB has recommended Rana Ashutosh Kumar Singh as the new MD to fill the vacancy being created by the retirement of Choudhary. Similarly Rana Ashutosh Singh is not eligible given that he assumes office only after June 30.

Tradition, and by the SBI Act mandate the government appoints SBI chairman from within the ranks. Though there have been a few exceptions in the past. The few exceptions when outsiders became chairman was first in 1985, when the government appointed DN Ghosh, an Indian Audit & Account Services officer, as the chairman. He was at the helm for almost four years.

Government maintains restrictions on import of non-compliant electronics

NEW DELHI. The government has maintained restrictions on the import of unregistered or non-compliant products as per an official notification from the Commerce Ministry on Monday.

"There is no implication of this notification. The import policy for these categories in question were restricted anyway, so its status quo," Reuters quoted a government official aware of the matter as saying. For LED products and DC/AC supplied control gear for LED modules, the authorities will randomly select consignments and pick up samples for testing. These samples will then be sent to labs to check if they meet certain safety standards. Customs will only

approve consignments that comply with these standards. Consignments that do not meet the standards will be



sent back or destroyed at the importer's cost, as per the amended rules. Goods that do not meet the Bureau of Indian Standards or labelling requirements will have to be re-exported or will be disposed of by government agencies. The government imposed restrictions on

certain IT hardware items in August 2023, raising concerns among domestic and foreign companies.

The government adjusted the restrictions on laptop and computer imports in October. Now, importers can bring in these items with an 'authorisation', specifying the quantity and value.

Concerns from the industry led the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) to clarify that there are no import restrictions on certain IT hardware products, such as desktop computers. However, the import of laptops, tablets, all-in-one personal computers, and ultra-small form factor computers is restricted. Imports of these goods require import authorisation.

EPFO membership rises by 14.41 lakh in March, women and youth lead

NEW DELHI: The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) added 14.41 lakh net members in March as per the provisional payroll data released on May 20. The provisional payroll data shows that EPFO added 7.47 lakh new members during March 2024. The data revealed that the 18-25 age group made up 56.83% of the total new members added in March. This shows that the majority of individuals joining the organised workforce are young people and are first-time jobseekers. According to the data, approximately 11.80 lakh members rejoined EPFO after having left earlier. These members switched their jobs and re-joined the establishments covered under EPFO and opted to transfer their savings instead of applying for final settlement, choosing long-term financial well-being.

A gender-wise analysis of payroll data shows that of the 7.47 lakh new members, around 2 lakh of them are females. The net female member addition during March stood at around



2.90 lakh. The increase in the addition of female workers is a broader shift towards a more inclusive and diverse workforce. A month-on-month comparison of industry-wise data displays growth in the members working in establishments engaged in industries such as manufacturing, marketing servicing, usage of computers, restaurants, chartered or registered accountants, fish processing and non-veg food preservation, eedi making, and others. Of the total net membership, around 43% of the addition is from the expert services sector. The EPFO had added 15.48 lakh net members in February. The data indicated that around 7.78 lakh new members were enrolled in the month.

In the last 6 and half years alone, more than 6.1 crore members joined the EPFO (Employees' Provident Fund Organisation) fold, indicating the formalisation of the job market.

The data shows that the EPFO had added 61.12 lakh net subscribers in 2018-19, which increased to 78.58 lakh in 2019-20. However, it dipped to 77.08 lakh in 2020-21, mainly due to the pandemic effect and improved again to 1.22 crore in 2021-22 and 1.38 crore in 2022-23.

The above payroll data is provisional since the data generation is a continuous exercise, as updating employee records is a continuous process. The previous data hence gets updated every month. Since April 2018, the EPFO has been releasing payroll data covering the period from September 2017 onwards.

In the monthly payroll data, the count of members joining EPFO for the first time through an aadhaar-validated Universal Account Number (UAN), existing members exiting from coverage of EPFO and those who exited but re-joining as members, is taken to arrive at a net monthly payroll.

Delhivery shares fall after Q4 results, but brokerages upbeat. Here's why

New Delhi. Shares of Delhivery Ltd tumbled by up to 12% during Tuesday's trading session following a disappointing sequential performance in the March 2024 quarter and the resignation of a key executive.

Despite these setbacks, brokerage firms remain largely positive on the stock.

Delhivery reported a loss of Rs 68.5 crore for the quarter ending March 31, 2024, marking a 57% improvement from a loss of Rs 159 crore in the same period the previous year. The logistics firm had posted an unexpected profit of Rs 11.7 crore in the December quarter, its first since at least 2021. Revenue from operations grew 12% year-on-year to Rs 2,076 crore in Q4 FY24, up from Rs 1,860 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous year. The company's EBITDA for the quarter rose to Rs 46 crore, compared to just Rs 13 crore in Q4 FY23 or the full financial year 2023-24. Delhivery's revenue increased by 13% to Rs 8,142 crore from Rs 7,224 crore in FY23. The company also narrowed its loss after tax to Rs 249 crore in FY24 from Rs 1,008 crore in the previous year. Moreover, Delhivery achieved operational profitability with an EBITDA of Rs 127

crore in FY24, reversing an EBITDA loss of Rs 452 crore in FY23. The company also announced the resignation of its Executive Director and Chief Business Officer, Sandeep Kumar Barasia, effective July 1, after more than nine years with Delhivery. He is leaving for personal reasons. Following the Q4 results announcement, Delhivery's shares fell by 11.92% to Rs 383.90, down from the previous close of Rs 435.90. At around 10:43 am, shares of the company were still trading over 8% lower. Despite the tumble, brokerage firms are optimistic, with target prices suggesting a sizeable upside. Emkay Global has assigned a target price of Rs 500 to Delhivery with a 'buy' rating. The brokerage firm anticipates that the company will achieve PAT (profit after tax) positivity in FY25. Emkay expects the reduction in capex intensity and Delhivery's net cash balance sheet to mitigate the impact of short-term volume fluctuations. Kotak Institutional Equities attributed Delhivery's underperformance to flat express parcel volumes, impacted by external factors not anticipated in FY2025. "The insourcing share for Meesho has stabilized and key customers



have secured funding for growth. Delhivery holds over 100% of the profit pool in Express Parcel, with peers affected more by external factors," Kotak analysts said. "Results were solid on other metrics, including resilient margins in Express Parcel and healthy growth with improving margins. Capex appears to peak, and working capital has improved, boosting the case for cash break-even in FY2026," the brokerage noted, maintaining a 'buy' rating on the stock with a target price of Rs 545. Prabhudas Lilladher highlighted Delhivery's strong position due to its unique low-cost business model, continuous infrastructure investments, cost optimization focus, and robust

proprietary tech infrastructure. "Delhivery's net debt-free status and favorable working capital position provide a competitive edge. The strong growth in the PTL network is leading to continuous improvement in asset utilization. The management anticipates continued volume growth in FY25," the brokerage said. "We have upgraded our stance to a 'buy' rating with a target of Rs 530 based on DCF, driven by faster-than-expected recovery in PTL margins," it added. Nuvama Institutional Equities noted that Delhivery reported higher-than-expected losses for the quarter compared to profits in the previous quarter. Express parcel shipment declined 2% year-on-year to Rs 1,760 crore due to softness in online consumption during the quarter. EBITDA margin in the express parcel segment was 17.6%, it said. "Losses have been narrowing but persist. Profitability remains key for the stock price to start an upward trajectory. We have increased our estimates by 1-6% for FY25E/26E with a revised DCF-based target price of Rs 463, up from Rs 450," it added, retaining a 'hold' rating.

NEWS BOX

Jake Fraser-McGurk, Matt Short named in Australia's reserves for T20 World Cup 2024

New Delhi . Australia's swashbuckling opener Jake Fraser-McGurk has been named in the final squad for the T20 World Cup 2024. Fraser-McGurk, who was not named in the initial list has been added as a travelling reserve alongside spinner Matt Short. Fraser-McGurk's much-anticipated call-up comes after the batter's incredible debut season in the Indian Premier League 2024 where he struck fear in the opposition team.

Fraser-McGurk's six-hitting ability wowed everyone in the IPL as the opener smashed his way to 330 runs in just 9 matches at a ridiculous strike-rate of 234.04. Earlier, the youngster had reacted to his snub from the side and said that he might not have been ready yet for a big tournament like the T20 World Cup. Australia head coach Andrew McDonald spoke to cricket.com.au after the final squad was named and said that Fraser-McGurk was in serious contention for the final 15. The coach revealed that Fraser-McGurk was not picked in the main team because of the stacked top order, which included the likes of David Warner, Travis Head, Mitchell Marsh and Cameron Green. You look at Jake's form in the IPL - he took that by storm and he was a serious consideration for the final 15. And so was Matthew Short. His BBL form has been outstanding over a long period of time and he's shown glimpses at the international level as well, albeit at times he's had to play a different role," Andrew McDonald told cricket.com.au. "When you're on the fringes potentially you're going to have to play different roles at different times and he's really embraced some middle-order opportunities. We know that he's best suited at the top of the order - and it's probably similar for Jake as well - hence why they haven't been picked in the in the initial 15," McDonald added.

Time kharab uska hota hai jiske...': KKR star Rinku Singh opens up on his T20 World Cup squad snub

NEW DELHI. India and Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) sensation Rinku Singh expressed his ambition to win a major trophy for his team at the senior level and lift it with his own hands. Despite his underwhelming performance in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL) season, with just 168 runs in 11 innings at an average of 18.66, Rinku remains optimistic and motivated. Although Rinku has played 15 matches and 11 innings for India in T20 cricket since his debut in 2023, scoring 356 runs at an impressive average of 89.00 and a strike rate of 176.24, he has not been able to secure a spot in the main squad for the T20 World Cup. However, this setback has not dampened his spirits, and he remains determined to achieve his goals.

"Since I have played cricket, I have won some trophies at junior level. But not at the senior level. I am going to the World Cup. I want to hold the WC trophy, I hope we win. My dream is to win a big trophy for my country and lift it in my hands," said Rinku, who will travel to the T20 World Cup as a reserve player, in a video on the IPL website.

"Time kharab uska hota hai jiske haath pair nahi hote, hamare toh hain. Hamara time kharab nahi hai (Time is bad for someone who does not have his limbs, I have them. I am not going through a bad time)," added Rinku, displaying his optimism. Rinku fondly recalled his five successive sixes against Gujarat Titans in the final over bowled by Yash Dayal, which helped KKR secure a thrilling victory in a tense run-chase. He acknowledged that this feat changed his life, leading to increased recognition and opportunities, stating, "I used to be wondering all the time if I would get to play further. I used to tell myself that I would do well in the next game and I should keep working hard. I kept working hard. After those five sixes,

'It's not fair': Wasim Akram agrees with Irfan Pathan, slams ECB and England players for leaving IPL early

NEW DELHI. Former Pakistan captain Wasim Akram has expressed his disappointment over the absence of England players from the IPL 2024 playoffs due to national commitments, highlighting a growing concern in the cricketing world. In stark contrast to Sunil Gavaskar, who has proposed financial penalties, Akram believes that cutting salaries will not resolve the issue. Speaking to Sportskeeda, Akram stated, "If you cut salaries, will it affect anything if your team doesn't win after reaching the playoffs? You've put in all the hard work and in the last hurdle, your boys leave because they have to play for the country. It's not fair." Akram also criticized the England Cricket Board (ECB) for not issuing full No Objection Certificates (NOCs) to its players, causing disruptions for the IPL teams. In contrast, former Indian cricketer Sunil Gavaskar, writing in his column for Mid-Day, took a different approach, suggesting that financial penalties should be imposed on both players and their boards.

"I am all for players choosing country before anything else but having assured various franchises about their availability for the full season, if they pull out now, it will be letting down the franchises which probably

MS Dhoni on his fitness regime for IPL season: 'Nobody gives you discount for age'

New Delhi . Former India wicketkeeper-batter MS Dhoni recently opened up on his fitness regime ahead of an IPL season. Ever since his retirement from international cricket in 2020, the former India captain only plays for CSK in the IPL and hence it becomes difficult for him to maintain his fitness throughout the year.

Speaking about the competition in the T20 league, Dhoni revealed that since he's competing against young international players, he has to be at his best in terms of fitness, as there's no discount for the age factor. The 42-year-old further highlighted his training and eating habits and mentioned how not being on social media helps him. "The toughest thing is... I am not playing cricket throughout the year. So I have to be fit. Once I come, you are competing against youngsters who are fit and playing international cricket. Professional sport is not easy, nobody gives you discount for age. If you want to play, you have to be as fit as the other guy. Age doesn't really give that grace to you. So, eating habits, a bit of training and all those things are there. Social media, thankfully, I am not on social media, so there's less



distraction," said Dhoni at a promotional event in Dubai. Further speaking ahead, Dhoni highlighted the role of motorbikes and vintage cars in de-stressing him.

"Once I quit international cricket, I wanted to spend a bit more time with my family. But, at that same time, to be mentally active, to have that passion to stay focussed - for me, I love farming, for me it's the motorbikes, I

have started getting into vintage cars. These things de-stress me. If am stressed, I would maybe go to the garage, spend a couple of hours over there and I will just be fine, I would come back," he added. Dhoni on his love for pets

The 42-year-old also spoke about his love for pets and mentioned how they treat him the same even after a loss. "I have always felt

growing up with a pet, whether it's a cat or a dog... I prefer dogs though. They have unconditional love towards you. I have said this in a previous interview, even if I lose a game and come back, my dog greets me the same way," Dhoni further said.

There are widespread speculations on Dhoni's retirement ever since CSK got knocked out of the IPL 2024 following a loss against RCB by 27 runs in their last fixture. The Ranchi-born cricketer got dismissed for 25(13) during the game as he failed to help his side reach the target of 201 needed for their qualification.

As a result, CSK bowed out of the tournament without playing the knockouts just for the third time in their history. Dhoni looked at his vintage best in the season having scored 161 runs from 11 innings at an average of 53.66 and a strike rate of 220.54. His cameo of 20* (4) proved to be a deciding factor against MI as Chennai eventually won by 20 runs. Meanwhile, the 42-year-old was spotted in his hometown Ranchi a day after CSK got knocked out. It remains to be seen whether the legendary cricketer will come back to play for another season or will call time on his professional cricketing career.

Deepthi Jeevanji shatters record to win gold in 400m T20 class in World Para Championships

New Delhi. India's Deepthi Jeevanji clinched the gold medal with a world record time of 55.07 seconds in the women's 400m T20 category race at the World Para Athletics Championships here on Monday. Para Asian Games gold medalist Deepthi smashed American Breanna Clark's earlier world record of 55.12 seconds set during last year's edition of the championships in Paris.

Aysel Onder of Turkey was second with 55.19 seconds while Lizanshela Angulo of Ecuador was third with 56.68 seconds on the fourth day of competitions. The 20-year-old Deepthi had qualified for the final after winning her heat race in an Asian record time of 56.18 seconds on Sunday. The T20 category is meant for athletes with intellectual impairment.

WHO IS DEEPTHI JEEVANJI?

Born to daily wage labourer parents at Kallada village in Warangal district of Telangana, Deepthi had won the 400m T20 gold in the Hangzhou Asian Games last year with the then Asian record of 56.69

seconds. Interestingly, Deepthi has competed along with abled-bodied athletes in the junior as well as senior championships. She has won several medals



at the junior level while competing among abled-bodied athletes. She last competed in an able-bodied senior event at the 2022 National Inter-State Championships in Chennai where she ran 100m and 200m. Before that, she competed with able-bodied athletes during the 2021 National Senior

Inter-State Championships in Patiala and won a 200m bronze. She won a 200m bronze in the 2019 Asian U18 Championships (able-bodied) with a time of 24.78 seconds. Yogesh Kathuniya then added a silver in men's F56 category discus throw with an effort of 41.80 metres. The F56 category is meant for athletes who compete in field events from a seated position. Different athletes, including those with amputations and spinal cord injuries, compete in this class. Later in the day, Bhagyashri Mahavrao Jadhav picked up a silver in women's shot put F34 class with a throw of 7.56m. F34 category is for field athletes with movement affected to a low degree in the trunk and arms with highly affected legs. India's tally has now swelled to five medals - 1 gold, 2 silver and 2 bronze. On Sunday, Nishad Kumar (T47 high jump) and 200m runner Preethi Pal (T35 200m race) won a silver and bronze respectively.

Midas touch: How Pat Cummins changed SRH's DNA in IPL 2024

New Delhi. SRH clinched a coveted playoffs spot in the 2024 Indian Premier League, claiming an impressive second position. This achievement is all the more remarkable considering their recent struggles, having found themselves near the bottom of the points table in two of the last three seasons. Since the departure of David Warner as captain and player in 2021, the team has weathered significant turmoil, grappling with frequent changes in leadership and coaching staff, and failing to recapture the success of their heyday in the mid-2010s.

As anticipation surrounded the appointment of a new coach and captain prior to the 2024 season, doubts lingered over SRH's prospects once more. However, the arrival of Pat Cummins and Daniel Vettori heralded a dramatic transformation for the team, propelling them into a formidable batting powerhouse and securing their first playoffs berth since 2020.

BATTING DNA

The last thing that one hoped would happen

with a World Test Championship and World Cup-winning captain was that SRH would turn into a batting-heavy side. However, under the astute leadership of Cummins and Vettori, SRH embraced a bold new approach, shifting their focus towards batting prowess, a departure from their traditional reliance on bowling strength. Recognising the evolving nature of the T20 format, the management strategically acquired Travis Head in the IPL auction, a move that would prove instrumental in reshaping the team's fortunes for the season.

Abhishek Sharma, Head, Aiden Markram, Heinrich Klaasen, Rahul Tripathi and Abdul Samad - SRH had varied hitters through their rank this season, all of whom were given the license to go out and express themselves. The batters turned the tournament on their head in the first game itself, when they almost chased down a target of 210 runs at the Eden Gardens. SRH were beautifully placed to win the match, however, Harshit Rana's brilliance stopped them short of the target, just by 4 runs.

The vibe after the match was not of sorrow in the SRH camp, as they were able to establish a belief in them, owing to their second-half showing. IPL 2024: JFM earns World-Cup call up after incredible IPL 277, 287

From the KKR game, SRH took confidence and managed to post two of the biggest totals seen in the history of the Indian Premier League. The assault against MI (277) and RCB (287) made the opponents think twice about their batting prowess, a feat that SRH fed on for the rest of the season. CUMMINS' WINNING MENTALITY

It was pretty clear why the SRH side went gung-ho for Pat Cummins in the IPL auction. The team spent Rs 20.50 crore for the winning mentality, the purple patch that Cummins had in 2023. It was not a joke that Cummins had won the WTC Final, drawn the Ashes away from home and then won the World Cup in Indian soil. Cummins had the X-factor, and SRH desperately depended on it.

Australia players in IPL playoffs to skip warm-up matches before T20 World Cup

New Delhi. Top Australian players who are currently featuring in the Indian Premier League playoffs will not be playing the warm-up matches of the T20 World Cup 2024, head coach Andrew McDonald has confirmed. Speaking to cricket.com.au, McDonald has said that the likes of Pat Cummins, Travis Head, Glenn Maxwell, Cameron Green and Mitchell Starc will join the squad just before of the team's tournament opener against Oman on June 5. Australia take on Namibia and West Indies in warm-up matches at Port of Spain's Queens Park Oval. They will not have the services of their full squad for those two games. RR are the only team who



do not have any Australians playing in their side. KKR have one, while RCB and SRH have two each. "They'll have a staggered entry now that they've made the finals - they'll meet us in Barbados, and the guys who aren't in the IPL finals, will meet us in Trinidad," McDonald said of the Australian players who are in the IPL. "We're just trying to tailor the best individual preparation and bring it together as a team when we get to Barbados, then we have four or five days there leading into the first game against Oman," he further added. DC might retain Jake Fraser-McGurk: Ganguly The head coach further added that captain Mitchell Marsh will not be bowling in the warm-up games due to his recovery from hamstring injury. Marsh had to skip the majority of the IPL to recover ahead of the T20 World Cup, where he will be captaining Australia.

Australia's final T20 World Cup squad Mitch Marsh (c), Ashton Agar, Pat Cummins, Tim David, Nathan Ellis, Cameron Green, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Glenn Maxwell, Mitchell Starc, Marcus Stoinis, Matthew Wade, David Warner, Adam Zampa. Travelling reserves: Jake Fraser-McGurk, Matt Short

Wasim Akram picks 'confident and dangerous' KKR as favourites against SRH in Qualifier 1

Legendary Pakistan fast bowler Wasim Akram feels that KKR will have an upper hand over SRH in Qualifier 1 of the Indian Premier League 2024 due to their wicket-taking bowling attack.

New Delhi. Legendary Pakistan fast bowler Wasim Akram feels KKR will have an upper hand over SRH in Qualifier 1 of the Indian Premier League 2024 scheduled to be played on Tuesday, May 21 at Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad. Notably, the bowling attack of the Knight Riders has been in brilliant form in the ongoing season with four of their bowlers ranking in the top 15 in the list of the leading wicket-takers of the

ongoing season. Praising the KKR bowling attack, the former bowling coach of the franchise stated that they have an attack consisting of wicket-taking bowlers. The 57-year-old also lauded Mitchell Starc, the costliest player of the season being sold for a whopping 24.75 crore, for his match-winning spells against MI and LSG. This [bowling] is one of the main factors [behind KKR finishing on top of the points table]. There are wicket-taking bowlers. The teams that will take wickets will win the matches. Starc single-handedly won them a game as well. They are going in the final as a calm, confident, and very dangerous side for sure," Akram told Sportskeeda. The entire KKR bowling attack is in marvellous form this



season with Varun Chakravarthy (18 wickets), Harshit Rana (16 wickets), Andre Russell (15 wickets), Sunil Narine (15 wickets) and Mitchell Starc (12 wickets) amongst the wickets. Further speaking ahead, Akram stated that almost everyone in the team is in form but also mentioned that Phil Salt's absence will affect them. Almost

everyone performed; they played Manish Pandey in one game and he also delivered. So, that shows that everybody is happy and confident. They have aggression, but they have controlled aggression. They are not cocky or overconfident. No doubt, Phil Salt's absence will affect them," he added.

Phil Salt's phenomenal run in season

Notably, Salt is the second-highest run-scorer of the season so far for the Knight Riders with 435 runs to his name from 12 innings at an average of 39.54 and a strike rate of 182 with four fifties. However, the English opener had to fly back home for national commitments and is likely to be replaced by Rahmanullah Gurbaz in the Qualifier 1.

With the two best teams of the tournament against each other and a spot in the final up for grabs, Qualifier 1 is expected to be a highly anticipated encounter of the ongoing season.



Shama Sikander

Flaunts Curves In A Ravishing Black Swimsuit

Medha Shankr rose to fame with her performance in the film 12th Fail. The actress won everyone's hearts. Well, today Medha shared a series of sexy photos on social media which have gone viral on social media. The actress is seen flaunting her cleavage in a black colour outfit. Taking to her Instagram handle, Medha Shankr shared photos in which she is seen wearing a black colour off-shoulder top and pants. Her makeup game is also on point. Fans are calling her sexy and hottie in the comment section.

Medha Shankr made her cinema debut with the acclaimed "12th Fail". Starring Vikrant Massey and Shankr, the Hindi film is based on Anurag Pathak's best-selling novel about the incredible journey of IPS officer Manoj Kumar Sharma and IRS officer Shraddha Joshi. Directed by Vidhu Vinod Chopra, "12th Fail" was a surprise hit at the box office. Shankr, who played Shraddha Joshi in the movie, said she received a lot of love from all quarters once "12th Fail" started streaming. "I tasted success after the OTT release because of the kind of love I got from the industry and otherwise on the internet. My Instagram literally blew up. This is just my first film and people have been incredibly kind to me," the actress told PTI in an interview.

Shankr said she is full of gratitude.

"Twenty-five weeks in the cinemas. It's big. We're just cherishing that moment for now. It's definitely opened up more avenues, more opportunities. But right now, I'm just enjoying the moment. People have so much respect and regard for every single actor in the film and the filmmaker. They (audience) look at us as if we have given them some motivation and inspiration. That regard in somebody's eyes is very special," she added. "Every single day we have to restart in our lives because self-doubt is going to creep in from time to time. All the negative talk is going to creep in. But you have to believe in yourself and keep going. "You have to be your biggest critic and your biggest cheerleader and just give yourself the self-belief because nobody else is going to give it to you. So, you have to give it to yourself and keep going," she added.



Shah Rukh Khan, Gauri Khan And Karan Johar Visit Ritesh Sidhwani After His Mother's Death; Watch



In an unfortunate incident, producer Ritesh Sidhwani's mother passed away on May 17. Many celebrities were spotted visiting the hospital to offer their condolences. Today, Shah Rukh Khan, Gauri Khan, and Karan Johar visited Ritesh Sidhwani's house to offer their condolences. The video went viral. In the video, shared by Viral Bhayani, we can see Shah Rukh Khan, Gauri Khan and Karan Johar's car coming out of his residence. On May 18, the family released an official note reading, "We are deeply saddened to announce the passing away of Mrs. Leelu Sidhwani on May 17, 2024. Prayers will be held on May 18, 2024 at Quantum Park R/G level at 3.15 pm. Cremation will be held at Santacruz Hindu Crematorium at 4.30 pm. Quantum Park address: R/G Level, Union Park, Khar West." Meanwhile, Shah Rukh Khan is all set to reunite with Anirudh Ravichander. The music composer who worked with King Khan for his 2023 movie Jawan, has now been reportedly roped in for the actor's upcoming movie, King As reported by Pinkvilla, Shah Rukh Khan was "very happy" with the way Anirudh worked on Jawan's music and therefore, the actor has decided to work with him again. Reportedly, Anirudh has now been roped in to produce the theme music for SRK's King. The composer is said to be excited about the venture and is likely to begin working on the film in August 2024. "King is a one of its kind action thriller, that will introduce a new flavour of action to the audience. Shah Rukh Khan, Siddharth Anand and Sujoy Ghosh understand the importance of BGM for a film in this space and have roped in the best in business. Anirudh," a source cited by the entertainment portal claimed. Recently, the actor was speaking for Knight Club's King Khan Rules on Star Sports when he shared insights on his return to the shooting schedule for the year. Shah Rukh mentioned that last year, he had three movie releases (Pathaan, Jawan, and Dunki), which kept him constantly engaged. Considering the physical demands of his roles, he opted to take a break and focus on his IPL cricket team Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR).

Shriya Saran Spends Sunday Morning With Her Baby Girl Radha, Photo Goes Viral



Apart from being a stellar actress, Shriya Saran is also a doting mom to her little daughter Radha. Time and again, the actress is seen spending quality time with her. On Sunday morning, the actress was spotted with her baby girl, dishing out major mother-daughter goals. The pictures exuded warmth and love. Shriya Saran often shares fun moments and snippets on her Instagram handle, for which she enjoys a massive fan following. Earlier last week, the actress dropped a bunch of photos on Instagram, where she can be seen in various outfits and having a happy moment with her family, which screams "love love, love."

Actress Rashmi Desai reacted to the pictures by dropping heart emojis. Fans were not just in awe of her beauty but also cherished her family moments. A comment read, "Santoor mom and the happy kid." One more wrote, "Khubsurat (Beautiful)." Shriya Saran is a prominent figure in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, and English films. She made her acting debut in 2001 with the Telugu film Ishtam. Her first commercial success was Santosham, which was released in 2002. In 2003, she made her Bollywood debut with Tujhe Meri Kasam. She garnered praise and accolades for her acting prowess in the successful crime drama, Tagore. In 2007, she was roped in for Sivaji: The Boss, opposite Rajinikanth, which emerged to be the highest-grossing Tamil film at the time. Shriya recently appeared in the Disney+ Hotstar series titled Showtime. Directed by Mihir Desai and Archit Kumar, with Sumit Roy as the creator and co-writer, the web series boasts a star-studded cast including Naseeruddin Shah, Emraan Hashmi, Mahima Makwana, Mouni Roy, Rajeev Khandelwal, Shriya Saran, and Vishal Vashishtha.

Sobhita Dhulipala

Flaunts Her Hot Curves In A Golden Bodycon Dress

Sobhita Dhulipala is one of the most popular actresses in the industry. She has created a niche for herself through her performances in rich content-driven and commercial projects. The actress also enjoys a massive fan following on her social media handle and is often seen sharing fun moments and photoshoots on her Instagram handle. Maintaining that trajectory, Sobhita Dhulipala shared a bunch of sizzling pictures of herself. Sobhita Dhulipala posted photos on her Instagram on Saturday, showcasing herself in a stunning golden bodycon dress with full sleeves. She completed her outfit with elegant long earrings, a bun hairstyle, and high heels. She penned the caption, "Pranced about like a gilded dragon at the @magnum lounge in Cannes (bright button emoji) Sobhita Dhulipala also went completely dramatic for her second appearance at the Cannes film festival. Sobhita was in a daring mood, and wore an extremely low-cut purple jumpsuit, which plunged almost all the way to her belly button. The jumpsuit had a very glamorous feel to it, with flared trousers that covered her metallic purple heels. Sobhita took to her Instagram account to share a series of hot snaps and a sexy video in the racy outfit by Namrata Joshipura. She wrote, "Had such fun at last evening's @magnum party at the Cannes film festival, their theme was Euphoria, wonder, chill. The music was hard, the drag queens were burnin' it, the food was divine, the vibes were hitting the spot. Life's giving, baby." In 2016, Sobhita graced the film



and a sexy video in the racy outfit by Namrata Joshipura. She wrote, "Had such fun at last evening's @magnum party at the Cannes film festival, their theme was Euphoria, wonder, chill. The music was hard, the drag queens were burnin' it, the food was divine, the vibes were hitting the spot. Life's giving, baby." In 2016, Sobhita graced the film

festival to promote her film Raman Raghav 2.0, donning a sophisticated beige formal suit designed by Masaba Gupta. The ensemble featured a high-neck top layered beneath a single-breasted blazer, impeccably tailored for a sleek fit, and secured with a closure button. Sobhita is rumoured to be dating actor Naga Chaitanya, who was previously married to Samantha Ruth Prabhu. She recently opened up about her views on love during an interview with GQ India.

