TUESDAY
May 28, 2024

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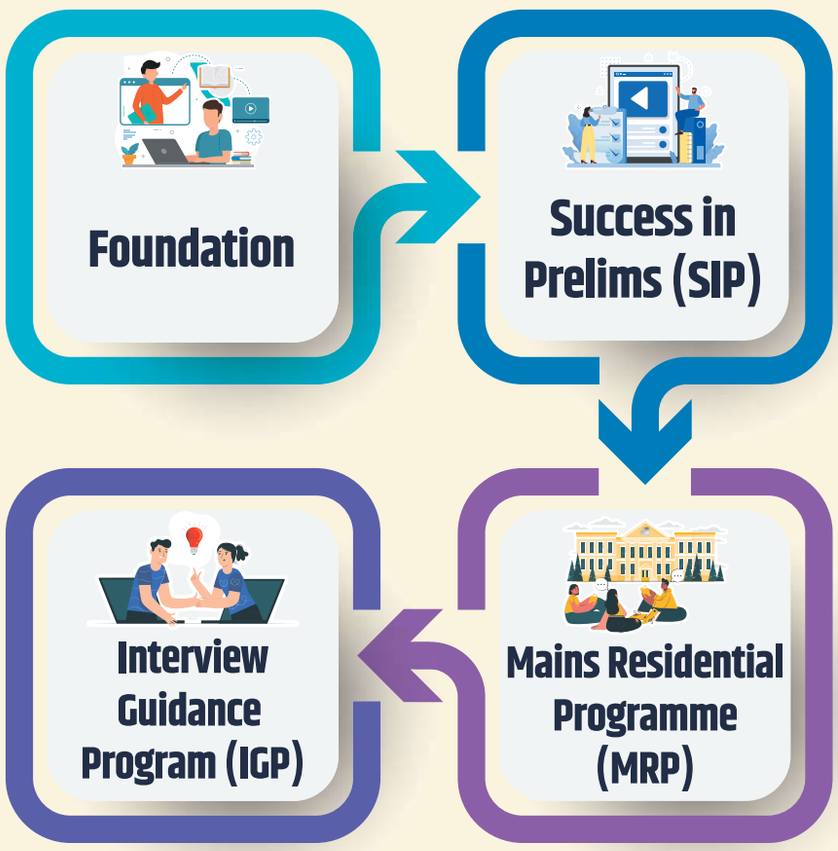
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RAJKOT FIRE

No faith in State machinery, says HC

NEWS » PAGE 10

MAJOR MISHAPS

'Playing to the gallery' and rail safety

Issues concerning loco pilots must be addressed

EDITORIAL » PAGE 6



EARLY EXIT

Nadal goes down to Zverev in first round

SPORT » PAGE 15

BJP's ads against Trinamool *prima facie* disparaging: SC

Top court says 'degenerating' debates during the Lok Sabha election process will harm voters' interests; the BJP says the advertisements were based on facts; Bench tells it 'your rival is not your enemy'; party to reply to the EC notice today

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court told the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Monday that degenerating debates during the Lok Sabha election would only harm voters' interests while finding advertisements published by the party against the Trinamool Congress "*prima facie* disparaging".

A Vacation Bench of Justices J.K. Maheshwari and K.V. Viswanathan refused to interfere with an injunction issued by the Calcutta High Court against the "derogatory" and "slanderous" advertisements.

"*Prima facie*, these advertisements are disparaging... You [BJP] can promote yourself, you can say you are the best... We [Supreme Court] cannot lend our hand to cause acrimony," Justice Viswanathan told BJP counsel, senior advocate P.S. Patwalia.

Justice Viswanathan said such advertisements "would not be in the interest of the voters. It will degenerate the debate". Justice Maheshwari referred to specific page numbers in the court's records, asking Mr. Patwalia to consider the advertisements contained in them.

'Rival, not enemy'

"Why are you precipitating things by coming here?" Justice Maheshwari asked. Justice Viswanathan told the BJP counsel that his client should keep in mind that "your rival is not your enemy". Mr. Patwalia submitted that the advertisements were based on facts.

The Single Judge of the High Court had passed the interim injunction order *ex parte*, without giving it a chance to be heard.

The Trinamool had already approached the Election Commission (EC) against the advertisements. The EC had issued a show cause notice to the BJP on May 18. The party was supposed to file its response on May 21.

Mr. Patwalia said the Trinamool had, while the EC proceedings were on, simultaneously approached the High Court on May 20. The High Court had proceeded to issue the injunction order, making it applicable till June 4.

"We want to file a reply by tomorrow to the EC notice. We will appear the day after tomorrow. Let the EC pass an appropriate order. We were not even heard by either the EC or the High Court," the senior counsel argued.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10

Set standards

Excerpts from the Model Code of Conduct on the general conduct of political parties and candidates:



- Criticism of other political parties, when made, shall be confined to their policies and programme, past record and work
- Refrain from criticism of all aspects of private life, not connected with the public activities of the leaders or workers of other parties
- Criticism of other parties or their workers based on unverified allegations or distortion shall be avoided

Nothing 'corrupt' if poll promises work out, says SC

NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court on Monday said that there is nothing corrupt about promises made in a manifesto working out eventually to the public's financial benefit. It said the view that commitments which help voters get richer amount to a "corrupt practice" was "far-fetched". » PAGE 12

IN BRIEF

Delhi blaze: 27 oxygen cylinders were on premises

NEW DELHI
Twenty-seven oxygen cylinders were found inside and outside the two-storey Baby Care New Born Child Hospital, as per the FIR registered in the case. Five of the cylinders had exploded during the blaze. » Page 2

Congress will blame EVMs for poll defeat: Shah

LUCKNOW
Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday said the NDA will return to power on June 4 and that Congress leaders will hold a press conference blaming EVMs for the defeat of the INDIA bloc. » Page 12

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IMD forecasts 'above normal' monsoon

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has retained its outlook of an 'above normal' monsoon this year. In April, the agency forecast June-September rainfall to be 6% above the normal of 87 cm. India's north-eastern States are expected to receive deficient rain.

The monsoon 'core zone', which encompasses most of central India and is critical for the kharif crop, and southern India are expected to see 'above normal' rainfall, Mrutunjay Mohapatra, Director-General, IMD, said on Monday.

The conditions for the monsoon over Kerala were "favourable" and the onset is likely in the next five days. Cyclone Remal, which made landfall in Bangladesh on Monday, had given a push to the eastern branch of the approaching monsoon system. The cyclone has nudged it closer to the Indian mainland though it was yet uncertain if the monsoon would begin in eastern India before Kerala – an extremely unusual, but not unprecedented phenomenon, said Mr. Mohapatra.

The IMD had earlier forecast the onset over Kerala on May 31, within an error window of four days.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10

Valley of death



Ghastly incident: People gather at an area hit by landslip at Yambali in Enga Province of Papua New Guinea on Monday. An official said more than 2,000 people were believed to have been buried alive in Friday's landslip. REUTERS (REPORT: PAGE 14)

Will return on May 31, says Prajwal in video

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Claiming that the sexual abuse cases over which he is now facing a Special Investigation Team (SIT) probe are "lies" and part of a "conspiracy to end his political career", Hassan MP and Janata Dal (Secular) leader Prajwal Revanna has said in a video released from an undisclosed location that he will present himself before the investigating authorities on May 31.

"I will appear before the SIT at 10 a.m. on Friday and completely cooperate with the investigation. I have faith in the judiciary, and I am confident that I will come out of this lie through the court," said Mr. Prajwal, who left the country soon after polls were held in Hassan on April 26, in a nearly three-minute video clip that was circulated on Monday. He, however, did not disclose his whereabouts in the undated video.

This is his first response after the case made headlines. "When the election was held on April 26, there was no case against me nor was the SIT set up. My foreign trip was pre-planned. It was about three to four days after I left that I received information, watching news channels on YouTube, and the SIT also issued notice for appearance," the MP said.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10

Six killed, life severely affected as Cyclone Remal batters south Bengal

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Six people were killed and life was severely affected as Cyclone Remal left behind a trail of destruction across the southern districts of West Bengal.

One person was killed in Kolkata when the roof of a structure collapsed in the Entally area and an elderly woman died on Mousuni Island at the mouth of the Bay of Bengal, when a tree fell on her house. A man and his son at Purba Bardhaman and a youth in North 24 Parganas were electrocuted. Later in the evening, a woman died from electrocution in the Metiabruz area of Kolkata.



A boat damaged in Cyclone Remal near the Sundarbans area in South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal on Monday. ANI

The weather formation, which made landfall on Sunday night, gradually weakened into a cyclonic storm on Monday morning and further weakened into a deep depression by evening. The wind speed had touched 120 kmph over Sagar Island on Sunday.

A preliminary report by the State government said more than two lakh people were evacuated to safer places.

The government said that nearly 2,500 houses were destroyed and 27,000 damaged. It said 1,700 electric poles had been brought down and many trees were uprooted in North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas.

Kolkata recorded 144 mm of rainfall in the 24 hours till 8.30 a.m. on Monday, resulting in widespread waterlogging. Several trees were uprooted in the metropolis and its adjoining coastal regions. While Haldia received 110 mm, Tamluk received 70 mm and Nimpith 70 mm.

Flights resumed at Kolkata's Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose airport on Monday morning.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10
MORE REPORTS » PAGES 12 & 14

DJ shot dead at Ranchi bar, accused held in Gaya

The Hindu Bureau
PATNA

A 30-year-old disc jockey (DJ) was shot dead at a bar in Ranchi after midnight on Sunday by a man with what appeared to be a sophisticated rifle.

The police on Monday arrested the accused, identified as Abhishek Singh, from Gaya in Bihar. The victim, Sandip Pramanik, a resident of West Bengal, worked at the bar. The CCTV footage of the incident shows a man, with his face covered, shooting at the chest of the DJ with a rifle from point-blank range.

INVOLVED IN SCUFFLE » PAGE 10

Israel's late-night strike on Rafah tent camp kills 45

Reuters
CAIRO/JERUSALEM

An Israeli airstrike triggered a massive blaze killing 45 people in a tent camp in the Gaza city of Rafah, officials said on Monday.

Palestinian families rushed to hospitals to prepare their dead for burial after the strike late on Sunday night set tents and rickety metal shelters ablaze.

Israel said initial investigations showed an attack against commanders of the Hamas set off the fire. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the strike a "tragic accident".

Survivors said families were preparing to sleep when the strike hit.



In penury: Palestinians search for food among burnt debris in the aftermath of an Israeli strike in Rafah on Monday. REUTERS

The attack took place in the Tel Al-Sultan neighbourhood, where thousands were sheltering after Israeli forces began a ground offensive in the east of Rafah over two weeks ago.

Video footage showed a fire raging in the darkness and people screaming in panic. More than half of the dead were women, children, and elderly people, health officials in Gaza said.

WORLD OUTRAGE » PAGE 14

Vivek Vihar hospital operated under govt. 'protection', says BJP

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Delhi BJP president (right) Virendra Sachdeva at the hospital site. FILE PHOTO

The BJP on Monday alleged that the Vivek Vihar hospital was allowed to run with more beds than sanctioned because of the Delhi government's "protection" even as several complaints regarding the violation were raised by the area residents.

Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva accused Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj's Officer on Special Duty (OSD) R.N. Das of trying to approve a bid for higher bed capacity by the owner of the hospital during its registration and inspection in 2021.

Ms. Das was serving as the Medical Superintendent for nursing homes at the time of the hospital's registration and inspection.

'Bid to link my name'

The accusation drew a sharp reaction from the Minister, who said the culprits won't be spared. "If Das is at fault, then action will be taken against him too," he said.

Mr. Bharadwaj also threatened to take legal action against anyone who tried to "link his name" to the 2021 inspection, saying he had taken charge as the Health Minister only in 2023.

Health Dept. inspection

However, Mr. Sachdeva alleged that during the inspection, the Health Department had found that the hospital had the capacity to admit only five children at a time.

"But then Mr. Das, based on the hospital owner's application, tried to increase its capacity to 10 beds," he alleged.

The BJP leader said Mr. Das enjoyed a good equation with former Health Minister Satyendar Jain, who is currently in judicial custody in a corruption case.

27 oxygen cylinders were kept in, outside hospital where blaze killed 7 infants: FIR

Hospital did not have fire alarms, water sprinklers, NCPCR notes in its report; owner and doctor on duty, arrested on Sunday, sent to three-day police custody; Vivek Vihar RWA chief says residents repeatedly complained to MCD, councillor, police that the facility was putting lives at risk, but to no avail

Alisha Dutta
NEW DELHI

Twenty-seven oxygen cylinders were found inside and outside the two-storey Baby Care New Born Child Hospital, as per the FIR registered in the case. Five of the cylinders had exploded during the blaze in the neonatal hospital in east Delhi's Vivek Vihar, in which seven newborns were killed and five injured.

It added that the hospital owner and its staff did not ensure the proper safety and security of the newborns.

"With the help of fire brigades and ambulances of CATS (Centralised Accident and Trauma Services) and Shaheed Bhagat Singh Seva Dal (an NGO), 12 newborns were rescued from the back of the building and were taken to another hospital," states the FIR accessed by The Hindu.

Dr. Naveen Khichi, the hospital owner, and Dr. Akash, who was on duty at the time of the incident, were remanded in police custody for three days after being produced before Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Vidhi Gupta Anand on Monday.

The two were arrested a day earlier and booked under various sections, including IPC Sections 304 (punishment for culpable homicide not amounting to murder) and 308 (attempt to commit culpable homicide).

Following the blaze, the newborns were moved to East Delhi Advance NICU Hospital. The seven infants who were declared dead on arrival by the hospital were shifted to the GTB Hospital mortuary for post-mortem. The bodies of five infants whose autopsies had been conducted were handed over to their parents on Monday, a senior officer said, adding that the remaining bodies would also be handed over after their post-mortem.

'Didn't ensure safety'

A delegation of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), which visited the site on Sunday and spoke to officials and family members of the victims, said in its findings that emergency exits were absent building, fire extinguishers were non-functional, and there was a lack of operational fire alarms and water sprinkler systems in the hospital.

The report, which was shared with the Lieutenant-Governor and the Police Commissioner, highlighted the lack of preparedness and safety compliance at the nursing home. The commission also noted that residents of the area, not the hospital staff, had reported the fire, indicating "a severe lack of emergency training" of the medical facility's employees.

Fire fury

A comparison of data on fire incidents in Delhi between 2023 and 2024 shows an increase in the number of distress calls by 38%, injuries by 61%, and deaths by 52%.

Month	Distress calls		Saved/injured		Deaths	
	2023	2024	2023	2024	2023	2024
January	1,171	1,204	36	51	12	16
February	941	1,032	39	42	2	16
March	1,230	1,328	48	62	14	12
April	1,672	2,357	42	78	3	4
May*	1,422	2,991	23	71	5	7

*Data till May 26 | Source: Delhi Fire Services



An FSL team inspecting the accident site on Monday (left); a parent grieving the loss of his 12-day-old child near the New Born Baby Care Hospital in east Delhi. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA/ANI

'Raised complaints'

Vivek Vihar's residents' welfare association (RWA) president Anand Goel told The Hindu that they had repeatedly complained about the threats posed by the medical facility to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, the area councillor, and the police, but to no avail.

"Residents who lived around the facility highlighted in every meeting that the medical facility housed such a high number of oxygen cylinders on the ground floor, creating a huge safety hazard," said Mr. Goel.

He added that those living near the two-storey building had informed the RWA about oxygen cylinders being unloaded, refilled, and loaded back on vehicles between 12 a.m. and 4 a.m.

Meanwhile, the Delhi government on Monday ordered all private and State-run hospitals to complete their fire safety audits by June 8. Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said the hospitals have also been told to submit a compliance report.

Audit of city hospitals

"Chief District Medical Officers have also been directed to conduct random checks at nursing homes," he said.

Mr. Bharadwaj said the Health Department had filed two cases against the hospital owner about deficiencies found during a surprise inspection conducted earlier. "The two cases are currently being heard by courts in Karkardooma and Tis Hazari," he said, adding that the hospital owner was found to have been running another medical facility in Paschim Puri.

"It had been learnt that oxygen refilling was being carried out at the hospital," the Minister said. He added that it is illegal for hospitals to have refilling systems since it can lead to a fire.

He also said that he would request the government to give bravery awards to two nurses and five residents who put their lives at stake to save the lives of the infants.

Bibhav Kumar denied bail, will approach HC

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's personal assistant Bibhav Kumar was denied bail by a court here on Monday in connection with the alleged assault on Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) Rajya Sabha member Swati Maliwal. Mr. Kumar will now approach the High Court for bail, AAP said in a statement.

Mr. Kumar was arrested by the Delhi police on May 18 after the Rajya Sabha member alleged that she had been assaulted at the CM House on May 13. According to the FIR lodged by Ms. Maliwal on May 17, the CM's aide hit her on the chest, stomach, and pelvic area.

Ms. Maliwal, who appeared in person before the judge, broke down while opposing Mr. Kumar's bail application and said her safety would be at risk if the accused was let out of jail.

She also spoke at length about the threats being issued to her on social media and claimed that she was being targeted by AAP leaders and the party's social media team.

"If he is allowed to come out, my life and my family's life would be in grave danger," Ms. Maliwal told the court.

The counsel representing Mr. Kumar countered that the Rajya Sabha member's allegation and the FIR against his client were "concocted".

Two-tier security for EVMs: CEO

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) P. Krishnamurthy on Monday said the poll panel has put in place a two-tier security arrangement around the strongrooms where electronic voting machines (EVMs) have been kept following the May 25 Lok Sabha election in Delhi.

The inner perimeter is being guparded by the Central Armed Paramilitary Forces personnel and the outer limit by the State Armed Police, he said.

Mr. Krishnamurthy said all seven strongrooms in the Capital's seven Lok Sabha constituencies are under constant CCTV surveillance and that logbooks are being maintained to record visits of authorised officials.

A control room has also been set up adjacent to the each facility with mandatory videography of every official visit. Mr. Krishnamurthy said agents of parties can closely monitor the security arrangements at the strongrooms through CCTV monitors.

Govt. hospitals to reserve beds for patients of heatstroke

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said on Monday that every Delhi government hospital will reserve two beds for heatstroke patients as the ensuing heatwave prompted the weather department to issue a red alert for the Capital.

According to the Delhi Minister, five beds will be reserved at Lok Nayak Hospital.

Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department predicted severe heatwave conditions in the Capital as the maximum temperature in the city settled at 45.1 degrees Celsius, five notches above normal for the season.

Timings
DELHI

TUESDAY, MAY. 28			
RISE	05:25	SET	19:13
RISE	23:49	SET	09:31
WEDNESDAY, MAY. 29			
RISE	05:25	SET	19:14
RISE	00:00	SET	10:38
THURSDAY, MAY. 30			
RISE	05:25	SET	19:14
RISE	00:28	SET	11:44

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	45	29
Safdarjang	45	29
Palam	46	31

Delhi Palam Today
46°C Heat wave to prevail. Morning will be slight warm. The weather will be very hot and uneasy during the day. Night also will be uneasy.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
47°C Severe heat wave to continue. Morning will be uneasy.The day will be very hot and uneasy. Night will be slight warm.

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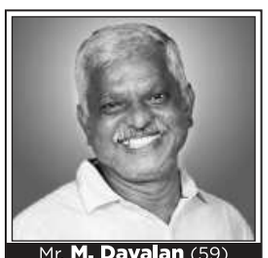
You departed for your heavenly abode at a very young age. With heartfelt gratitude, we reminisce your love, affection, care and concern you showered on us despite your ill-health. We also cherish fond memories of our late father, your mother & your sister who followed your footprints inculcating moral values in upbringing and shaping ourselves for a glorious future.

"Your Eternal Spirits Would Continue to Guide us in every walk of our Lives."

OM SHANTHI.

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Divisional Railway Manager (Commercial), East central Dhanbad, on behalf of President of India invite open e-Auction through IREPS portal vide website www.IREPS.gov.in for awarding the contract. Details are as under:-
Sr. No. i, 1. e-Auction Catalogue: ii, Parking, e-Auction Catalogue no.: iii, Parking-34-24, Scheduled date and time of e-Auction starting details : iv, 07.06.2024 From 15:00 hrs, Details of work and name of station : v, Two (02) Wheeler, Three (03) Wheeler & Four (04) Wheeler Parking Stand at North side of Gomoh station for 03 years, Sr. No. i, 2, e-Auction Catalogue: ii, ATM, e-Auction Catalogue no.: iii, ATM-10-24, Scheduled date and time of e-Auction starting details : iv, 07.06.2024 From 15:00 hrs, Details of work and name of station : v, e-Auction for Installation of Automated Teller Machine (ATM) at 11 locations over Dhanbad Division for the period of five years i.e., Dhanbad (beside south side station, building), Renukut, Gomoh, Barkakana, Chopan, Singrauli, Parasnath, Hazaribagh Road, Chandrapura, Tori, Garhwa. All prospective bidder are advised to visit the website www.ireps.gov.in for full details and participate against the above mentioned e-Auction as per schedule given vide column No. iv., Railway Administration reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason what so ever.
ACM/DHN
Divisional Railway Manager (Commercial)
East Central Railway/Dhanbad
PR/00353/DHN/COML/N/24-25/44

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY
OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE No. SRDEE-TRD-IZN-2024-25-T02 Dated 27.05.2024
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/TRD, North Eastern Railway, Izzatnagar for and on behalf of President of India, invites sealed "OPEN" E-Tender for the following work. S.No. 1. Name of work: OHE work for provision of 600M new stabling line extension of existing stable line and washing line of 600M and making shunting neck at CBJ end in Izzatnagar Division of N.E. Railway. Tender Reference No.: SRDEE-TRD-IZN-2024-25-T02; Approx. Cost (in ₹): ₹73,15,269.36; Earnest Money/Bid Security(in ₹): ₹1,46,300/-; Cost of Tender documents (in ₹): 0.00; E-Tender closing date and Time: 20.06.2024 at 11:00; Completion Period: 12 Months. • E-Tender Online will be submitted upto 11:00 hrs. on date: 20.06.2024 • For full details and submission of bid kindly visit the Official website of Indian Railways i.e. www.ireps.gov.in
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-Sd-
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238 AIR



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313 AIR



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517 AIR



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541 AIR



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551 AIR



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555 AIR



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हिन्दी माध्यम

दिल्ली: 14 मई, 9 AM | 11 जून, 9 AM

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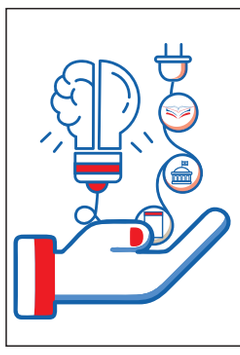
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INBRIEF



PM to visit Kanniyakumari for two days of meditation

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to visit Kanniyakumari on May 30 and stay there for two days to meditate at the Vivekananda Rock Memorial. Police sources said that he will arrive on the evening of May 30 and visit the memorial on May 31 for a day-long meditation. He is expected to leave on June 1. "If the Prime Minister decides to meditate on June 1, too, he will be at the memorial for a second day, before leaving Kanniyakumari," a police source said. Mr. Modi's latest trip to the southern most tip of peninsular India comes a day ahead of the seventh and final phase of Lok Sabha election polling on June 1.

Undertrial hurls slipper at magistrate inside courtroom

An undertrial prisoner who was taken to a local court for hearing in a case on Monday hurled his slipper at the magistrate inside the courtroom in Bhilwara district of Rajasthan, police said. Rasik Mohammad, ASI, City Kotwali police station said Ismail, who is under judicial custody in a case of theft, was taken to the court of additional chief judicial magistrate from jail. "He suddenly took out his slipper and threw it at the magistrate," Mr. Mohammad said, adding that the accused was sent to judicial custody again. A case is being registered against the accused by the magistrate and he will be arrested on production warrant, the ASI said. PTI

Record voter turnout in J&K LS election, Assembly poll to be held soon: EC

CEC Rajiv Kumar says active poll participation echoes faith of the people in democratic process; this will be first Assembly election since the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution in August 2019

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI



Voters waiting to cast their vote for the sixth phase of the Lok Sabha election at a booth in Anantnag district. FILE PHOTO

The Election Commission on Monday said the voter turnout in Jammu and Kashmir this time was the highest in any Lok Sabha election in the past 35 years, with the Kashmir valley witnessing a "massive" 30% jump in poll participation compared to 2019.

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar said there was a 25% increase in the number of candidates contesting election this time since 2019.

"This active participation is a huge positive for the Assembly elections to be held soon so that the democratic process continues to thrive in the Union Territory," he said.

The poll panel also said the combined voter turnout at the polling stations for the entire Union Territory with five Lok Sabha seats was 58.46%.

On Saturday, Mr. Kumar had said that encouraged by the voter turnout in Jammu and Kashmir in this Lok Sabha poll, the Election Commission will "very soon" initiate the process of conducting the Assembly poll in the Union Territory.

'30% jump from 2019'

The voter turnout of 50.86% from the three parliamentary constituencies in the Kashmir valley echoes the faith of the people in the democratic process, the Election Commission said, adding the poll participation percentage witnessed a 30-point jump from the 2019 general election where it was only 19.16%.

The three seats in the Valley – Srinagar, Baramulla and Anantnag-Rajouri – recorded a voter turnout of 38.49%, 59.1% and 54.84%, respectively, all of which have been the highest in the last three decades.

The other two seats in the Union Territory – Udhampur and Jammu – which fall in the Jammu region, recorded 68.27% and 72.22% voter turnout respectively, it said.

The Election Commission said that an increasing number of young people have asserted their faith and embraced democracy in a big way.

Another interesting perspective is the people in the age group of 18-59 years constitute over 80% of the electorate in each of the five Lok Sabha seats of the Union Territory, it underlined.

The high poll percentage in the 2024 Lok Sabha poll is reflective of their faith in democracy, which is a positive and heartening development, the poll panel stressed.

Whenever an Assembly election is held in Jammu and Kashmir, it will be the first since the August 2019 abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution and the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories with the other being Ladakh, which has one Lok Sabha seat and no provision for a legislative Assembly.

PM abandoned H.P. in time of crisis: Priyanka

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH



Priyanka Gandhi Vadra with Anand Sharma, Congress candidate for the Kangra seat, in Chamba on Monday. ANI

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Monday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of abandoning Himachal Pradesh in its hour of need when disaster struck the State after heavy rain in 2023, despite making claims that he considers it "his home".

Addressing meetings in Chamba and Shahpur in the Kangra Lok Sabha constituency, where former Union Minister Anand Sharma is in the fray, she said Mr. Modi neither visited the State during the crisis nor provided financial aid to the affected people.

Ms. Vadra said the Congress never compromises on public interest, and blamed the Centre's policies for rising inflation and unemployment, citing the Agniveer scheme as a prime example. She said under the scheme, youth are left jobless after four years, receive no pension, and lack financial support and status if martyred.

Apart from repealing the scheme on coming to power at the Centre, the Congress government will give women ₹8,500 per month and 50% reservation, provide farmers legal guarantee for minimum support prices, and fill 30 lakh vacant posts, she said.

'Double service'

While the BJP talks about a "double-engine" government, the Congress will focus on "double service", the party leader said.

All guarantees are being fulfilled by the Congress government in Himachal Pradesh despite challenges, Ms. Vadra said. With clear intentions, any government can achieve good results, and the Congress government has demonstrated this, she said.

"The old pension scheme has been restored and the announcement of ₹1,500 as pension to women has been made," the Congress leader said.

T.N. Forest Minister's stay at 'illegal resort' along elephant corridor raises questions

Rohan Premkumar
UDHAGAMANDALAM

Tamil Nadu Forest Minister M. Mathiventhan's vacation to the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR), where he has chosen to stay in one of the resorts located along the notified elephant corridor in Sigur, has raised concern among conservationists.



M. Mathiventhan

According to official sources, Mr. Mathiventhan had been staying in Jungle Hut for the past few days with friends and family. Jungle Hut was among the 12 resorts against which orders were passed by the Supreme Court-appointed Segur Plateau Elephant Corridor Inquiry Committee in 2023.

The committee had observed that the resorts – Jungle Hut, De Rock, Rolling Stones, Forest Hills Farm and Guest House, Jungle Retreat, and Gordon Jungle Properties – had a total of 74 buildings on their premises. This showed that it was "amply evident that these are not small bona fide residential buildings, but big commercial constructions without all requisite approvals", the committee had observed, in the orders passed last year. The orders directed the Nilgiris district administration to initiate "necessary action" against the owners, and called for the illegal buildings to be demolished.

Officials from the Nilgiris administration said a portion of the resort where Mr. Mathiventhan was staying was allowed to function by the administration. However, no further action had been initiated to demolish the buildings along the elephant corridor, raising concern among conservationists that government officials were colluding with resort owners in maintaining status quo in the region.

K. Mohanraj, a noted conservationist from Tamil Nadu, said the Forest Minister staying in a resort built in the elephant corridor raised questions of impropriety.

Minister's response

When contacted, Mr. Mathiventhan, told *The Hindu* that he was staying in Mudumalai and in the resort "on vacation".

BJP biggest party, says Fadnavis as NCP eyes larger share of seats in *Mahayuti* for Assembly election

Shoumojit Banerjee
PUNE



Chief Minister Eknath Shinde of the Shiv Sena with his two deputies, Devendra Fadnavis of the BJP and Ajit Pawar of the NCP. FILE PHOTO

> Leaders of all three parties of the alliance will sit together to decide a seat-sharing formula for the Assembly election... our allies will be shown due respect in the process
>
> **DEVENDRA FADNAVIS**
> Deputy CM and BJP leader

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Monday underscored that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is numerically the biggest party in the 288-member State Legislative Assembly and will get the maximum share of seats within the ruling *Mahayuti* for the Assembly election likely to be held in October this year.

The BJP shares power with the Shiv Sena led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar of the Nationalist Congress Party.

The senior BJP leader's remarks came after Mr. Pawar, along with senior NCP leaders Chhagan Bhujbal and Sunil Tatkare, spoke about getting a larger share of seats in the Assembly poll at a State executive meeting of the party in Mumbai earlier in the day.

Seat-sharing talks for the Lok Sabha election, which concluded in the State in the fifth phase on May 20, had witnessed a deadlock within the tripartite alliance over key seats.

Staking claim

"Elections are a test for party workers. No one should be over the top with joy following victory, nor should one be disheartened by defeat," said Mr. Pawar, addressing his party workers at the meet. He also staked claim to the Satara Rajya Sabha seat.

Mr. Bhujbal made it clear that the NCP would have to be given a larger share of seats in the Assembly election than it had received in the general election. "Only if we are given 80-90 seats can we hope to win 50 or 60 of them. Whatever may have happened this time [Lok Sabha seat-sharing process], in the coming election, the NCP should get its rightful share. When we entered [the *Mahayuti* coalition], we were told we would be given our fair share of seats," he said.

Mr. Pawar, who split the NCP founded by his uncle Sharad Pawar in July last year, was given only four Lok Sabha seats (Baramati, Shirur, Raigad, Dharashiv) of the total 48. The BJP, with the most MPs in the State, fielded candidates in 29 seats. Mr. Shinde, who drove a hard bargain with the BJP, managed to secure 15 seats for the Shiv Sena.

This seat-sharing arrangement upset the ruling NCP faction, which had been negotiating with the BJP high command for at least eight seats.

Responding to Mr. Bhujbal's remarks, Mr. Fadnavis said the BJP will get the maximum share by virtue of being the biggest party, but assured its allies in the *Mahayuti* that they will be accorded due respect in the seat-sharing process for the Assembly poll.

"Leaders of all the three parties of the alliance will sit together to decide a proper seat-sharing formula for the Assembly election. Obviously, BJP will get the maximum number of seats as it is the biggest party. However, our allies will be shown due respect in the process," he said.

In the 2019 Assembly election, the BJP had contested 122 seats and won 105, while its then ally Shiv Sena (undivided) led by Uddhav Thackeray fielded candidates in 63 seats and won 56. The undivided Nationalist Congress Party, which was then part of the Opposition Congress-led UPA, secured 41 seats.

'In my home town, I have a new identity as an anti-nationalist'

Mehul Malpani
JABALPUR (M.P.)

Former stand-up comic Nalin Yadav, who was put behind bars in 2021 along with fellow comic Munawar Faruqui, has said his career ended after the case and that he and his family are still being harassed by local groups in his home town near Indore.

Mr. Yadav, 28, made the remarks in an Instagram post he shared on May 26. He claimed that he and his 20-year-old brother, Akash, were being harassed for three years by some people and shared a video of an alleged incident from March.

While his Instagram profile still reads "comedian", Mr. Yadav told *The Hindu* that he has completely given up comedy and is now managing with irregular jobs in film production. A native of Pitampur town in Dhar district, he had left his home town shortly after being released from jail. His brother, however, continues to live there.

Mr. Faruqui was arrested on January 1, 2021, before he could perform during a show in Indore, for allegedly hurting religious sentiments through comments in his previous shows.

Mr. Yadav, who had opened the Indore show for him, and four others, including the show organisers, were also arrested. The arrests were made based on a complaint from Eklavya Gaur, son of Indore MLA and former Mayor Malini Gaur.

While Mr. Faruqui spent over a month in jail in Indore, Mr. Yadav was released on bail after 57 days.



Nalin Yadav says career ruined, still being harassed in home town after arrest in 2021 Munawar Faruqui case. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

'Family is broke'

"In my home town, I have a new identity as an anti-nationalist. A few people, who are relatives and known affiliates of the ruling party, have been harassing my brother and me for three years now," he wrote in the post and said his family is "broke financially and mentally". Speaking to *The Hindu*, he said some policemen suggested that he leave the town. "My brother was 16 back then and I could not take him along as I had no source of income," said Mr. Yadav, whose parents are no more.

He also said he had to struggle to file FIRs after each incident. "The police were filing a counter FIR against us almost every time," Mr. Yadav said.

He received a notice to be produced before a local court in connection with the case last month and plans to challenge it in the High Court.

Pitampur Superintendent of Police (City) Amit Kumar Mishra said he had only recently taken charge there. "I will look into the matter in detail," he told *The Hindu*.

Divergent trajectories

Pointing out the difference in his and Mr. Faruqui's career trajectories, with the latter going on to win the popular reality show *Bigg Boss* in 2022, Mr. Yadav said, "We have not been in touch since we got out of jail."

"I was a young comic and had just got the opportunity to open the Indore show for Faruqui. There was no objection on my jokes. People like me just got caught in the middle of a political game," he said.

Mr. Yadav said he struggled to find work in Delhi and Mumbai after the controversy as "people were scared of being associated" with him.

He started working for a digital media agency in Indore in January this year, but was fired in March after they found out about the 2021 case, he said.

In his Instagram post, Mr. Yadav said, "Today, I am not a comedian anymore. I am not that person who can find laughter in disguise. We are just waiting for justice one day, though I'm not so hopeful about that..."

Activists seek judicial probe into anti-Naxal encounters in Bastar

The Hindu Bureau
RAIPUR

Tribal rights activists from across Chhattisgarh converged in Raipur on Monday raising the demand of a judicial probe into the killings in anti-Naxal operations in Bastar in recent months.

At a press conference at the Raipur Press Club, volunteers from the Chhattisgarh Bachao Andolan (CBA), an umbrella body of activist groups, Dantewada-based human rights activist and lawyer Bela Bhatia, and tribal leader Manish Kunjam specifically mentioned a recent encounter in Bijapur's Pidiya village where 12 tribals were gunned down by security forces who termed them Naxals.

While the Opposition Congress, too, has raised questions over the encounter, the State government has dismissed queries over the encounter and maintained that all those killed were Naxalites.

At the press conference, Mr. Kunjam, who has been an MLA in the past, questioned the government's version and said that the police camps were being set up to clear land for mining.

Ms. Bhatia said the number of "fake encounters" has gone up.

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ISSN 0971 - 751X

INBRIEF



Jagan attack case: verdict on bail plea of accused reserved

A Vijayawada court on Monday reserved its judgment on the bail petition filed by Vemula Satish, prime accused in the case of the stone-throwing at Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. The verdict will be pronounced on Tuesday. Mr. Satish had moved the bail petition on April 30 mainly on the grounds that he was falsely implicated and a confessional statement was obtained from him under duress.

Bypoll for one MLC seat in Telangana sees 69% turnout

The election season in Telangana has come to an end for the time being with polling for the Khammam-Nalgonda-Warangal Graduates constituency byelection of the Telangana Legislative Council passing off peacefully on Monday. Counting of votes is scheduled for June 5. Polling was around 69% by 4 p.m. and was peaceful with no untoward incidents reported. The constituency had 4,63,839 eligible graduate voters across three joint districts.

After fracas at camp, KSU suspends two office-bearers

The Kerala Students' Union (KSU) has suspended its State general secretary Ananthakrishnan for causing infamy to the Congress's student organisation. It has suspended KSU Ernakulam district secretary Anjelo George Tito from primary membership. The KPCC enquired into the revelry and skirmishing at a KSU study camp at the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Development Studies in Thiruvananthapuram and recommended the disciplinary action.

Crime Branch questions bar owner over bribery charge

Probe is based on Excise Minister's complaint; UDF accuses the government of luring bar lobby for bribes to formulate 'permissive' policy; State says it is a plot to undermine trust in LDF's policies

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A Crime Branch team on Monday interrogated Animon, an office-bearer of the bar owner's association, in Kerala. The move comes after a voice note, purportedly from Mr. Animon, surfaced, urging members to raise funds to allegedly influence the government's liquor policy.

The United Democratic Front (UDF) has accused the government of luring the bar lobby for bribes by dangling the prospect of a "permissive liquor" policy. It also alleged that Tourism Minister P.A. Mohamed Riyas had schemed the move by tasking his officials to discuss the proposal at a stakeholder meeting.



Youth Congress workers stage a protest near the official residence of Excise Minister M.B. Rajesh on Monday. S. MAHINSHA

Sensing a 'conspiracy' to undermine public trust in the government's policy-making process, Excise Minister M.B. Rajesh sought a police inquiry. Subsequently, the State Police Chief constituted a Crime Branch team to probe the complaint. Mr. Riyas termed the accusation as patently false.

The team questioned Mr. Animon at one of his bar hotels in Kottayam district. The bar owner reportedly echoed the association's line that money was collected to purchase a 28-cent plot to build an office in Thiruvananthapuram. Mr. Animon had posted the voice note in a 45-member group of bar hotel owners. He reportedly told the police that he was under pressure from the association's State leadership to raise funds for the project. He had posted the message in desperation.

HC reserves order on AAP plea for allotment of land for party office

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday reserved its order on the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) plea seeking the allocation of land for its office by the Centre on account of being recognised as a national party. The court said it is likely to pass an order on the issue of temporary allotment of the space on June 5.

AAP had moved the court last year by filing two separate petitions seeking a piece of land in the national capital for the construction of its office in view of its status as a recognised national party or allotment of a housing unit on a licence basis for the time being.

Senior advocate Rahul Mehra, representing AAP, said a national party is entitled to a temporary office until land is given to it for the construction of a permanent party office.

He said in the instant case, one of the Ministers in the AAP government was willing to forgo his occupation of a unit on Deen Dayal Upadhyay (DDU) Marg in favour of the party.

The lawyer representing the Central government said the allotment has to come from the general pool and there is no exclusive list for political parties.

He said AAP was offered land in 2014 for the purposes of its offices, but the same was not accepted and currently the allotment of a housing unit from the pool was not feasible.

As far as the DDU Marg unit was concerned, he said it has to be returned to the government. The AAP counsel had earlier said an alternative housing must be allotted to the party as its current office has to be vacated by June 15.

In March, the Supreme Court granted AAP time till June 15 to vacate its Rouse Avenue office after noting that the land was allotted to the Delhi High Court for expanding judicial infrastructure.

Woman who filed POCSO case against Yediyurappa dead

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The woman, who had filed a complaint against former Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa, accusing him of sexually assaulting her 17-year-old daughter at his residence here, died in a private hospital in the city on Sunday.

According to police sources, the 53-year-old visited a private hospital on Sunday night after she had difficulty breathing. The sources said she died at the hospital after failing to respond to treatment. The sources, quoting the hospital, said the woman had lung cancer.

The woman was accompanied to the hospital by her daughter, who is the victim in the POCSO case. The girl had messaged one of the witnesses in the case, saying her mother was in hospital, around 9.21 p.m. She later texted saying her mother was no more.

3 policemen found partying at criminal's house; 2 suspended

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

A raid conducted by the Angamaly police in Kerala at the house of a goon on Sunday under Operation AAG left the State police red-faced as a few officers were found enjoying the hospitality of the criminal.

The raiding party came across three personnel – two drivers and a civil police officer – attached to the Alappuzha police at the house. The trio gave a statement to the effect that a Crime Branch Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) had taken them to the house. It is learned that the personnel had made a stopover at the house of one Thammanam Faisal.

The Alappuzha District Police Chief suspended two of the personnel pending inquiry and the other officer, reportedly attached to the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau, is also likely to face similar disciplinary action shortly.

Alamgir Alam's remand extended for 3 days

The Hindu Bureau
PATNA

The remand of Jharkhand Rural Development Minister Alamgir Alam, arrested in the money tender scam has been extended for three more days on Monday, for the second time. Mr. Alam, who was arrested by the Directorate of Enforcement on May 15 in a money laundering case, was produced in the Ranchi special PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act) Court on Monday after the completion of his extended five-day remand period.

Investment in technology will secure boundaries: Dhankhar

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Monday said a country that invests in technological advancement will have secure boundaries. Mr. Dhankhar, who visited National Aerospace Limited (NAL) and laid the foundation stone of the Centre for Carbon Fiber and Prepregs in Bengaluru, said, "Gone are the days of conventional warfare. I have before me men in uniform. They know the changing dynamics of warfare."

He said how a country positions itself and how strong it will be will be determined in laboratories like NAL. "How our position will happen, how strong we will be, will be determined in laboratories like this. And the good thing is, our future is bright because you people are working with that intellect, education, which is unrivaled in the world," he added. He said India is one of the countries that are focusing on disruptive technologies. "There are five to six countries focusing on that (disruptive technologies). Our quantum computing system that will be of extreme awareness to you all is in place," Mr. Dhankhar said.

He also praised NAL's contribution to the country's aerospace sector. "In the last two years, India's space accomplishments have come to be globally recognised.

He witnessed the flying display of the Hansa NG, the indigenous flying trainer designed and developed by NAL at the HAL airport.

Net-working



Fish eye: Two fishermen trying to catch fish in the western canal of Prakasam Barrage in Krishna river in Vijayawada on Monday. K.V.S. GIRI

Kerala HC to advise courts to strictly follow guidelines in sex assault-related cases

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

The Kerala High Court Registrar (District Judiciary) on Monday informed the High Court that the Registry is in the process of issuing a directive to the subordinate courts to adhere to the guidelines regarding the safe handling of sexually explicit material in sexual assault cases.

The submission was made in a report filed in response to a directive by Justice K. Babu on a petition by the government seeking a directive to all subordinate courts to follow the High Court guidelines on such material.

Recently, the High Court had issued guidelines to the police and the courts to ensure that any such material is not accessed illegally.

Confidential items

The report said that the administrative committee of the High Court would consider whether the guidelines can be adopted with respect to handling of electronic and other records involving confidential/objectionable items and whether they need to be made applicable to the High Court as well.

The committee would also consider whether the matter needs to be referred to the Rule Committee constituted under Section 123 of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, to examine the necessity of framing new rules/amendment to existing rules to implement the guidelines, the report said.

Director-General of Prosecution T.A. Shaji submitted that the State government had taken all measures to comply with the High Court guidelines issued for the police.

The court closed the petition of the government in view of the submissions by the High Court Registry and the Director-General of Police of the State.

Using AI to increase student enrolment

The AI-powered campaign is aimed at spreading awareness about advantages of studying in the State-run school; the headmaster gets the idea from her daughter, who is studying B.Tech

P. Sridhar
RAJANNA SIRCILLA

In a novel campaign to boost enrolment in the Zilla Parishad High School at Vattemla in Rajanna Sircilla district of Telangana, the school headmaster K. Suryanarayana is spearheading an AI-powered campaign on social media to increase student enrolment in the State-run school in the next academic year.

The novel idea struck him when his daughter, who is studying in third year B.Tech at IIITDM-Kancheepuram, explained to him about the multifarious applications of AI during her recent visit to her native place for summer vacation.



K. Suryanarayana. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Translating the idea into action, he claimed to have created a 'virtual AI anchor', a computerised avatar, to highlight the benefits of studying in the ZPHS, Vattemla.

"The 'AI anchor' reads out a text in Telugu highlighting the salient features of the ZPHS such as English medium instruction, well-qualified teachers, mid-day meals, free textbooks, two pairs of school uniform, digital lessons through T-Sat channel and so on," Mr. Suryanarayana said.

He said efforts are on to increase student enrolment in the school.

The campaign is aimed at spreading awareness about the advantages of studying in the State-run school endowed with well-qualified and experienced teachers. The ZPHS, Vattemla, recorded 100% results in the SSC exams last year.

Modi's Mysuru visit: Karnataka govt. to settle hotel expenses

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Karnataka government decided to bear the hospitality expenses of PM Narendra Modi, incurred during his visit to Mysuru in 2023 to participate in a programme organised to mark the 50th year of Project Tiger.

Disclosing this to mediapersons on Monday, Forest Minister Eshwar B. Khandre said the State government had decided to end the row over clearing pending bills by bearing the hospitality expenses that amounted to ₹80 lakh.

He explained that normally it was a practice that the State would take care of the hospitality of dignitaries such as the President and the Prime Minister during their visit to the State. However, the State had kept itself away from the programme in 2023 as the model code of conduct was in force for the Assembly elections.

He noted that the entire programme had been organised by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA). While the total expenses of the programme had touched ₹6.33 crore, the NTCA had paid only ₹3 crore to the State. Following this, it had not been possible to clear the hospitality expenses.

BJP slams Revanth over purchase of paddy

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

The BJP has questioned the silence of Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy in the ongoing war of allegations and counter-allegations on the paddy procurement process and demanded a high-level probe either by a High Court judge or the CBI.

On Monday, former MLA N.V.S.S. Prabhakar alleged that Mr. Reddy has no say in the functioning of several departments as the Ministers seem to be working "independently" and claimed that the "collective responsibility of the Cabinet has gone for a toss".

Cannes do

Indian films are beginning to make a splash on the international stage

The moment after Payal Kapadia scripted history by becoming the first Indian filmmaker to win the Grand Prix award at the Cannes film festival for *All We Imagine as Light* will be etched in cinematic memory. As the 38-year-old walked to the stage, she pulled along the three main women protagonists of her film, Kani Kusruti, Divya Prabha and Chhaya Kadam, and the four posing with the prize has become the shot of the 77th edition of the festival, definitely for Indians. Bagging the second highest honour after the Palme d'Or (which went to American director Sean Baker's *Anora*) for her trilingual debut feature, an Indo-French collaboration, which shines a light on the story of two Malayali nurses and migrants working in 'Maximum City' Mumbai, is a big win for indie cinema. The last time an Indian film was in the competition section was 30 years ago with Shaji N. Karun's *Swaham* in 1994. "Please don't wait 30 years to have another Indian film," Kapadia said in her acceptance speech. Eschewing the usual song-and-dance trope or larger-than-life heroes, Kapadia's film is about a friendship between three very different women. She said friendship is a very important relationship for her, "because it can lead to greater solidarity, inclusivity and empathy towards each other. These are the values we should all be striving for".

The other important takeaway is Kapadia's remark that "it takes a village to make a film". Thanking her cast and crew, Kapadia talked about the Indian film-making ecosystem – "There are interesting films being made in India, and I am only a product of that." She also rooted for the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), with which she had a run-in in 2015, where she said she watched world cinema. She was effusive about the strong film industry presence in most States, singling out the Malayalam film industry for its support to good cinema. India clearly made a splash at Cannes this year, with Kolkata's Anasuya Sengupta winning the Best Actress in the Un Certain Regard section for her turn in Konstantin Bojanov's *The Shameless*; British-Indian film-maker Karan Kandhari's *Sister Midnight* in the parallel Director's Fortnight selection; FTII student Chidananda S. Naik's short *Sunflowers Were The First Ones To Know* winning the top prize in the official LaCinef section, Cannes's competition for film school students; Cannes Classics releasing a remastered *Manthan*, Shyam Benegal's 1976 film, and so forth. For Kapadia, this was her third outing in Cannes – she had won the best documentary prize in 2021. With the Grand Prix prize just three years later, Kapadia will inspire young independent film-makers to tell their stories, and, hopefully, get the backing they deserve.

Maximum impact

IPL's 17th edition added a new dimension to the way cricket is played

Sunday's Indian Premier League final between Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) and Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai might have turned anti-climactic, but it should not deflect from what was an enthralling two months of cricket. KKR thrashed SRH by eight wickets to claim its third title – its first since 2014 – but the one-sided nature of the summit clash should not stain the latter's reputation. KKR and SRH had finished seventh and tenth, respectively, in 2023, but broke out of the rut by playing some of the boldest and most attacking cricket. Eight of the nine highest IPL totals came this season, and KKR and SRH accounted for five of those. These gargantuan scores can be attributed to the Impact Player rule, which allowed an extra batter or bowler to be drafted into the playing XI. But credit is also due to the respective teams' think-tanks that assembled such wholesome squads. KKR's stock was built on Shreyas Iyer's astute captaincy, the experience of Sunil Narine – most valuable player for a record third time – Andre Russell and Mitchell Starc, and a strong Indian core of Venkatesh Iyer, Varun Chakravarthy and Vaibhav Arora. SRH brought in Pat Cummins to helm the side, and under the Aussie's calm leadership, Travis Head, Abhishek Sharma and Heinrich Klaasen redefined T20 batting.

As much as KKR and SRH broadened the horizon of T20s, IPL-17 witnessed spirited attempts by others to keep pace. Virat Kohli had his second-best IPL (741 runs) and scored at a never-seen-before rate (154.70). The belligerent hitting of Jake Fraser-McGurk and Tristan Stubbs kept Delhi Capitals in Playoffs contention for long, while Will Jacks played a crucial role in Royal Challengers Bengaluru's fairytale entry into the final four despite having lost seven of the first eight games. The competition was also enriched by Mayank Yadav's searing speed, fast bowler Harshit Rana's deception and the early-career promise of batters Abishek Porel and Nitish Kumar Reddy. What also stood out in this cricketing jamboree was the timelessness of Dinesh Karthik, and to a lesser extent, of M.S. Dhoni. Perhaps, the only discordant note was the absence of T20 World Cup-bound Indian stars – despite fine performances – in the business end of the tournament. But it can potentially work in India's favour, for a week's rest in a jam-packed calendar is a god-send. If the likes of Kohli, Rishabh Pant, Sanju Samson, Shivam Dube, Suryakumar Yadav and Jasprit Bumrah can carry their form into the biennial extravaganza that begins on Sunday, Rohit Sharma's men will have a fair chance of ending their long ICC trophy drought.

Playing to the gallery can be injurious to rail safety



K. Balakesari

formerly of the Indian Railway Service of Mechanical Engineers, was also Member Staff, Railway Board

Believe it or not, adhering to the rules can sometimes invite disciplinary action. A few weeks ago, in one of the zonal railways, disciplinary action was sought to be taken against the pilot of a "light engine", i.e., a locomotive without a trailing load of coaches or wagons, who was tasked with clearing a train stranded in midsection as the locomotive had failed. The case was that the pilot had not spoken to his supervisor over the phone, but it was actually for not having run at a higher speed than 15 km that was permitted in the written authorisation given to him by the station master under the rules for operation in a section that is blocked by another train. Why was he asked to do this? It was to minimise the delay to passenger trains held up due to the disruption . Apparently, punctuality took priority over safety. Fortunately, with the incident gaining media attention, the proposed disciplinary action was withdrawn .

Of late, loco pilots and assistant pilots of the Indian Railways (earlier called drivers and assistant drivers), seem to be at the receiving end of an attitude of the management that can best be described as "playing to the gallery". Let me explain with two more examples.

The runaway train

On February 25, 2024, a train formation, consisting of two diesel locomotives, both unmanned, and 53 wagons, that were loaded with stone ballast, with no brake van, rolled out of Kathua station of the Northern Railway unmanned. Because of the continuous falling gradient of the terrain, the "pilotless train'' in both locomotives continued its journey for over 70 kilometres before it could be finally stopped . Fortunately, by routing the runaway train through unoccupied lines along the way a major disaster was averted.

Since access to a copy of the inquiry report in this case has been denied under a restrictive clause of the Right to Information (RTI) Act 2005, this writer has had to go by the version put out in the media by one of the staff organisations . According to this version, the pilots, who were beyond their normal hours of duty, had requested to be relieved. But, instead of allowing them to proceed to their base station which was nearer, orders were issued to them to stable (park) the train and proceed by a passenger train (which had already arrived at the station) to another station further away from their base station. The insufficient time available to the pilots to ensure proper securing of the stabled load on a station with a gradient seems to have been a critical factor that led to the train rolling away. Yet, the most stringent provision of the discipline and appeal rules of the Railways was invoked in this case to summarily remove the pilots along with the station master and a pointsman from service.

A heavy-handed approach in dealing with Indian Railway locomotive pilots can be counter productive

The third case is a serious accident, a tragedy wrapped in a mystery. On October 29, 2023, at about 7 p.m., the Visakhapatnam-Rayagada Passenger collided with the rear of the Visakhapatnam-Palasa Passenger, also travelling on the same line, between Kantakapalle and Almanda stations on the Howrah-Chennai line. The collision led to the death of 14 passengers, apart from the pilot and assistant pilot of the rear train and the guard (train manager) of the train in front. Fifty passengers were injured.

There was a statutory inquiry after the accident, conducted by the Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS), South Central Circle who functions under the Ministry of Civil Aviation. The Preliminary Report of the CRS/SC Circle, which was submitted in November 2023, a little over two weeks after the accident, had concluded that the accident was caused by "errors in train working" – essentially meaning that the station staff and the crew of the train in the rear had not followed the rules of operation on a section with automatic signalling in which some signals were also defective.

The case of 'distractions'

Over four months after the accident, in early March 2024 and before the publication of the Final Report of the CRS, the Minister for Railways announced to the media (Eureka!) that an inquiry conducted by the Railway officials a day after the accident had revealed that the attention of the crew of one of the trains involved in the accident was distracted as they were watching a cricket match on a mobile phone. Based on this finding, the Minister added, for good measure, that the Indian Railways would now be installing systems which would be able to detect any distractions and ensure that the pilots and assistant pilots are focused on train working.

The Preliminary Report of the CRS, accessed by this writer through the RTI route, nowhere mentions that the attention of the crew was diverted due to their watching a cricket match on a mobile phone. On the contrary, the CRS has commented that during the 10 minutes preceding the collision, the loco pilot of the rear train had performed nine different operations testifying to his alertness.

The Final Report of the CRS, which was released recently, essentially reiterates the conclusion of the Preliminary Report. And now, according to a report published in this daily on May 3, 2024 , we are informed that "with no evidence forthcoming later in the mobile data usage to substantiate the allegation that the loco pilots were watching cricket'' on mobile phone at the time of the collision, the Railways have recalled the safety circulars issued in this context. This sordid episode – which seems to be a classic case of first formulating a theory and then later looking for evidence to support it – raises a few questions.

Troubling questions

If, as it turns out now, no evidence was forthcoming from the mobile call records to substantiate the allegation that the pilots were watching a cricket match, on what basis was an announcement made four months after the CRS submitted his Preliminary Report, by the Union Minister for Railways to that effect? Was there an attempt at the lower levels to plant a red herring? After all, watching a cricket match on a mobile phone can be blamed on a reckless crew, whereas the flouting of rules of train operation in automatic signalling territory by the station staff and the loco crew partially reflects on the administration for improper training of the staff or ineffective monitoring of train working under abnormal conditions.

The episode, unfortunately, also exposes a surprising lack of professionalism in the Railways at various levels in dealing with the investigation of a serious accident. And, what is even worse, it also shows a deplorable lack of sensitivity in handling a matter involving two deceased railway employees.

Each case recounted above is vastly different from the other. Yet, there are some common threads running through all of them. All involved loco pilots. Each case was linked to rail safety. Each case showcased an over-weening eagerness at various levels of the hierarchy to punish or blame, almost expecting approbation from "the gallery'' for a tough, no-nonsense approach. The gallery varies in each case: the immediate superior, the bosses in the Ministry, or the media and the public at large.

The cases also call for some serious introspection. With nearly 10% vacancies in the cadre of loco pilots and also ever increasing volumes of freight traffic handled each year, it is a no-brainer that such record-breaking performances are made possible only by the regular breach of the rules governing the duty hours of the running staff to a significant extent. There are also other issues such as continuous night working and inadequate rest at home stations, all of which point to the need for putting in place a mechanism to give focused attention to the major issues concerning loco pilots. Meanwhile, playing to the gallery can adversely impact rail safety.

Chabahar's opportunities and challenges



Kabir Taneja

is Fellow, Strategic Studies Programme, Observer Research Foundation

The recently concluded contract between India and Iran, which gives New Delhi rights to invest in and operate the Shahid-Behesti terminal at Chabahar Port for another 10 years, has created many headlines. The port remains the crown project anchoring economic relations between the two countries. The deal came at a precarious time in West Asia as the war in Gaza continues unabated, Israel-Iran tensions remain critical, and the passing of Iran's President and Foreign Minister in a helicopter accident challenges domestic politics in Tehran.

Representative of India's thinking

There is no denying that the Chabahar project is an important endeavour for both economic and strategic reasons. At the core of it, Chabahar, for India, represents its thinking from the perspective of an extended neighbourhood, and not necessarily as part of its West Asia outlook. The port is a fulcrum of the International North-South Transport Corridor, a project looking towards seamlessly linking India with Central Asia and Russia, bypassing Pakistan. Beyond this, Chabahar is also astutely tuned into the 'new' realities of Afghanistan. The Taliban-led interim government in Kabul has also thrown its weight behind the port, offering an investment of $35 million as it looks to secure alternatives and not be economically reliant on Pakistani ports such as Karachi or the China-backed Gwadar. In November 2023, Taliban leader Mullah Baradar visited Chabahar, with Shahid-Behesti visible in the background.

Bilaterally for India and Iran, Chabahar is also a symptom of challenges between the two states. While there is a lot of public championing for the project, and for good reasons, if it was not for Chabahar, India-Iran ties today would look extremely dry. The reasons are multifaceted and tied to both country's views of their national, regional, and geopolitical interests. Instead of expanding projects and economic cooperation beyond Chabahar, many older ones, such as the gas field Farzad-B which was discovered by Indian state-owned enterprise ONGC Videsh, have now been written off. Another old bilateral platform, the IranoHind shipping company, was dissolved in 2013 because of sanctions. Chabahar, is a legacy project, which has its foundations going back to 2003. This was an era when India was opening to developing economic assets abroad. Chabahar in Iran was one, Sakhalin-I in Russia, was another.

The geopolitics around India's play in Chabahar and Iran's leverages is interesting

A reflection of diplomacy

The geopolitics today that surrounds India's play in Chabahar, and Iran's leverages, make for an interesting study. This latest iteration of the deal was signed not too long after both Israel and Iran exchanged missile fire and came critically close to a full-scale conflict. India's Adani Group, meanwhile, has also invested in a large port project in Israel. The company bought Israel's Haifa port on the Mediterranean Sea for $1.2 billion. This was also made possible in part due to India's participation in new diplomatic and economic endeavours with the United States, Israel, and Arab partners, such as the I2U2 and India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor.

The fact that India's buy-in into Haifa was not a constraint for the Chabahar deal to go through is not only a testament to Indian diplomacy but also for the U.S. to also recognise that this kind of access which New Delhi has is beneficial, and not detrimental, to Washington.

Recent remarks from the U.S. over potential sanctions against Chabahar stand out as myopic. India's relations with Iran and the continuity of Chabahar's development, which offers access to difficult political terrain such as Central Asia, and even Afghanistan, could bring in a significant level of integration and help in building alternatives to China-backed projects. Despite public discourse, China's heavy financial might and the 2021 strategic deal with Iran, does not automatically make Tehran subservient to Beijing. Iran is a quintessential survivalist state and plays a diverse set of cards in its playbook of geopolitics.

The Biden administration would benefit by not blindly following former U.S. President Barack Obama's doctrine on how to deal with India-Iran ties, and Chabahar, at its centre. New Delhi burnt its fingers by giving Mr. Obama too much room when it completely stopped importing oil from Iran. This took Tehran, consistently among India's top-two suppliers of oil for decades, out of the top 10. Even if India's thinking was to build influence in Washington around the nuclear deal negotiations, Donald Trump as the U.S. President and the unilateral exit of the U.S. under his watch from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2018, recalibrated how non-partisanship and the stability of critical U.S. foreign policies were to be viewed thereafter.

The bigger picture

Finally, for Chabahar, there are two main points to consider moving forward. First, the port project cannot be the singular major play in the bilateral relationship. This concentration of interests is volatile. Second, the U.S. must move towards being accommodative on sanctions against Chabahar. Viewing the port as a collateral against problematic Iranian policies in West Asia would not be an accurate understanding of the big picture of India's own outreach towards its extended neighbourhood which could benefit larger American aims as well.

This is important to be considered at a time when the U.S. itself maintains a channel with the Iranians not only through Swiss intermediators but, increasingly, through Oman and Qatar as well.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Making light of fire safety

The fire accidents, at Rajkot and in a children's hospital in east Delhi, are shocking. It should be made mandatory to have a fire audit every year not only in hospitals but also in places where people congregate in large numbers. The fire service authorities should inspect and issue a certificate regarding the safety of buildings. Fire drills, the condition of fire fighting equipment and the training of staff in fire fighting must be undertaken. The fire evacuation plan must also undergo checks. Alas, most checks are hardly followed.

Dr. (Col.) Rajamahendran (retd.),
Pillayarkulam, Tamil Nadu

At Chepauk

One hoped that the IPL final match, in Chennai on Sunday, would have kept spectators on the edge of their seats. It was not to be. Nevertheless, one cannot discount the hard work put in by the KKR bowlers and batters. KKR's mentor Gautam Gambhir deserves praise for shaping the team into a formidable unit.

S. Ramakrishnasayee,
Chennai

In sharp contrast to the last edition, IPL 2024 proved to be an utter disappointment. It was purely one-sided and disappointing to witness SRH crumble under pressure. Overall, the sportsmanship and bonhomie exhibited by all teams were truly commendable.

B. Suresh Kumar,
Coimbatore

Yet another edition of the Indian Premier League has come to an end. It was indeed a totally commanding performance by KKR, trouncing SRH in a one-sided final. For the past two months, the IPL has entertained fans with some high-scoring contests barring a few matches which include the final. We now wait for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup to begin.

S. Sankaranarayanan,
Chennai

The great cricket festival came to an end in a most disappointing final. The Impact Player Rule was not very effective and one hopes that it is removed.

Mohammed Azhar V.P.,
Tanalur, Malappuram, Kerala

The IPL cricket final turned out to be a damp squib with KKR's bowling and batting crushing SRH like a *pappad*.

Devadas V.,
Talap, Kannur, Kerala

The final match waned as it progressed. However, the Kolkata team deserves credit for its disciplined bowling attack and committed fielding.

Satish Reddy Kanaganti,
Tipparthy, Nalgonda, Telangana

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Where animals are dying by a thousand cuts



Sankarshan Rastogi
is an ecologist. Views are personal



Rekha Warrier
is an ecologist. Views are personal

Elections have concluded in most constituencies in Uttar Pradesh, with unemployment, inflation, and agrarian distress likely to have been the core issues motivating the voters. With more than a million abandoned cattle decimating harvests and farm-based livelihoods, however, electoral winds may blow in strange directions in this largely agrarian and electorally pivotal State. These stray cattle, or "*chutta jaanwar*" as they are colloquially known, were born out of the disruptions wrought on a functioning livestock economy by state policies and state-empowered vigilantes. The transport and trade of cattle without permits has been illegal in U.P. since 1955. Cattle trade, however, thrived until recently. It was enabled by a clandestine network of traders, and the tacit acceptance of communities that the meat industry is an integral part of the livestock economy.

Impact on wildlife

While the impacts of stray cattle on farm livelihoods have been widely covered, we want to highlight their toll on wildlife populations in the biodiverse Terai areas of U.P., spanning the districts of Pilibhit, Lakhimpur Kheri, and Bahraich. The U.P. Terai landscape is renowned for its thriving sugarcane agriculture and two tiger reserves that harbour populations of endangered species such as tigers, rhinoceros, swamp deer, and Bengal florican. Here, forests, grasslands, and agriculture seamlessly blend to create a vast wilderness within which people and wildlife live cheek by jowl. Paroxysmal conflicts with tigers and chronic crop losses to herbivores have been the norm across the landscape. Some people set up simple fences to protect their farms. Others, with farms adjoining protected areas, pool resources and use their influence to have fences set up along the farm-forest boundary.

With stray cattle venturing into farmlands proximate to villages and busy roads, farmers are adopting deadlier measures such as putting up razor-wire and high-voltage electric fencing. These are designed to kill or inflict debilitating injuries on anything that crosses their path. Reports of wounded cattle dying are common. But the toll these fences are likely taking on the plethora of wildlife that use these farms remains unaccounted for. In the U.P. Terai, sugarcane farmlands serve as vital wildlife movement corridors. Being able to move unhindered between protected areas is key to ensuring the survival of wide-ranging species. Ensuring this movement, while preventing and mitigating conflicts, is a huge challenge now, which is further complicated by deadly fences intended for crop-raiding stray cattle.

The potential for large populations of unvaccinated free-ranging cattle to transmit diseases such as bovine tuberculosis and lumpy skin diseases to wild populations also remains underappreciated. Multiple cases of the latter were reported recently from various districts of U.P., including parts of the Terai. The presence of large numbers of cattle within farmlands and along forest boundaries is also creating a large prey base that potentially facilitates the residence of tigers within farmlands, which creates fertile grounds for more conflicts.

Farmers recognise stray cattle as a serious menace, even as they wrestle with their beliefs in the divinity of cows. Some of their newer convictions about the extraordinariness of cows – "the only animal that inhales and exhales oxygen" – rests uneasily alongside the recognition that in terms of utility, they are outmatched by buffaloes. The ubiquitousness of tractors, the loss of grazing commons, changing aspirations, and rising input costs have made cattle rearing an increasingly impractical activity. Communities that were once pastoral have over the decades become largely agrarian, with livestock rearing primarily supporting their household needs. High-yielding buffalo breeds, so far exempt from bans on trade and slaughter, fill this niche better than cattle do. Demand for buffaloes is dented only on account of their high purchase and rearing costs.

Building cow shelters

These dueling commitments towards one's livelihood and ideas of cultural identity result in farmers propounding innovative ideas to solve the issue. Popular among these is the suggestion that the government needs to build cow shelters, including within protected areas, to allow cattle to enjoy the forest air and readily available fodder. These sentiments mirror those expressed towards crop-raiding wildlife species in the Terai. Like many landscapes with protected areas, communities in the Terai view the tiger reserves and wildlife as exclusive government property. It is unsurprising then that they wish to see the stray cattle, which they refer to as "Yogi-Modi *ki gay* (Yogi-Modi's cows)", be cared for within the government's protected area where, they believe, other crop raiders owned by the government reside.

Protected areas in the U.P. Terai are small, fragmented, and their most productive grasslands are declining due to environmental change. The future of several imperiled species depends on sustaining and enhancing these grassland areas. Creating cow shelters within protected areas does not serve this end. While this has not yet been mooted as a possibility by the government, given recent trends, and the fact that the U.P. government spends more on feeding stray cattle than on pensions for widows and the elderly, it is not implausible.

Who will eventually reap electoral dividends from voters' complicated relationship with stray cattle remains to be seen. In the interim, animals both domestic and wild are dying by a thousand cuts across the Terai.

In the U.P. Terai, farmers are putting up razor-wire and electric fencing to guard their farms against stray cattle. The toll these fences are likely taking on wildlife remains unaccounted for

An unfortunate debate in Karnataka

The narrative has shifted from rape to the question of who leaked the videos

STATE OF PLAY

K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj
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The narrative around the Prajwal Revanna case seems to have shifted in Karnataka. Initially, there was outrage against the Hassan MP, who stands accused of sexual abuse and rape, as well as his father, who allegedly attempted to prevent victims from testifying against Prajwal. Now, the debate has slowly shifted to who leaked the explicit content. This narrative suggests that the entire case is a "political conspiracy."

Prajwal, who left India in April, said on video on Monday that he will be returning on May 31 and that the people who want to "thwart" his political growth have hatched this "conspiracy".

Former Chief Minister and Janata Dal (Secular) State president H.D. Kumaraswamy, who is Prajwal's uncle, has been relentlessly attacking the government in the State, accusing the ruling Congress and specifically Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar of orchestrating the leak of the sexually explicit videos. While maintaining that he is not defending Prajwal and has in fact appealed to his nephew to return home and cooperate with the Special Investigation Team (SIT) that was formed to probe his alleged crimes, Mr. Kumaraswamy has been effectively pushing the Congress to a defensive position. He has thus shifted the focus of the debate around the issue in the public.

This attempt follows Devaraje Gowda's allegation that Mr. Shivakumar had offered him money to leak the content. Mr. Gowda, an advocate from Hassan, was the first to claim in a letter to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader-



ship in December 2023 that he had a copy of the explicit content, with 2,976 files, and had argued against giving ticket to Prajwal. He has now been arrested in a sexual abuse case.

The bone of contention between the two Vokkaliga leaders, that is, Mr. Kumaraswamy and Mr. Shivakumar, has been the mantle of leadership of the community. Mr. Shivakumar is keen on snatching the leadership from the Gowda family. As most of the victims in the case are also Vokkaligas, Mr. Shivakumar has been accused of "misusing" the videos of these women for political gains. Posters making these accusations against him turned up at many places in Bengaluru a few weeks ago.

Alleging that the SIT was being "partisan" and not probing how the videos got leaked and distributed, Mr. Kumaraswamy, along with the BJP, has demanded that the case be handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). However, the State government has ruled out a CBI probe.

So far, the SIT has arrested three people, all linked to the BJP; raided multiple locations in Hassan; and recovered several computer devices which were allegedly used to leak the explicit content.

Since the faces of the women were not masked in the videos, those who leaked the videos have definitely caused a lot of grief to the victims. While the alleged perpetrator fled India, the victims have had to deal with the trauma of these videos being freely circulated on messenger apps.

The line of attack by the JD (S) has gone to such an extent that recently, while speaking to journalists, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah asked, "Under which law of the Indian Penal Code is leaking videos a bigger crime than rape?" He said that while leaking the videos without hiding the faces of the victims is definitely a crime, rape is a bigger crime, and arguments about the former cannot be used to mask the latter.

With Prajwal absent and Mr. Kumaraswamy holding multiple press meets to push the narrative on the leak of videos, most of the local media coverage of the issue has also been dominated by the political slugfest rather than the sexual abuse, or the impunity of the MP, or the efforts made to bring him back.

To date, of more than 90 victims, only three have lodged complaints. This led to the filing of three rape cases against Prajwal. Despite professional counsellors being deployed to talk to all the victims, the women have not been forthcoming in lodging complaints. Fear of stigma and the fact that Prajwal belongs to the politically influential family of former Prime Minister H. D. Deve Gowda have prevented them from lodging complaints, according to sources. Keeping the focus on the MP's alleged crimes and providing moral support to the victims may have given the women the confidence to complain, they added.

Members of civil society are now attempting to correct this narrative and bring the focus back to the alleged multiple instances of sex abuse and misuse of power by the MP. They have announced a 'Hassan Chalo' protest march and a rally in the district on May 30.

India relies on China for most electronic and electrical goods

India sources over 50% of its mobiles, automatic data processing units, and semiconductor devices from China

DATA POINT

Sruthi Balaji, Aashreya C., & Vignesh Radhakrishnan

In FY24, China once again became India's top trading partner. This is the sixth time in the last 10 years that China has beaten the U.S. to emerge as India's top partner. A country is designated as a top trading partner if the total value of India's exports to it and imports from it exceeds that of any other country.

Notably, China's status as India's top trading partner is primarily due to the exceptionally high volume of imports from China, which overshadows the relatively low volume of exports to China by India. That is why India's trade deficit with China has been widening the fastest, in absolute terms, compared with other partners. India's trade relationship with the U.S. is the opposite, with India exporting more to the U.S. than what it imports. In fact, the gap between imports and exports, or the trade balance (trade surplus in this case), has been widening in recent years.

Chart 1 shows India's export and import in $ billion with the U.S. and China. While imports from China have surged, exports to China have remained stagnant. On the other hand, exports to the U.S. as well as imports from the U.S. have increased, though the degree of increase in exports was greater than that of the imports.

Chart 2 shows the trade deficit/surplus of important partners of India since FY15. Among India's partners, China and the U.S. occupy the two extreme ends. With the U.S., India has a trade surplus of $36.7 billion, while with China, India has a trade deficit of $85.1 billion in FY24. Both these figures are the highest ever trade surplus and trade deficit recorded with the respective countries.

With most major trade partners, India has a trade deficit. Interestingly, the trade deficit with Russia has skyrocketed in recent years, from just $6.6 billion in FY22 to $57.2 in FY24. A majority of this is due to the import of oil at a discounted price from Russia, after the West imposed sanctions on the country. Russia is currently the chief oil source for India.

India's trade surplus with the Netherlands has increased; this is also connected to the sanctions on Russia. About 40-45% of the crude oil sourced from Russia is converted to petrol, diesel, and other products by Indian refineries and sold to the Netherlands. The European country is sourcing petroleum products from India and not directly from Russia due to the sanctions. It then redistributes these products among its neighbours.

A majority of the items that India imports from China can be classified as electronics and electrical items. In the FY15 to FY24 period, India imported $75 billion worth of mobiles/telephones, the biggest component in the import basket. This was followed by automatic data processing units ($37 billion), semiconductor devices and diodes ($28 billion), and electronic integrated circuits ($27 billion). **Chart 3** shows the tree map of India's top 20 imports from China in the FY15 to FY24 period. Thirteen of these 20 items were electronic or electrical items.

Not only is India buying electrical and electronic items from China in bulk, but also, China is the major source for most of these items, with very few alternatives. India sourced 54% of its mobiles/telephones from China in the FY15 to FY24 period. It also sourced close to 56% of automatic data processing units, about 70% of semiconductor devices and diodes, and 32% of electronic integrated circuits and micro assemblies from China in this period. **Chart 4** shows item-wise imports from China in $ billion and India's dependency on China for that product in percentage share.

Made in China

The data was sourced from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry



Chart 1: The chart shows India's export and import in $ billion with the U.S. and China

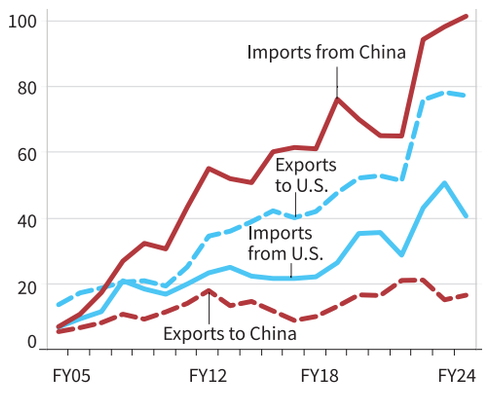


Chart 2: The chart shows the trade deficit /surplus of important partners of India since FY15 in $ billion

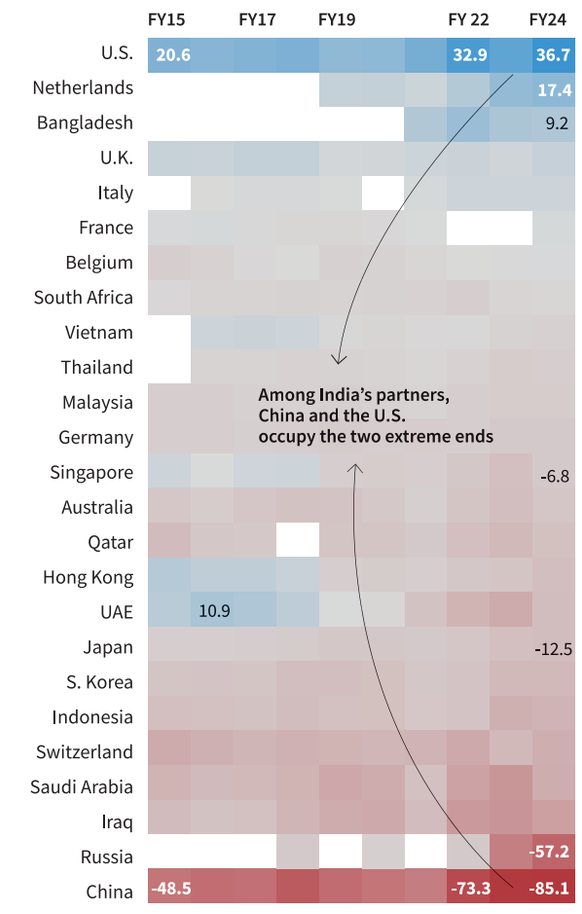


Chart 3: The tree map of India's top 20 imports from China in the FY15 to FY24 period in $billion

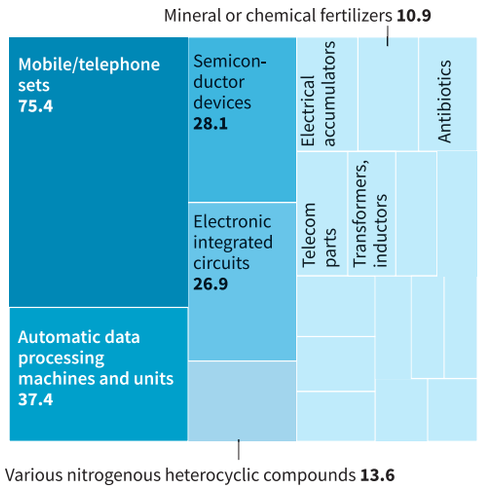
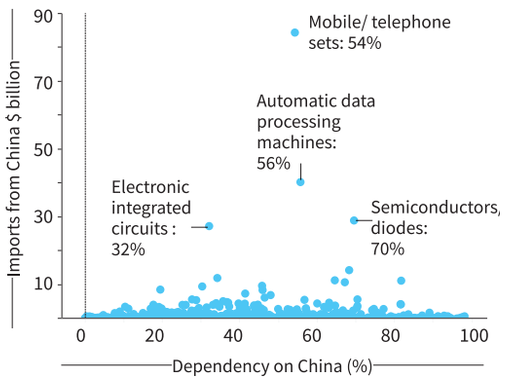


Chart 4: Item-wise imports from China in $ billion and India's dependency on China for that product in % share



Sruthi Balaji and Aashreya C. are interning with The Hindu Data team

FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 28, 1974

Railmen call off 20-day strike

New Delhi, May 27: The 20-day-old strike by railwaymen has been called off with effect from 6 a.m. to-morrow (Tuesday) by the Action Committee of the National Co-ordination Committee for Railwaymen's Struggle.

The Action Committee, in a resolution adopted to-day, said: "Having given deep consideration to the strike situation on all the zonal railways and in other railway establishments and aware of the economic consequences of further prolonging the action, and conscious of the responsibility thrust on it in the circumstances, the Action Committee resolves unilaterally to call off the strike with effect from 6 a.m. on Tuesday.

"The committee also calls upon all railwaymen to return to work from that hour and do everything within their power to bring normalcy to the movement of trains."

After the President, Mr. V.V. Giri's appeal yesterday to the railwaymen to withdraw their strike and resume work which would be a gesture to help the Government to deal with questions of victimisation, etc., in a responsive manner, Mr. Fernandes, Convener of the Action Committee, and his colleagues, who are in Tihar jail, felt that the strike should be ended forthwith. They communicated this desire to the other members of the committee but there was no immediate response.

It is learnt that the Action Committee members, who are outside the jail, wanted to have a full discussion of the subject before they accepted the advice of Mr. Fernandes.

Late last night, some of the trade union leaders met Mr. Qureshi, Deputy Minister for Railways, and sought an assurance from him that there would be no victimisation after the withdrawal of the strike. The leader claimed to-day that Mr. Qureshi assured them that the Government would consider the request favourably and sympathetically.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 28, 1924

Latest telegrams

Ootacamund, May 27: The Hon'ble Sir Arthur Knapp, Home Member had a private discussion yesterday with the Agent and Engineer of S.I. Ry. the Collector of Malabar and a few others with regard to the question of employing Moplah prisoners in Ry. construction. It is understood that the matter is now being investigated.

Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

J&K records the highest combined voter turnout

58.5 in percentage. This is the highest voter turnout for a Lok Sabha poll in 35 years. The Kashmir Valley witnessed a 30 percentage point jump in poll participation compared to 2019. PTI

The one-day rainfall recorded in Kolkata due to cyclone Remal

150 in mm. The neighbouring Salt Lake city received 110 mm of rain during the same time frame. Around 68 trees were uprooted in Kolkata, and another 75 in the Salt Lake and Rajarhat area. PTI

Number of eligible voters in South Africa's general election

27.6 in million. The vote could prove a historic turning point if, as opinion polls predict, the African National Congress loses its absolute parliamentary majority for the first time. AFP

The death toll recorded by Health Ministry in Gaza

36,050 The death toll has surpassed 36,000 in the seven months of war between Hamas and Israel. This includes 66 deaths in the last 24 hours. AFP

Worth of military deal to be inked between Ukraine and Spain

1.1 in billion euros. The deal encompasses patriot missiles and Leopard tanks, a substantial increase from Spain's prior €330 million commitment. AFP

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Menstrual hygiene in Indian prisons

What are the various policies and schemes introduced by the Indian government with respect to menstrual hygiene management? What did a study in a Maharashtra prison reveal about women prisoners and their access to water and sanitation facilities?

EXPLAINER

Himani Gupta
M. Sivakami

The story so far:

India has witnessed a promising shift in the landscape of menstrual hygiene management over the years. The fifth round of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS 2019-2020) revealed that about eight out of 10 young women aged 15-24 years are now using safe menstrual hygiene products. While urban areas and certain demographics have seen improved usage of menstrual hygiene products, the plight of one of the most marginalised populations – women in Indian prisons – remains overlooked. In a society where prisoners are deemed unworthy of fundamental rights, female prisoners face an even greater injustice. Society clings to an unrealistic standard of female purity, refusing to accept that women, too, can commit crimes. This bias has led to a systemic oversight and neglect of female prisoner's basic needs, including menstrual hygiene.



ISTOCKPHOTO

What is the status of menstrual hygiene in prisons?

According to the National Crime Records Bureau, there are 23,772 women in Indian prisons. Of them, 77% are in the reproductive age group (18-50 years) and are likely to be regular menstruators. However, the availability of sanitary napkins has been inconsistent across different prisons in the country. The quality of sanitary napkins has also been unsatisfactory. Despite recommendations outlined in the 2016 Model Prison Manual, many States have not implemented provisions like supplying adequate water and washroom facilities for female prisoners. Overcrowding and poor socio-economic conditions further exacerbate the struggle of incarcerated women to secure basic necessities such as water, sanitary napkins, detergent, and soap during menstruation.

A study conducted by one of the authors in a prison in Maharashtra in June 2023 revealed that water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities failed to meet the demands of women imprisoned there. This presents significant challenges for women, who need more water to maintain personal hygiene during menstruation. The lack of continuous water supply also forced women to store water, taking up valuable space in the limited number of toilets available. About 50 women were forced to share just two toilets for all their daily activities, including excreting, changing napkins, and washing clothes and utensils. Women also reported feeling discouraged from using the filthy washrooms for frequent urination, which led to a greater incidence of urinary infections.

The study also found that prison authorities depended on sanitary napkins donated by non-governmental organisations. Decisions about the type, quality, and quantity of menstrual absorbents were left to these organisations, often resulting in the supply of substandard products.

What have been policy interventions?

India has been making consistent efforts to improve access to menstrual hygiene products, especially among young women through the Menstrual Hygiene Scheme which includes the distribution of free or subsidised sanitary napkins.

In 2023, India took an important stride forward by formulating the 'National Menstrual Hygiene Policy', to recognise menstruation as a natural process that demands more meaningful attention. At its heart lies a crucial principle: ensuring equity in the safe and dignified management of menstrual hygiene. The draft policy states: "Prioritise equity to enable all menstruating individuals, regardless of their socioeconomic status and geographical location, to have equal opportunities to access and manage their menstruation in a safe and hygienic way. Address disparities and barriers that prevent certain groups from accessing required menstrual hygiene products, resources and information."

Remarkably, the policy identifies prisoners as a target population with a compromised access to menstrual hygiene facilities. This inclusion reflects a positive step forward. However, the policy falls short of providing a concrete action plan to enhance menstrual hygiene management in prisons. It also overlooks the Ministry of Home Affairs as a critical stakeholder that influences menstrual hygiene management in prisons.

What needs to be done?

The Indian government must ensure that basic standards of menstrual hygiene for women in captivity are met. The uneven implementation of the Model Prison Manual 2016 across States demands urgent attention as well. As a first step, the government must ensure every State adheres to the recommendations outlined in the manual. The experience of menstruation within prisons presents unique challenges that demand attention through a public health lens, particularly as part of the fight against 'period poverty'. The next step is to encourage collaboration between public health authorities and prison administrators to develop a comprehensive strategy to ensure access to adequate menstrual hygiene products and facilities while prioritising the health and dignity of women behind bars. Third, there is a dearth of empirical evidence. Therefore, there is an urgent need to conduct research to understand the current state of menstrual hygiene within prison walls.

Himani Gupta is pursuing her masters at Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai. M. Sivakami is professor at TISS.

THE GIST

According to the National Crime Records Bureau, there are 23,772 women in Indian prisons. Of them, 77% are in the reproductive age group (18-50 years) and are likely to be regular menstruators.

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The controversy over eucalyptus planting in Kerala

Why did the Kerala government allow the Kerala Forest Development Corporation to plant eucalyptus trees? Why were environmentalists and social activists against the order?

The Hindu Bureau

The story so far:

The Kerala government issued an order allowing the Kerala Forest Development Corporation (KFDC) to plant eucalyptus trees for its financial sustenance in 2024-2025. Environmentalists soon protested the decision saying the move would adversely affect forests and heighten human-animal conflicts in future. Subsequently, the head of the Forest Force submitted a report to the State Forest Minister saying it hadn't permitted the planting of eucalyptus trees inside forests. On May 20, the government amended its order to limit permission to only cut exotic tree species from lands in the KFDC's control.

What are KDFC and its plantations?

The KFDC was established on January 24, 1975, as part of a dynamic production forestry enterprise. According to the KFDC website, the corporation has around 7,000 hectares (ha) of plantations. The plantation working circle includes the following species: Eucalyptus grandis, Acacia auriculiformis, Acacia mangium, Acacia crassicarpa, Acacia pycnantha (also known as wattle), Alnus nepalensis, Casuarina equisetifolia, and Pinus patula.

Eucalyptus plantations have a rotation age of nine years; Acacia auriculiformis trees, 18 years; and Acacia mangium, seven years. At the end of each cycle, plantations approved by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate change are felled.

Clear-felled plantations are planted with species listed in a management plan. Before planting, experts check for soil quality and consult with the Kerala Forest Research Institute. As of this month, the KFDC website also said plantations of exotic species, including eucalyptus, would be converted to those of indigenous species once exotic flora has been felled "so as to be more ecologically and environmentally friendly".

What was the issue with the order?

In 2021, the State government had published an eco-restoration policy. Among other things, it sought to address what it called the "proliferation of invasive species that are not suitable for our environment" and the resulting "depletion of natural forests". Such depletion, according to the policy, was in turn forcing wild animals to move to human-occupied land in search of food and thus increasing the prevalence of human-wildlife conflict.

For example, a recent study by the Kerala State Forest Protective Staff Organisation – an association of frontline forest officers – found replacing exotic plants in forested areas with the corresponding natural species could help ensure food for wild elephants at Chinnakanal in Munnar. The Chinnakkanal landscape is prime elephant habitat in the Munnar forest division, and is filled with eucalyptus trees. The policy also acknowledged that invasive species of plants as well as animals had rendered "serious damage to natural habitats and ecosystems" and that "eradicating such invasive species ... is of high priority." Environmental activists alleged following the State's order – permitting the KDFC to plant eucalyptus trees – contravened the policy's aspirations and undermined efforts to beat back invasive species and mitigate human-animal conflicts.

What is eco-restoration?

Kerala has around 27,000 ha under industrial plantations. Against the backdrop of climate change and the promise researchers have said trees offer to mitigate against its worsening, the Kerala government had decided to phase out plantations of eucalyptus, acacia, wattle, and pine by 2024 and replace them with natural forests. This process is called eco-restoration. Many of these areas are currently overwhelmed with invasive species.

For example, in 2019, in the Marayoor Sandal Division in Idukki, the forest department initiated a project supported by the UNDP, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, and the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority. Some 108 hectares of exotic species were removed to allow natural grasses to flourish. The result: water streams in the area were restored after a 30-year gap.

THE GIST

The Kerala government issued an order allowing the Kerala Forest Development Corporation (KFDC) to plant eucalyptus trees for its financial sustenance in 2024-2025.

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BUILDING BLOCKS

What are colours and how do people understand them?

Colours, and the degrees of freedom associated with them, have made their presence felt in art, the organisation of social classes, natural philosophy, trade, innovation, climate change, politics, and religion

Vasudevan Mukunth

Colour plays an outsized role in the human experience of modern life. It invests both natural and synthetic worlds with beauty and meaning. Colours don't deny universalism – a red sign will make you stop anywhere on the planet – yet they also make room for human cultures to appropriate them in unique, even discordant, ways. As the human understanding of colour has improved, and continues to do so, this knowledge has also broadened our sense of our place in this world, and the other life-forms with which we share it.

What is colour?

Colour is a type of information our eyes receive and process based on electromagnetic radiation. An object by itself can't be said to have a colour – but based on which frequencies of visible-light radiation it absorbs, reflects, and/or scatters, we can perceive the object to have a particular colour.

In the human eye, the rod and the cone cells receive information in the light that strikes the eye: the rod cells record brightness while the cone cells record the wavelengths, which the human brain interprets as colour. Human beings have three types of cone cells. Each type is sensitive to light of a different wavelength, and they work together to input colour information to the brain.

The possession of three types of cone cells is why humans are called trichromats. Many birds and reptiles, on the other hand, are tetrachromats (four types of cone cells). Similarly, while human vision is restricted to wavelengths from 400 nm to 700 nm (also known as visible light), honeybees can also 'see' ultraviolet light and mosquitoes and some beetles can access information in some wavelengths of infrared radiation. (Humans sense the latter has heat.)

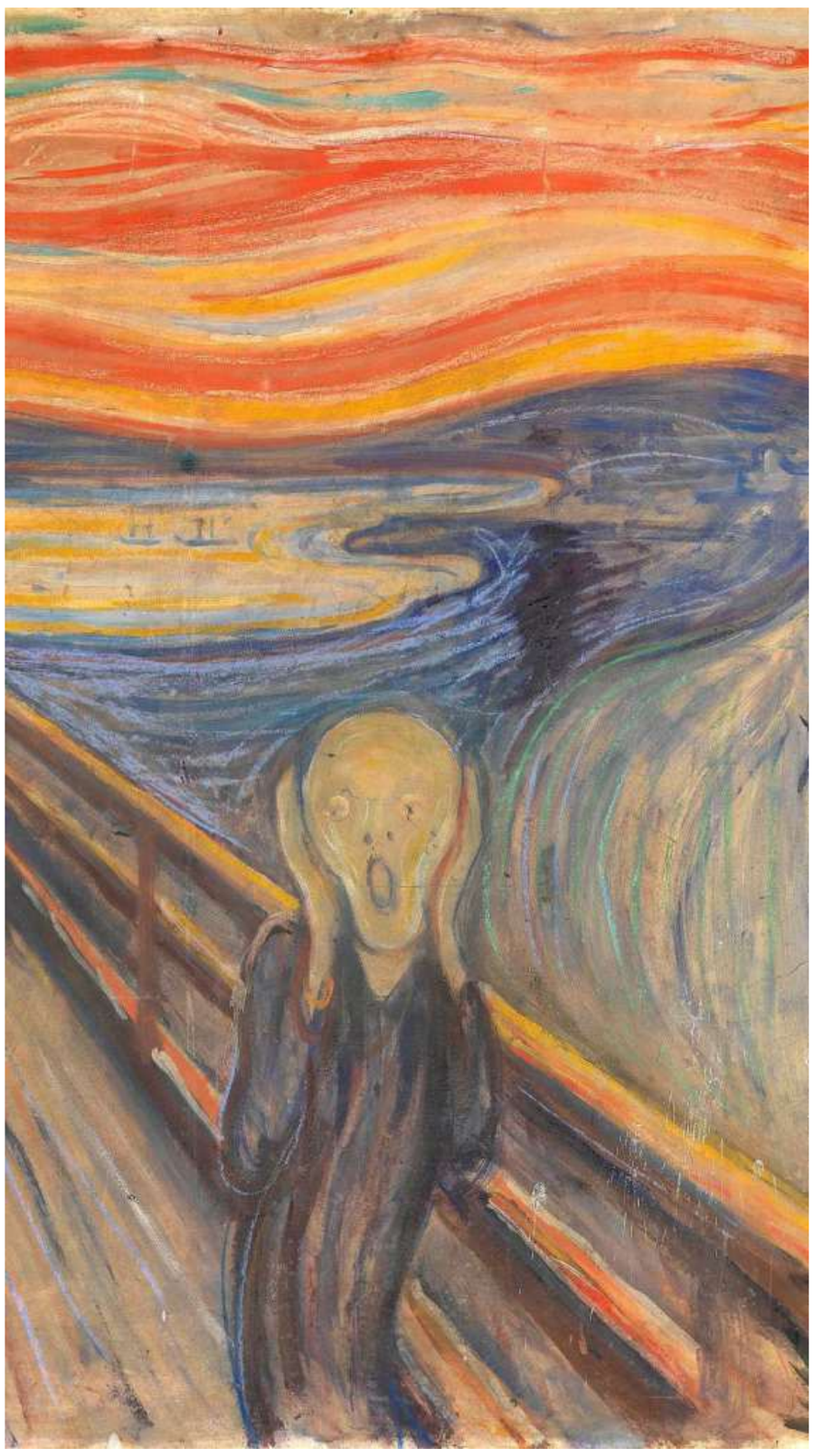
This limitation, such as it is, is why those spectacular images captured by space telescopes of celestial wonders like nebulae need to be false-coloured: to highlight the information secreted in radio waves, X-rays, gamma rays, ultraviolet light, etc. Seen in visible light alone, many of these images will have much less visual detail.

Is there a science of colours?

There are many ways to produce specific colours. The art of mixing colours to produce others is rooted in colour theory.

Until the late 19th century, traditional colour theory specified the different ways in which dyes, pigments, and inks could be mixed to make other colours. In this paradigm, there were three primary colours – red, yellow, and blue – that when combined in different ways could produce all the colours the human eye is capable of seeing.

But modern colour theory, more accurately colour science, rejected the idea of there being three fixed colours. Instead, according to colour science, all the colours that could be produced by combining any three colours in different ways is called the gamut of those three colours. Each colour in a gamut populates a given colour space, and all colour spaces are smaller than the full range of colours the eye can see.



'The Scream of Nature' by Edvard Munch, 1893. PUBLIC DOMAIN

How are colours rendered?

There are two broad ways to render colours: additive and subtractive colouring. In additive colouring, light of different wavelengths is 'mixed' to yield light of one combined colour. The colours on your smartphone screens and television sets are produced in this way.

A common colour space associated with additive colouring is the RGB space: where red, green, and blue when added to each other in varying measures produces other colours.

In subtractive colouring, a colour is rendered by passing white light through a medium that absorbs, or takes away, specific wavelengths of light, leaving the rest to render a particular colour.

The typical examples include dyes, pigments, and inks. A dye is a chemical compound that can absorb certain wavelengths of light. When, say, a cloth is dyed, the dying compound forms chemical bonds with compounds in the cloth and imbues the cloth with the corresponding (subtractive) colour. A pigment does the same thing without forming chemical bonds. An ink is a solution that contains a dye, a pigment or some other colouring substance.

What are the properties of colour?

In colour science, all colours however rendered are said to have a few appearance parameters: hue, brightness, lightness, and chromaticity.

In 2002, a technical committee of the International Commission on Illumination specified the definition of hue to be the degree to which a given (perceived) colour can be said to be "similar to or different from" perceived "red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet". Isaac Newton defined complementary colours on the basis of hue: if two colours combine to produce a greyscale colour – that is, lacking in hue – they are complementary.

Brightness is related to an object's luminance. The luminance is the power emitted by a source of light per unit area, weighted by wavelength; the eye's subjective perception of this power in some direction is inferred as the source's brightness.

Lightness refers to the extent to which a coloured object appears light compared to a white-coloured object that is well lit. The chromaticity, or chromatic intensity, has to do with the human perception of colour and depends on the colour's quality irrespective how well it is lit.

How have people related to colour?

The place and roles of colour in human cultures are too wide-ranging and multifaceted to capture in one short article. Colours, and the degrees of freedom associated with them, have made their presence felt in art, the organisation of social classes, natural philosophy, trade, innovation, cultural symbols, climate change ('green' and 'greenwashing'), politics, and religion, to name a few human endeavours.

Here are just three examples:

(i) In the famous painting 'The Scream of Nature' by the Norwegian painter Edvard Munch, the sky is rendered in shades of red and orange – a combination Munch himself famously described as "blood red", to represent an "infinite scream passing through nature".

Why did the sky have such a terrible colour? Some experts have said this could have been the result of the eruption of Krakatoa in Indonesia in 1883. One effect of this devastating event was a tremendous amount of dust in the air for years to come, and dust scatters redder light more, giving the sky the same hues.

(ii) Scientists have dated the use of a pigment called ochre by prehistoric humans to more than 2,00,000 years ago. This is illuminating because we learn something about how much intelligence these humans had. The use of ochre suggests the ability to make it, and to make ochre, you need to mix ferric oxide, clay, and sand together in the right proportions. Archaeological records of pigment use, among others, in Africa have been used to argue against Eurocentrism in the field: manifesting as the belief that, for example, behaviours typical of the 'modern human' first turned up around 40,000-50,000 years ago based on excavations in Europe – whereas the African record would suggest these behaviours arose multiple millennia earlier.

(iii) Light-emitting diodes (LEDs) transformed consumer technologies and industrial and household energy consumption in the 21st century – yet the transformation had to wait for the invention of blue LEDs.

LEDs use additive colouring to produce colours. In the 1970s, scientists had found a way to make LEDs that emitted red light and green light – two of the three primary colours in the RGB colour space – but they didn't have a way to make them emit blue light.

Yet they desperately needed a blue LED because combining the three colours would produce white light, which is the most common lighting colour in household and industrial settings, and therefore had tremendous commercial value. Scientists in Japan finally found a way to make blue LEDs by the late 1980s, for which they and others had to develop sophisticated techniques to make crystals that went on to transform other industries as well.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

K. Subrahmanian

"Deface, efface (A. N. Ragbavan, Madras)."

" 'Deface' means 'to spoil the appearance of, to disfigure.' When you deface something, you spoil its external appearance.

The wall was defaced by several slogans.

'Efface' means 'to rub or wipe out.' It means the complete removal of something.

The letters on the coin have been effaced through constant use.

I cannot efface that unpleasant incident from my memory.

'Efface oneself' means 'to make oneself inconspicuous or regard oneself as unimportant.

You won't notice him in any company. He is so self-effacing.

The noun form of 'efface' is effacement.' The noun form of 'deface' is 'defacement.' The stress is on the second syllable in 'deface' and 'efface.' The 'e' is 'de' and the first 'e' in 'efface' are pronounced like the 'i' in 'ink.'"

"Make chalk of one and cheese of another (R. Kulkarni, Bombay)"

" 'Chalk' stands for something useless and 'cheese' for something of value. When you make chalk of one and cheese of another, you treat two things or persons unequally. You favour one person over the other.

She makes chalk of Krishna and cheese of Raju."

"Rest assured or be rest assured (A. S. N. Murthy, Mysore)"

It is 'rest assured.' 'Rest assured' means 'be certain that..., feel certain.'

You may rest assured that your mother is fine here.

'Rest assured' is a formal expression. It is followed by 'that.'"

"The Present Continuous or Progressive Tense"

"It was mentioned earlier that verbs like smell, taste, understand, doubt, dislike, know, love are not used in the progressive. These are verbs which refer to a state of mind or feeling. There are some contexts in which these are used in the progressive tense. 'Have' is not used in the progressive tense when it is a 'state' verb. I have a job, not I am having a job. However it is used in the progressive tense when it denotes an activity.

He was having his dinner when I went to see him. It means that dinner had started and was continuing and had not ended. When 'think' is used in the sense of option, it does not take the progressive. I think he is a fool, not I am thinking he is a fool. When it is used in the sense of 'plan, consider,' it is used in the progressive. I am thinking of attending his wedding. When we go into a garden, we smell flowers. The sensation of smelling happens to us. When you take a flower and start smelling it deliberately, you can say 'I am smelling this flower.' You use 'seeing' in certain contexts.

"Can you see this?"

"No."

"I will bring it closer. Can you see it?"

"Yes. Now I am seeing it."

Some more examples:

I can't hear you. I am hearing you now. I could not hear you earlier. There is something wrong with the phone.

You are imagining things."

Published in The Hindu on February 25, 1992.

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

The ninth edition of the T20 World Cup commences on June 1 co-hosted by the U.S. and West Indies. A quiz to test your knowledge on the World Cups held so far

Soorya Prakash. N

QUESTION 1
Who is the only player to have won two editions as captain?

QUESTION 2
Who are the players to have won the cup as wicket-keeper captains?

QUESTION 3
Which country was involved in two tied matches in the 2012 edition and lost both after a one-over eliminator?

QUESTION 4
Which country has reached the semi-finals six times — most for any country in T20 World Cup history?

QUESTION 5
Dirk Nannes, Roelof van der Merwe, David Wiese and Mark Chapman share a similarity with respect to the T20 World Cup history. What is it?

QUESTION 6
Who is the only bowler from a non-test playing nation to pick up five wickets in an inning?

QUESTION 7
Who has stood as an on-field umpire in most matches?





Visual question:
Identify the players and the feat that connects them? AFP

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. The city where Nehru was born. **Ans: In Allahabad (now Prayagraj) on November 14**
2. The parents of Jawaharlal Nehru. **Ans: Swarup Rani Nehru and Motilal Nehru. He had two sisters Vijayalakshmi Pandit and Krishna Hutheesing**
3. The country with which the 'Panchsheel' was formally enunciated under Nehru's leadership. **Ans: China (under Premier Zhou Enlai)**
4. The interim Prime Minister for a 13-day tenure following Jawaharlal Nehru's demise. **Ans: Gulzarilal Nanda**
5. The prison in which Nehru began to write his autobiography. **Ans: Almora prison**
6. This son of a President wrote *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography.* **Ans: Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's son Sarvepalli Gopal**
Visual: Name the 'samadhi' of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru. **Ans: Shanti Van**
Early Birds: C. Saravanan| KN Viswanathan| Meena Khanna| Atul Gaur| Saheni George

Word of the day

Ebullient:
joyously unrestrained

Synonyms: high-spirited, exuberant

Usage: *The boss was in an ebullient mood.*

Pronunciation: bit.ly/ebullientpro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ɪˈbʊljənt/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

From Page One

'Ads against Trinamool *prima facie* disparaging'

Justice Maheshwari asked whether the EC had done something till now or even after the injunction order was passed by the High Court. The elections were going on.

"It is a question of the independence of the Election Commission," Justice Maheshwari noted.

The BJP finally chose to withdraw the petition after the court gave it the liberty to approach the High Court again for any relief in accordance with the law.

The Trinamool was represented by senior advocates A.M. Singhvi and Amit Anand Tiwari.

'Will return on May 31 to appear before SIT'

Mr. Prajwal is speculated to be in Germany on his diplomatic passport. The State government had sought the cancellation of his diplomatic passport, following which the Centre issued a notice to the MP. A blue corner notice had also been issued against him, which means he could be detained soon after he entered the country.

Mr. Prajwal, contesting as a JD(S) candidate under the NDA fold, is facing Congress nominee Shreyas Patel in the Hassan Lok Sabha constituency that went to polls on April 26. He was suspended by the party in connection with the case.

After the pen drives, containing explicit videos and photographs allegedly involving the MP, made an appearance on April 21-22 in Hassan, the State government set up the SIT on April 27 to investigate the sexual assault on women.

'Political conspiracy'

The Hassan MP, who did not broach the issue of the sexual assault in the video, claimed that he went into depression after the attack by the Congress. "The very next day [after seeking time to appear before the SIT], senior Congress leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, started speaking and discussing the issue in an open platform as part of political conspiracy. After seeing this, I went into depression and isolated myself."

"Some powers joined together in Hassan to hatch a political conspiracy to prevent my growth politically and bring me down," he added.

The Hassan MP's video on Monday comes after appeals from his grandfather, former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda and uncle H.D. Kumaraswamy, the former Chief Minister of Karnataka, to return home and face action.

The JD(S) has taken the stand not to defend its lone MP in the Lok Sabha publicly and has constantly attempted to turn the tables on the Congress government for the lack of action against those involved in the distribution of the pen drives.

IMD forecasts 'above normal' monsoon

As in April, India's strong monsoon rainfall is predicated on El Niño conditions withering away to 'neutral' conditions and the onset of La Niña conditions during the later part of the monsoon season. "At present, neutral Indian Ocean Dipole [IOD] conditions are prevailing over the Indian Ocean. The latest forecasts from many global climate models indicate positive IOD conditions are likely to develop during the monsoon season," said a statement from the IMD.

El Nino, La Nina and IOD conditions refer to temperatures in the Central Pacific, and the eastern and western halves of the Indian Ocean respectively. La Nina conditions coupled with a favourable IOD spell good rains for India.

Six killed as cyclone Remal rips south Bengal

The airport services were suspended for almost 20 hours.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, while acknowledging the damage caused by Remal, said that due to the actions of the State administration, the loss of life was relatively less.

"Our municipalities and panchayats have the credit for moving the poor people to 1,400 camps in safer places. For this I express my sincere thanks to all the State and local administrations," she posted on social media.

In the Sundarbans, minor breaches of embankments were reported in several places in the coastal areas of South 24 Parganas. Locals at several places in the Sundarbans took it upon themselves to repair embankments and clear roads. The water from the sea and rivers entered agricultural fields and *bheries* (shallow fish ponds).

Even as the severe cyclonic storm weakened into a deep depression, the weather office has issued an orange alert and predicted heavy (7-11 cm) to very heavy rain (12-20 cm) for one or two places over North and South 24 Parganas, Howrah, Hooghly, Kolkata, Nadia and Murshidabad districts.

The IMD has predicted surface wind with speed reaching 50 to 60 kmph gusting to 70 kmph likely over North and South 24 Parganas, East Midnapore, Nadia and Murshidabad; reaching 40 to 50 kmph likely over Kolkata, Howrah and Hooghly.

Rajkot fire tragedy: no faith in State machinery, says Gujarat High Court

Court asks if the Corporation had been unaware of the structure's existence for 18 months; State government shunts out Police Commissioner and Municipal Commissioner after court's censure

Mahesh Langa
AHMEDABAD

Hearing a *suo motu* petition on the fire at a gaming zone in Rajkot in which more than 30 people were killed, the Gujarat High Court on Monday rapped the State government and the Rajkot Municipal Corporation (RMC) saying the court had "no faith in them", and asked the Municipal Commissioner why he should not be held personally responsible for the "man-made disaster".

The court said the civic body did not bother to check even once when such a giant structure was built and became operational.

Lambasting the State government's counsel, Justice Biren Vaishnav of the Division Bench said, "Who will take the drastic steps? Honestly speaking, we do not have faith in the State machinery now. After four years of orders passed by this court, this is the sixth incident that has happened. They only want lives to be lost, only then do they trigger the machinery."



In mourning: People take part in a candlelight vigil to pay tribute to the lives lost at the amusement park fire in Rajkot. AFP

The Bench became furious when the State government's counsel said that local officials were probably 'hand-in-glove' with the play zone operators.

The RMC's lawyer admitted that the structure had come up without approval and told the court that the landowners had applied for regularisation of the structure on May 9 even though they had been using the area for go-karting and other activities since June 2021.

"So, you were ignorant of these structures existing in the vicinity? You were blind to it, that these big structures existed? You were unaware of it for 18 months? Was fire safety applied for it? Did you ever inspect it? We will take it that you are completely turning a blind eye to the whole issue. When did the corporation first recognise the existence of such a game zone," the Bench asked the RMC's lawyer.

Justice Vaishnav added, "There are media reports that your corporation commissioner went for the inauguration. For 18 months, what did the municipal body do? There was no fire NOC, no structural stability certificate and it was merrily going on, in front of the corporation's eyes."

Action against officials

Within hours of the court's strong remarks, the Gujarat government swung into action and shunted out Municipal Commissioner Anand Patel and Police Commissioner Raju Bhargava. Both have been kept on wait for further posting.

D.P. Desai has been made the new municipal commissioner and Brajesh Kumar Jha has been named the Police Commissioner.

The State government has removed Additional Commissioner of Police (Traffic and Crime) Vidhi Chaudhary and suspended seven officials. The officials have been held responsible for "gross negligence in allowing the game zone to operate without necessary approvals," a government statement said.

Kejriwal moves SC seeking extension of interim bail for tests

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Arvind Kejriwal

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has moved the Supreme Court for a seven-day extension of the interim bail granted to him in a money laundering case linked to the liquor policy scam.

The Supreme Court had granted him interim bail on May 10 to campaign for the Lok Sabha election.

'Surrender on June2'

He was ordered to surrender on June 2.

In an application seeking extension of time by a week, Mr. Kejriwal said he had to undergo a series of medical tests, including a PET-CT scan.

The election results are due on June 4.

"There is no gainsaying that General Elections to Lok Sabha is the most significant and an important event this year, as it should be in a national election year," a Bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta had observed in its order for interim bail.

Court's restrictions

The court had barred Mr. Kejriwal from visiting the Chief Minister's Office or the Delhi Secretariat. He would not sign any official files unless it was required and necessary for obtaining clearance or approval of the Lieutenant-Governor of Delhi.

The order has prohibited him from making any comments with regard to his role in the liquor policy case.

The court had made it clear that the grant of bail was not a comment on the merits of the case or on the pending appeal filed by Mr. Kejriwal against his arrest on March 21.

The eight-page order had rejected an argument by the prosecution agency, the Directorate of Enforcement (ED), that releasing Mr. Kejriwal on interim bail to canvass votes would create an impression among the public, worse still, a judicial precedent, that politicians were a separate class, higher in status than the ordinary citizen and immune from arrest.

J&K court quashes order on delisting some contractors

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

The Jammu and Kashmir High Court on Monday allowed contractors, who were delisted for being relatives of militants and separatists, "to participate in the tendering process" and quashed an order of the Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj.

"I find merit in these petitions...The impugned communication dated March 15, 2023, issued by the commissioner/secretary, Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, is quashed. The respondents shall permit the petitioners to participate in the tendering process," Justice Sanjeev Kumar said.

Justice Kumar was hearing a number of petitions where local contractors pleaded that they were denied permission to participate in a government tendering process for allegedly being related to militants or separatists.

"Evidently, the competent authority has not proposed the cancellation or refusal to renew the certificates of registration issued in favour of the petitioners. Simply, because one or more relatives of the petitioners were involved in anti-national activities in early 1990s or thereafter cannot be a ground to deprive the petitioners of their right to enter into contracts with government for execution of various public works," Justice Kumar held.

Malegaon tense as ex-Mayor shot at by two persons on a motorbike

Ateeq Shaikh
MUMBAI

Tensions broke out in Malegaon after Abdul Malik Mohammed Yunus Isa, All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) leader and former Malegaon Mayor, was shot at by two unidentified motorbike-borne assailants at 1.20 a.m. on Monday.

Mr. Isa, who was attacked outside a shop in the Malegaon section of the Mumbai-Agra highway, sustained bullet wounds in the chest, right hand and left thigh. He was rushed to a nearby hospital and then shifted to a private hospital in Nashik, 100 km from Malegaon.

"The law and order situation in Malegaon has become dangerous in the past few days. In the past as well, firing incidents had taken place, but the Police Department never arrested the real culprits," alleged the Malegaon Central MLA and AIMIM leader, Mohammed Ismail Abdul Khalique, who also went by the name Mufti Mohammed Ismail Qasmi.



Abdul Malik

"Such firing situations in Malegaon happen every two to four months and the culprits are not arrested. Are those responsible for the law and order sleeping? Is it a Jungle Raj here?" he asked.

Casting aspersions, the AIMIM leader said the attack was a political one, and if the assailants were not arrested by Tuesday morning, the party would have an internal discussion to chalk out the next steps.

"The police should have immediately arrested the accused by sealing the crucial points. Instead, the police came in big numbers to the hospital," Mr. Khalique said.

He said the assailants attacked without any fear as they had not covered their faces at the time and fired three rounds from a close distance of only seven feet.

Immediately after the attack, a crowd gathered at the incident spot as well as the hospital, leading to a tense situation within the textile city of Malegaon. However, no untoward cases were reported.

Reacting to the attack on the party leader, Asaduddin Owaisi, MP and president of AIMIM, took to the social media platform X to say, "I spoke to his brother Dr. Khalid on phone. We stand firmly with Abdul Malik's family. Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and DGP, Maharashtra must take immediate steps. This is a conspiracy and the murderers should be arrested as soon as possible."

The local police registered a case of attempt to murder, along with other charges, against two unidentified persons.

INDIA bloc leaders to meet on June 1 to assess poll performance, future plans

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has called a meeting of the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) in Delhi on June 1 to assess its performance in the Lok Sabha election and chalk out a strategy ahead of the results on June 4.

The Trinamool Congress has expressed its inability to attend the meeting as the last phase of polling is on that day.

"It is an informal discussion. During the election, we have not met. We have only been coordinating over the phone. And contrary to everyone's initial expectations, the INDIA bloc has performed very well across the country.



The INDIA bloc seems to be optimistic of the poll outcome.

The meeting is to assess our electoral performance and to chart the way ahead," a top Congress leader said.

While the INDIA bloc leaders appear optimistic about the poll outcome, there is no conversation yet on formulating a common minimum programme.

The INDIA bloc was constituted in March 2023 and since then, it has suffered multiple setbacks, including losing founding members such as the Janata Dal (United) and the Rashtriya Lok Dal. The allies have also fought against each other in at least three States – the Congress against the Aam Aadmi Party in Punjab; the Congress against the Left parties in Kerala, and the Trinamool against the Congress-Left combine in West Bengal.

The many committees and sub-committees constituted for campaigning and publicity also failed to function during the election. However, the allies believe that they have good coordination, particularly in Uttar Pradesh which sends the highest number of MPs to the Lok Sabha.

Padma Shri award winner Manjhi faces Naxal threat

Press Trust of India
NARAYANPUR

Traditional medicine practitioner Hemchand Manjhi, renowned for his stellar work from a remote village in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district, on Monday said he would return his Padma Shri award, after he received threats from Naxalites.

Dr. Manjhi, 72, popularly known as Vaidyaraj, also said he would discontinue his practice.

Naxalites on Sunday night set on fire two under-construction mobile towers in Chameli and Gaurdand villages and put up banners and dropped pamphlets there threatening Dr. Manjhi, police said.

The pamphlets also had a picture of Dr. Manjhi receiving the award.

Man who shot dead DJ was involved in a scuffle at bar: police

The Hindu Bureau
PATNA

The Ranchi Police on Monday said the shooting of a disc jockey (DJ) at a bar in the Jharkhand capital may have been the fallout of a scuffle that took place there. The police said the main accused in the case had been arrested from Gaya in Bihar.

Ranchi Senior Superintendent of Police Chandan Kumar Sinha said, "We arrested the accused within 15 hours of the incident. The accused's name is Abhishek Singh alias Vicky, a resident of Ranchi...The police are also interrogating three people in the case."

Mr. Sinha said Singh was in a drunk state when the crime was carried out. He said that *prima facie* it was known that there was a scuffle between the bouncers and customers, including the accused, at the bar around 10.30 p.m. on Sunday.

Around 1.18 a.m., the DJ was standing near a lift just outside the bar when Singh shot him.

"There was no one excluding the DJ at that time. It appears that after the fight with bouncers, the accused, who was in an alcoholic state, came for revenge," he said.

Mr. Sinha said the rifle used in the crime had been recovered. "After searching his house, we recovered two arms licences issued from Assam in his name. We are verifying if they are authentic."

The accused is a businessman.

(With PTI inputs)

ELECTIONS 2024



No postal ballot for Cong.'s Kangra candidate: CEO

Himachal Pradesh Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) has turned down a request of Congress candidate from Kangra Lok Sabha seat Anand Sharma for casting his vote from Dharamshala by postal ballot as his voter registration is in Shimla. The Congress veteran and former Union Minister on Monday termed the decision "unfair and unconstitutional", and said he would challenge it in the Supreme Court. The CEO refused the permission, noting that as per the rules only special voters, service voters, voters on election duty, electorates subjected to preventative detention and those notified under Clause C, Section 60 of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 are entitled to vote by post and Sharma does not fall under any of these categories. PTI



Congress' Kangra Lok Sabha seat candidate Anand Sharma in Chamba on Monday. ANI

Purvanchal will deal final blow to BJP: Akhilesh

Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav on Monday in Chandauli claimed that Purvanchal or eastern Uttar Pradesh would deal the final blow to the BJP.

"The people of Purvanchal have made up their mind that they will support the INDIA alliance. Ever since the elections came to Purvanchal, the people of the BJP are in shock. These people in the past were raising the slogan of '400 *paar*' have forgotten this slogan ever since elections have come to Purvanchal. The region will deal the final blow to the BJP," he said.

"The BJP government, which has been in power for the last 10 years, has been governing on the basis of loot and lies. They did not work. They wasted 10 years in the Centre and seven years in Uttar Pradesh," he said.



> In a democracy, we have the right to challenge and criticise the govt. But every time you criticise the govt. you are accused of being an anti-national
>
> **SHASHI THAROOR**
> Congress leader

BJP won't allow religion-based quota: Nadda

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president J.P. Nadda said on Monday that there will be no reservation based on religion as long as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the party are in power.

He accused the Opposition of planning to give reservation based on religion. PTI



> Kangana must ask PM why he has kept Prajwal...in the NDA fold; and why no FIR was lodged against former WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh
>
> **ALKA LAMBA**
> Mahila Congress president



Tight contest: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at a public meeting in support of Neeraj Shekhar, BJP's candidate from Ballia on Monday. ANI

Battle for Ballia evokes memories of ex-PM Chandra Shekhar

Mayank Kumar
BALLIA

Deciding which way to vote is a tough choice for Devendra Pandey. A resident of Bairia in Ballia of eastern Uttar Pradesh, Mr. Pandey has remained a supporter of former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, but is confused about supporting his son Neeraj Shekhar, who is contesting on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) symbol.

"Last time, I voted for the Samajwadi Party (SP), but it is a difficult choice this time. I have to listen to my inner conscience," he says.

The prestigious seat of Ballia, once synonymous with Chandra Shekhar, a socialist leader, is likely to witness a close contest between Mr. Neeraj and Sanatan Pandey of the SP with caste mobilisation playing a key role. In 2019, Mr. Pandey lost by a margin of 15,000-odd votes against Virendra Singh Mast of the BJP.

"It is difficult to predict anything. Top leaders held rallies but the SP candidate is banking on a formidable Brahmin-Muslim-Yadav social alliance, which is roughly 35-40% of the total votes," Shaligram Chaurasia, a resident, said. Rajput candidates have won 14 of the 18 times the constituency went to the polls; they include the late Chandra Shekhar, who won on eight occasions, while Mr. Neeraj won twice.

Mr. Neeraj and the BJP leaders are making an aggressive outreach towards the Brahmin community, highlighting the nationalistic plank of the ruling dispensation and invoking Ballia's rich legacy with freedom movement icons such as Mangal Pandey and Chitu Pandey.

"To honour the legacy of former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, the BJP has fielded Neeraj Shekhar as its candidate. I pay my tribute to the great freedom fighters Mangal Pandey and Veer Chittu Pandey," Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said, while campaigning for the BJP candidate. Mr. Shekhar has been invoking his father's association with the other caste combines of Ballia. The BJP campaign pitch also revolves around its development initiatives.

The Bhumihar community which consists of roughly one lakh voters in Ballia will be crucial in deciding the outcome. The community has a major presence in the Mohammadabad and Zahoorabad Assembly segments in Ghazipur district. Five Assembly seats come under the Ballia Lok Sabha constituency. The remaining three are in Ballia district. The SP is considered strong in the region as it won three of the five Assembly seats in the Ballia Lok Sabha constituency in the 2022 election.

The SP nominee is focusing on local issues such as migration to bigger industrial cities, but is also invoking Ballia's *Baagi* (rebel) character associated with Chandra Shekhar. He says he and the SP are the real followers of the socialist leader.

"Respected Chandra Shekhar*ji* is our collective heritage, but who he opposed ideologically all his life every person in Ballia knows, we are real inheritors of his ideas," Mr. Pandey said.

AAP faces a critical test in the multi-cornered fight in Punjab

The June 1 election is a prestige battle for the State's ruling party which is taking on the Congress, its INDIA bloc partner, in all 13 Lok Sabha constituencies; former allies BJP and SAD are contesting all seats separately, and the BSP too is going solo

OVERVIEW

Vikas Vasudeva
CHANDIGARH

As Punjab heads for the Lok Sabha election, it appears locked in a four-cornered electoral battle, even as the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which came to power with a thumping majority in the State in 2022, faces a critical test in its popularity and appeal.

The AAP and the Congress, both Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) partners, are fighting against each other in Punjab, though they have a seat-sharing arrangement in Delhi.

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), alliance partners from 1996 to 2020, are contesting the election separately. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) is for the first time contesting on its own all the seats in the State.

The Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar), led by Simranjit Singh Mann, a known Sikh hardliner, has also fielded its candidates.

The 13 Lok Sabha constituencies in the State will go to the polls on June 1. In 2019, the election was largely a triangular fight among the Congress, the SAD-BJP alliance, and the AAP. In the 2019 Lok Sabha election, the Congress won eight seats, securing a 41% vote share, while the AAP got one (7%). The BJP (9%) and the SAD (28%) won two seats each.

The AAP is seeking votes on the performance and policies of its government in the State. The election will be a critical test to ascertain the two-and-half-year-old government's popularity in Punjab as it is halfway through its tenure and the anti-incumbency factor cannot be ruled out. The prestige and leadership skills of Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, who is leading the election campaign, are at stake.

As campaigning reaches its last leg, the AAP is attempting to garner people's sympathy over the arrest of party supremo and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal as it continues to target the BJP-led Union government, blaming it for placing democracy and the Constitution in danger. Even as it fires salvos at its opponents, the AAP is facing confrontation on the ground as farmer groups have been questioning its leaders over poll promises not fulfilled, including minimum support prices for crops.

Facing the heat

The Opposition parties have been cornering the AAP government over such unmet promises and governance failures. A monthly pension of ₹1,000 to women is one of the key promises that has not been kept, and the AAP is facing the heat for it.

The Congress, which is the principal Opposition party in Punjab, is focusing on the anti-incumbency factor against the AAP in the State and the BJP at the Centre.

The Congress's backing of the earlier farmers' agitation on the Delhi boundary against the now-repealed farm sector laws and the latest protests on the Punjab-Haryana boundaries is a key factor on which the party pins its hopes on.

The Congress hopes to give a tough fights based on its manifesto, which promises to waive the debt of farmers and ensure there will be a legal guarantee for minimum support prices.

The SAD, a century-old regional party, which has been going through a rough patch following the drubbing in the 2017 and 2022 Assembly elections, is making desperate efforts to return to the *panthic* (Sikh) agenda to regain its relevance in State politics. The party, in its manifesto, has made a *panthic* and "pro-Punjab" pitch.

Going solo in the battle, the BJP, which has been facing the farmers' wrath, is attempting to make inroads into Punjab with an outreach to Sikhs and Scheduled Castes (SCs), and fresh politics of social engineering. The SCs account for around 32% of the population, the highest percentage among all States in the country.

Over the years, the BJP had been contesting the electoral battle in Punjab as a "junior partner" in its alliance with the SAD, but after the regional party quit the alliance, the saffron party has been aggressively busy with its expansion in the State.

After the alliance broke up, the BJP inducted several Sikhs into the party, including Capt. Amarinder Singh (retd.) and former Congress leader Rana Gurmit Singh Sodhi, in an attempt to build its pro-Sikh image.

The BSP, which has witnessed a gradual decrease in its vote share over the years in Punjab, is focusing on Dalits as a political plank by raising the issues faced by Scheduled Castes to garner support.

Past results

The table lists the 2019 election winners, runners-up and their vote shares in the 13 constituencies going to the polls in the seventh phase of the Lok Sabha election in Punjab

Seat	Party (Winner)	Vote share	Party (2nd)	Vote share
Gurdaspur	BJP	50.61	Cong.	43.14
Amritsar	Cong.	51.78	BJP	40.19
Khadoor Sahib	Cong.	43.95	SAD	30.51
Jalandhar	Cong.	37.9	SAD	35.9
Hoshiarpur	BJP	42.52	Cong.	37.63
Anandpur Sahib	Cong.	39.57	SAD	35.24
Ludhiana	Cong.	36.66	LIP	29.36
Fatehgarh Sahib	Cong.	41.75	SAD	32.23
Faridkot	Cong.	42.98	SAD	34.44
Firozpur	SAD	54.05	Cong.	37.08
Bathinda	SAD	41.52	Cong.	39.3
Sangrur	AAP	37.4	Cong.	27.43
Patiala	Cong.	45.17	SAD	31.35



Poll fervour: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal during a roadshow of AAP candidate Raj Chabbewal in Hoshiarpur. PTI

INDIA bloc will win all 40 LS seats in Bihar: Rahul

The Hindu Bureau
PATNA

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday took a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his '*Parmatma*' remark while addressing three election rallies in Bihar.

He said Mr. Modi was not going to become the Prime Minister as a wave in favour of the INDIA bloc was blowing in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Mr. Gandhi said the INDIA bloc would win all 40 Lok Sabha seats in the State.

At a rally in Bakhtiyarpur, Mr. Gandhi said, "The Prime Minister says that he does not take decisions, but it is taken by *Parmatma*. He says that he is not biological but a messenger of *Parmatma*. You know why he has brought up the *Parmatma* story? Because when ED will ask him about Adani after elections, he will say that he doesn't know anything about it, and he was asked to do so by *Parmatma*."

In an interview, Mr. Modi had said that when his mother was alive, he believed he was born biologically but after she passed away, based on his experiences, he was convinced that God had sent him.

Mr. Modi had said that the energy he gets could not be from his "biological body". but was "bestowed upon him by God".

Apart from Bakhtiyarpur, Mr. Gandhi addressed rallies in Paliganj and Bhojpur.

In Bihar, heavyweights, hat-trick hopefuls seek comeback

Amarnath Tewary
PATNA

Sitting MPs and party heavyweights will seek a referendum on their performance as eight seats in Bihar will go to the polls in the final phase of the Lok Sabha election.

The constituencies that will vote on June 1 are Nalanda, Patna Sahib, Pataliputra, Karakat, Buxar, Ara, Jehanabad and Sasaram (reserved).

The BJP has fielded five candidates while its NDA allies, the Janata Dal(U) and Rashtriya Lok Morcha (RLM), have fielded two and one candidates, respectively. The Rashtriya Janta Dal (RJD) and the CPI (ML) are contesting three seats each, while the Congress is contesting two.

Key candidates

In Nalanda, NDA candidate and three-time sitting MP Kaushalendra Kumar of the JD(U) is contesting against the CPI(ML)'s Sandeep Saurav. Mr. Kaushalendra is a close associate of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and has been winning the seat since 2009. In 2019, he defeated Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) candidate Ashok Kumar Azad by more than two lakh votes. The CPI (ML) has fielded its young MLA from Paliganj, hoping to give the JD(U) a tough fight.

In Patna Sahib, BJP leader and former Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad is seeking a second term. He is contesting against Congress candidate Anshul Abhijit, the son of former Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar. However, Mr. Abhijit is not a familiar face and on Monday, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addressed a public meeting to galvanise support for the candidate. Mr. Prasad, who comes from the upper caste Kayastha community, the dominant voter base in the constituency, is popular. In 2019, he defeated Congress candidate and Bollywood actor Shatrughan Sinha by more than 2.5 lakh votes.

From Patliputra, sitting BJP MP Ram Kripal Yadav is eyeing a hat-trick. He is pitted against the RJD's Misa Bharti, the elder daughter of RJD chief Lalu Prasad. Ms. Bharti, who lost the seat to Mr. Yadav in 2014 and 2019, has campaigned hard, hoping to wrest the seat from the BJP candidate who is known for his easy accessibility. Mr. Prasad's family has lost the seat thrice, including in the 2009 election when the RJD chief lost by fewer than 24,000 votes to the JD (U)'s Ranjan Prasad Yadav.

From Ara, BJP candidate and Union Minister Raj Kumar Singh is seeking a third term. He is contesting against the CPI(ML)'s Sudama Prasad.

In 2019, Mr. Singh defeated CPI(ML) candidate Raju Yadav by 1.47 lakh votes.

The Minister is popular, especially among the upper caste Rajput voters. While the CPI(ML) has the support among the EBC and OBC voters, Mr. Singh is banking on the upper caste votes and Mr. Modi's popularity.

In adjoining Buxar, the BJP has replaced sitting MP Ashwini Kumar Choubey, known for his hard-line Hindutva, with former Baikunthpur MLA Mithilesh Tiwari. Mr. Tiwari is pitted against RJD leader Sudhakar Singh, a former Agriculture Minister who had resigned from the Cabinet alleging corruption. Two Independent candidates, Dadan Singh Yadav and former bureaucrat Anand Mishra, are expected to cut into the vote shares of Mr. Tiwari and Mr. Sudhakar.

In Sasaram, the BJP has changed its sitting MP Chhedi Paswan by fielding Shivesh Ram. Sasaram is the only reserved (SC) constituency going to the polls in the last phase in Bihar. Mr. Ram is pitted against Congress candidate Manoj Kumar. In 2019, Mr. Manoj had contested on a Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) ticket and had come third.

In Karakat, popular Bhojpuri film star Pawan Singh has thrown his hat in the ring as an Independent candidate. Mr. Pawan had hoped to contest the Lok Sabha election from Ara but the BJP fielded him from Asansol in West Bengal. Mr. Pawan withdrew from the contest citing 'personal reasons' and filed his nomination from Karakat instead to fulfil his 'mother's wishes'.

Ahead of Mr. Modi's visit to the constituency on May 25, to campaign for NDA candidate Upendra Kushwaha (RLM), the BJP expelled Mr. Pawan from the party for 'anti-party activities'.

Mr. Kushwaha is pitted against CPI(ML) candidate Raja Ram Singh Kushwaha. Mr. Pawan has made the Karakat election a triangular contest having organised a spirited campaign by roping in Bhojpuri film actors.

In Jehanabad, the NDA has reposed its faith in sitting MP Chandehswar Prasad Chandravanshi (JD-U) against the RJD's Surendra Prasad Yadav and the BSP's Arun Kumar. Jehanabad had been a stronghold of the Left before the RJD won it in 1998. Since then, the RJD or the JD(U) has been winning the seat. This time, Mr. Arun could dent the upper caste vote bank of Mr. Chandravanshi. Mr. Surendra, who lost to the JD(U) candidate in 2019 by just 1,751 votes, has been canvassing hard to bridge the slim gap.



Seeking support: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with Misa Bharti, RJD candidate from Patliputra, at a public meeting on Monday. ANI

Eight constituencies will go to the polls in the last phase of the Lok Sabha election on June 1 in Bihar

INBRIEF



Hemant Soren files bail plea in Jharkhand High Court

Former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, arrested by the Enforcement Directorate in an alleged land scam case, filed a bail petition in the Jharkhand High Court on Monday. Mr. Soren had withdrawn his petition before the Supreme Court seeking interim bail and quashing of arrest on May 22. Ranchi Special PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act) court had rejected his bail petition in this case on May 13. The fresh bail petition noted that the ED did not have a single document related to the 8.5 acres of land in the centre of the land-grabbing allegation. It also mentioned that land under Jharkhand's Chotanagpur Tenancy Act) cannot be transferred to anyone under any circumstances.

DRDO Chairman gets a year's extension of service

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet on Monday extended the tenure of Samir V. Kamat as the Secretary of Department of Defence Research and Development and Chairman of Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) for one year, up to May 31, 2025. "The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the proposal of Ministry of Defence for extension in service of Dr. Samir V. Kamat... for a period of one year from June 01, 2024 or until further orders, whichever is earlier," a notification from the Department of Personnel and Training said. Dr. Kamat was appointed to the post in August 2022.

Congress will blame EVMs for Lok Sabha election defeat: Shah

The Hindu Bureau
LUCKNOW

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday said that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance would return to power with a thumping majority on June 4, and predicted that Congress leaders would hold a press conference blaming electronic voting machines (EVMs) for the defeat of the INDIA bloc.

Addressing a rally in support of the BJP candidate for Uttar Pradesh's Kushinagar Lok Sabha seat, Mr. Shah added that following the results, responsibility for the Congress's defeat would likely be placed on its national president, Mallikarjun Kharge, leading to his resignation.

"Congress leaders will hold a press conference and claim that they lost because of the EVMs. The blame for the loss will also fall on Kharge-*ji*," the Home Minister said.

Mr. Shah also pitched Prime Minister Narendra Modi's backward class identity, adding that Opposition leaders Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav were born with a silver spoon in their mouths. "Modi-*ji* was born in a backward class home. He understands the problems of the underprivileged sections, while both Rahul *baba* and Akhilesh-*ji* were born with a silver spoon and do not know about the problems being faced by people of eastern Uttar Pradesh," he said.



Union Home Minister Amit Shah at a public rally in Kushinagar on Monday. ANI

Mr. Shah hailed Mr. Modi's leadership, and said that the BJP had given priority to the economic and social development of the State.

"Our government under PM Modi's leadership has always given priority to the economic and social development of eastern Uttar Pradesh, and voters have always given us their love and blessings," he said, adding that the enthusiasm in the public meeting was evidence that all the 80 seats from the State would be won by the BJP.

Kolkata comes to a standstill after cyclone makes landfall

One person killed, three injured in the aftermath of the storm that disrupted public transport and left large parts of the city inundated, bringing back memories of Super-cyclone Amphan in 2020

Moyurie Som
KOLKATA

Cyclone Remal battered Kolkata and adjoining areas of the metropolis on Monday, inundating large parts of the city, uprooting trees and electric poles and leaving people stranded for public transport.

The cyclone made landfall between the West Bengal and Bangladesh coasts on Sunday night, and people of Kolkata woke up to torrential rain and gales. In the 24 hours to 8.30 a.m. on Monday, the city received 144 mm of rainfall.

The cyclone claimed the life of a 51-year-old man and injured three in the city. The deceased, Sheikh Sajid, was killed as a cement tile blown away by the wind fell on him on Sunday night.

People from across the city were seen wading through knee-deep water as areas such as Camac Street, Theatre Road, Amherst Street, Central Avenue, Mohammad Ali Park, and Mahatma Gandhi Road remained waterlogged.

The storm brought back memories of Super-cyclone Amphan that had wreaked havoc in Kolkata and adjoining coastal areas in May 2020.



Under water: Vehicles and pedestrians on a flooded street in Kolkata on Monday. DEBASISH BHADURI

"Low-lying areas in north Kolkata are our main problem areas. We hope to improve the waterlogging situation in these areas in the next year-and-a-half," Mayor Firhad Hakim said on Monday. He said he was looking to raise funds for this purpose and would make an announcement soon.

"We need five hours from when the rainfall stops and the high tide sets in to clear most of the waterlogging from the city roads," he added.

At least 68 trees were uprooted across the city, leading to road blocks and traffic disruptions.

Municipal authorities and disaster management teams from civic bodies around Kolkata deployed teams in multiple areas to restore normal traffic movement. Services of the Kolkata Metro main line were halted between certain stretches until noon, as the underground tracks were under water.

Local train services of the Sealdah suburban section were disrupted, and some long-haul trains were cancelled. There were fewer vehicles on the road and commuters had a tough time. Office-goers stranded near Camac Street said the traffic conditions and disruptions of metro and bus services have made commuting very difficult.

The airport resumed flight operations around 9 a.m. on Monday, following a 21-hour suspension since Sunday noon.

NCW calls for probe into charges against Punjab MLA

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The National Commission for Women (NCW) has expressed "grave concern" over the allegations of inappropriate sexual conduct made against Punjab MLA Balkar Singh and sought a prompt and impartial probe into the matter. The allegations against Mr. Singhwere levelled by BJP leader Tajinder Pal Singh Bagga. The BJP leader has accused Mr. Singh of engaging over a video call in a sexual act with a woman seeking employment.

The NCW called for urgent intervention by the Punjab DGP and sought a report within three days. "The NCW is gravely disturbed by the social media post alleging inappropriate conduct by Punjab MLA Mr. Balkar Singh...," the NCW said in post on X.

NIA arrests five from different locations for human trafficking

Devesh K. Pandey
NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Monday arrested five persons in human trafficking and cyber fraud case.

The NIA probe has revealed that the accused were part of the organised trafficking syndicate engaged in luring and sending Indian youth to foreign countries on the false promises of legal employment.

Manish Hingu from Gujarat, Pahlad Singh from Bihar, Nabialam Ray from Delhi, Balwant Kataria from Haryana, and Sartaj Singh from Chandigarh were held following searches across 15 locations in six States and two Union Territories in coordination with the local police and Central intelligence agencies.



Victims of human trafficking rescued from Cambodia arrive at Visakhapatnam airport on May 24. V. RAJU

"The youth were being forced to work in fake call centres in Laos, Golden Triangle SEZ, and Cambodia, among other places, as part of the racket, controlled and operated mainly by foreign nationals. They were coerced into undertaking illegal activities online, such as credit card fraud," the agency said.

Two doctors arrested for tampering with evidence in Pune luxury car crash case

The Hindu Bureau
PUNE

The Pune luxury car crash case took another twist on Monday as the police arrested the head of the Forensic Medicine Department at the State-run Sassoon Hospital here, another doctor and a staffer for allegedly tampering with evidence.

Alleging a "criminal conspiracy" on the part of the doctors and kin of the teenage driver of the car, Pune Police Commissioner Amitesh Kumar on Monday said the doctors had replaced the blood samples of the 17-year-old – who allegedly ran over two persons on May 19 while driving a luxury car under the influence of alcohol – with that of another person, and threw the original samples in the dustbin.

They allegedly replaced the blood sample of the accused with that of another person

The arrested are Ajay Taware, head of the Forensic Medicine Department; Shrihari Halnor, chief medical officer of the hospital; and Atul Ghatkamble, a staff member who works under Dr. Taware.

All three were produced before a court and remanded in police custody till June 30.

The police told the court that financial transactions had taken place between the kin of the minor and the doctors to change the blood samples, and they would search the houses of the accused for evidence.

The Police Commissioner told presspersons that Sections 120 (B) (pertaining to criminal conspiracy), 467 (forgery) and 201, 213, 214 (destruction of evidence) of the Indian Penal Code had been added to the case, which has been registered under Section 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder).

"As part of a criminal conspiracy, the accused juvenile's blood sample was taken by a doctor of Sassoon Hospital and thrown in the dustbin. Another person's sample was taken and sealed and sent to the forensics laboratory. He did this on the instructions of Dr. Ajay Taware, who is the HoD of Forensic Medicine of Sassoon Hospital," Mr. Kumar said, adding that the doctors were questioned on Sunday evening and taken into custody on Monday morning.

Nothing 'corrupt' in making promises in manifestos, says SC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A two-judge Bench found the petitioner lawyer's take on election promises a bit too 'far-fetched'

The Supreme Court on Monday said that there is nothing corrupt about promises made in a political party's manifesto working out eventually to the public's financial benefit.

A Bench of Justices Surya Kant and K.V. Viswanathan found a bit too "far-fetched" the argument of the lawyer of a petitioner that commitments which help voters get richer amount to a "corrupt practice" .

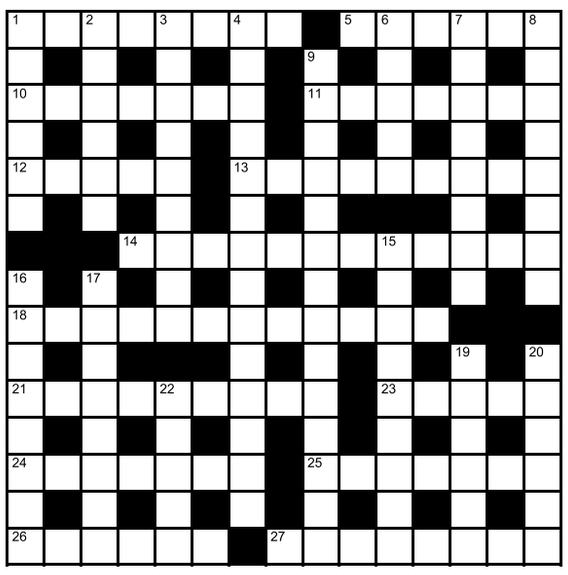
"The contention of counsel that the commitments by a political party in its manifesto, which eventually lead to direct or indirect financial help to the public at large, will also amount to corrupt practice by a candidate of that party, is too far-fetched and cannot be accepted," the Bench observed in a short order. The order was based on an appeal assailing a Karnataka High Court decision rejecting an election petition filed by Shashanka J. Sreedhara, a voter from the Chamrajpet Assembly constituency. He had challenged the election win of B.Z. Zameer Ahmed Khan, a Congress candidate, in the Assembly election of 2023. The petitioner said the promises or guarantees in the manifesto of Mr. Khan's party amounted to corruption. Mr. Khan countered that the guarantees were policy thresholds and projections, and not corrupt practices.

TH CROSSWORD + 14186

(set by Dr. X)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ *https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Soft drink with essence of fruit flavour for masses (8)
5 Check boy having intestinal colic at first, giving digestive remedy shortly (6)
10 High on rum, cuddling single female in flat (7)
11 Elderly person is retd, so worried about bills essentially (7)
12 Rushes with courage to save son (5)
13 Doctor loves nurse? Not new for us, personally (9)
14 Essentially managing company in a muddled manner (12)
18 Article about old bumpy secluded road (12)
21 Strange case of colic in enteric disorder (9)
23 Metal girder in hotel yard discarded, may be defective (1-4)
24 Canadian cop leapt on time to catch thugs at centre (7)
25 Nailed criminal smuggling cocaine to European country (7)
26 Apply over back of knee joint (6)
27 Feel at home, getting century in session (8)

Down

1 Hype about new electronic drive (6)
2 Receiving religious instruction, troublesome person becomes man of God (6)
3 Checks toilet close to studio having bad stink (5,4)
4 Anxious groom romanced nervously at first? That's usual (6,2,6)
6 Saving a little cash, motivate to invest (5)
7 Move air-conditioned container secured by chain (8)
8 Panoramic train rides through pass (5-3)
9 Plan educational programme for stuntmen? (6,2,6)
15 Most raunchy actress at premiere in tight tee shirt (9)
16 Flag in ship over river (8)
17 Infer fraud with evidence implicating director (8)
19 Arrest Greek character involved in row (6)
20 In the middle of a haze after consuming a little dope (6)
22 Reviewed sample of inert inorganic compound (5)

SUDOKU

7								
		6		3	1			8
	3		6		2		5	
5		2		4				3
		9				1		
3				1		5		2
	4		2		9		7	
2			5	7		6		
								9

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

C	O	M	P	L	A	I	N		P	L	A	T	E	S
A		O		I		M		G		A		E		P
S	P	I	F	F	U	P		O	N	T	A	R	I	O
I		E		E		E		I		H		R		O
N	A	T	A	L		R	E	N	D	I	T	I	O	N
G		Y		I		S		G				F		F
			E	N	D	O	F	T	H	E	L	I	N	E
I		S		E		N		O		G		C		D
S	A	T	I	S	F	A	C	T	I	O	N			
O		A				T		H		M		G		A
P	U	N	C	H	L	I	N	E		A	V	E	R	S
R		D		O		O		W		N		L		S
E	M	O	T	I	O	N		A	N	I	M	A	T	E
N		F		S		S		L		A		T		R
E	F	F	E	T	E		B	L	A	C	K	O	U	T

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

4	3	6	1	7	2	5	9	8
5	2	7	9	4	8	3	1	6
1	8	9	6	5	3	2	7	4
9	7	4	3	6	1	8	5	2
6	5	3	2	8	7	1	4	9
2	1	8	4	9	5	7	6	3
3	6	1	7	2	9	4	8	5
8	9	2	5	1	4	6	3	7
7	4	5	8	3	6	9	2	1



FAITH

Gain Parvati's grace

Our spiritual literature is replete with instances of good deeds resulting in great boons. One example is that of Vidyavati, said P. Swaminathan in a discourse.

Employed as a sweeper in a temple, Vidyavati went beyond her duties and served the temple deity, Parvati, with utter devotion and humility. Wont to speak with the deity, she once expressed a desire that if she were to be reborn, then the deity should be born as her child. Perceiving this as a rightful plea, Parvati granted the boon. In her next birth, Vidyavati was born as Kanchanamala and married Malayadwaja, the ruler of Madurai. The couple had no children and hence the king conducted a yagna, seeking to be blessed with a boy to carry on his legacy, However, a girl child walked out of the fire.

Soon, the young girl, named Tadadakai, becomes the famous Meenakshi, and has conquered all the kingdoms barring Kailash. Venturing there, she came across a splendorous Siva and the warrior woman turned into a blushing maiden. She sought marriage with Siva, who promised to do so after arriving in Madurai. However, when he arrived, he came clad in a tiger skin, with skulls as garlands around his neck, in order to test her. Tadadakai was shocked at this form, but was advised to see Him with the inner eye. She realised this was none other than Sundareswaran.

INBRIEF



KAL, Maran to seek ₹1,323-cr. damages from SpiceJet, Singh

KAL Airways and Kalanithi Maran on Monday said they will seek more than ₹1,323 crore in damages from SpiceJet and its chief Ajay Singh as well as challenge the recent Delhi High Court order in the ongoing dispute between the two sides. On May 17, a division bench of the court set aside a single judge bench order that had upheld an arbitral award asking SpiceJet and its promoter Ajay Singh to refund ₹579 crore plus interest to Mr. Maran. PTI

Sai Silks Kalamandir Q4 net profit rises 42% to ₹28.73 cr.

Sai Silks Kalamandir Ltd. (SSKL) reported fourth-quarter net profit rose 42% year-on-year. to ₹28.73 crore. Total revenue climbed 11.3% to ₹359.64 crore. For FY24, profit grew 3.36% to ₹100.87 crore. Total revenue for the full year rose to ₹1,373.55 crore from ₹1,351.47 crore. Bharadwaj Rachamadugu, Senior Vice President, SSKL said, "We delivered a marginal growth in revenue and profit during the year despite several market adversities in consumer markets."

Healthtech start-up Meradoc eyes $20 mn for expansion, AI

Meradoc Healthtech Pvt. Ltd., a start-up and an online medical services provider, is in advanced talks with venture capitalist firms to raise up to $20 million and focus on customised Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to expand its footprint in India and offer specialised treatment to subscribers, Founder & CEO Sudhir Mathur said. As part of this expansion, the company plans to on-board doctors and specialists full-time to cater to healthcare needs in mental wellness.

LIC Q4 net rises 2.5%, wage arrears, benefits hit growth

For FY24, LIC reported a 11.75% rise in net profit to ₹40,676 crore from ₹36,397 crore; in Q4, the insurer set aside ₹13,750 crore for staff remuneration against ₹10,381 crore in Q4 of FY23

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) reported Q4 FY24 standalone net profit grew 2.49% to ₹13,763 crore from ₹13,428 crore in the year-earlier period. Profit growth softened due to a sharp rise in wage arrears and welfare expenses.

During the quarter, LIC earmarked ₹13,750 crore towards employee remuneration and welfare compared with ₹10,381 crore in the same period last year.

Tepid growth

LIC reported Q4 FY24 standalone net profit grew 2.49% y-o-y to ₹13,763 crore impacted by wage arrears

- For FY24, it allocated ₹39,584 crore towards wages, down from ₹40,094 crore in FY23
- Net Q4 premium income rose to ₹152,293 crore from ₹131,761 crore in the year-earlier period
- Income from investments in Q4 rose to ₹84,425 cr. from ₹67,847 cr. in the same period of FY23



But for FY24 it allocated ₹39,584 crore towards this expense down from ₹40,094 crore in FY23.

LIC's net premium income for the quarter rose to ₹1,52,293 crore from ₹1,31,761 crore in the year-earlier period. Income from investments in Q4 also rose to ₹84,425 crore from ₹67,847 crore in the same period in FY23.

For FY24 the firm reported a 11.75% rise in net profit of ₹40,676 crore compared with ₹36,397 crore in the previous year.

Siddhartha Mohanty, Chairperson, said, "We focused on directional changes in product mix . We have more than doubled our share of non-par business. Now, we intend to maximise our market share across categories."

Telcos to pay spectrum GST along with instalments

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Telecom companies must pay GST along with the instalments paid towards spectrum charges, a senior official said.

The Department of Telecom (DoT) will hold the next round of spectrum auction on June 6 for eight spectrum bands meant for mobile phone services. The base auction price has been set at ₹96,317 crore.

Spectrum will be assigned for 20 years and successful bidders must make payments in 20 equal annual instalments in the coming auction.

The official said Goods and Services Tax (GST) must be paid at 18% by telecom companies along with each instalment.

"The GST Council in its next meeting is likely to clarify the procedure for GST payment by firms winning the bids," the official told *PTI*.

The clarification will end confusion among field formations regarding the method for collection of GST in the auction process.

All available spectrum in the 800, 900, 1,800, 2,100, 2,300, 2,500, 3,300 MHz, and 26 GHz bands are part of the auction.

The total frequencies being put under the hammer are valued at ₹96,317 crore on base price.

Moore Singhi ED Rajat Mohan said under the GST law, spectrum payment is covered under licensing services for the right to use other natural resources on which tax is levied at 18%.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	MONDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	75,391	-0.03
US Dollar	83.13	-0.04
Gold	72,820	0.23
Brent oil	83.08	-----

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter	3289.05	-95.90
Adani Ports	1431.65	15.55
Apollo Hosp	5939.30	24.95
Asian Paints	2872.30	-2.45
Axis Bank	1187.00	13.00
Bajaj Auto	8998.70	50.50
Bajaj Finserv	1595.80	-5.90
Bajaj Finance	6895.50	58.60
Bharti Airtel	1384.35	-4.15
BPCL	656.05	1.95
Britannia Ind	5212.25	-28.45
Cipla	1478.65	-7.80
Coal India	494.45	-6.55
Divis Lab	4255.25	132.85
Dr Reddys Lab	5872.70	6.95
Eicher Motors	4793.30	-87.65
Grasim Ind	2390.65	-50.35
HCL Tech	1353.30	8.10
HDFC Bank	1527.70	10.50
HDFC Life	564.25	-0.85
Hero MotoCorp	5083.90	-34.40
Hindalco	677.85	4.60
Hind Unilever	2384.50	15.45
ICICI Bank	1129.80	-2.15
IndusInd Bank	1465.10	23.30
Infosys	1471.35	6.25
ITC	431.50	-4.70
JSW Steel	901.95	-6.70
Kotak Bank	1711.00	7.55
L&T	3652.00	26.10
LTIMindtree Ltd.	4892.05	52.30
M&M	2549.10	-30.65
Maruti Suzuki	12906.10	-94.35
NestleIndia	2459.90	-7.85
NTPC	369.65	-5.30
ONGC	277.65	-5.60
PowerGrid Corp	317.95	-0.85
Reliance Ind	2932.50	-28.00
SBI Life	1410.20	-26.05
State Bank	833.70	5.10
Shriram Finance Ltd.	2380.00	-17.50
Sun Pharma	1466.05	-20.65
TataConsumerProduct	1087.90	-10.35
Tata Motors	958.50	-2.05
Tata Steel	175.50	0.65
TCS	3847.05	-2.45
Tech Mahindra	1329.70	7.95
Titan	3403.40	-9.00
UltraTech Cement	10225.50	-5.60
Wipro	452.45	-11.20

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on May 27

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	82.93	83.25
Euro	90.02	90.37
British Pound	105.73	106.15
Japanese Yen (100)	52.86	53.07
Chinese Yuan	11.45	11.49
Swiss Franc	90.74	91.10
Singapore Dollar	61.46	61.71
Canadian Dollar	60.72	60.96
Malaysian Ringitt	17.65	17.74
Australian Dollar	55.10	55.32

Source:Indian Bank

General insurers' GDPI may rise 32% by FY26: ICRA

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Gross direct premium income (GDPI) of general insurers in India is expected to touch ₹3.7 trillion by 2025-26, which will be an increase of 32% from the ₹2.8 trillion registered in 2023-24, ICRA said.

In the current fiscal, the GDPI is likely to increase 15.5% on the back of continued strong growth in the health segment, it said. Health segment was also behind the robust growth of insurance in FY24.

Consumer durables to get dearer on freight, input costs

Meenakshi Verma Ambwani
NEW DELHI

Consumer durable makers have been hit by a surge in raw material prices like copper; and logistics and freight costs, leading them to consider raising prices of products like air-conditioners, refrigerators, and LED TVs from June.

Kamal Nandi, Business Head & EVP, Godrej Appliances, said: "Prices of commodities such as copper have shot up 25-30% over the past three months. Aluminium prices too have surged. Global freight costs have increased by 60-70%. This has put pressure on the input costs for players.



"Raw materials are usually purchased a quarter in advance and the impact will be felt more in the July quarter. Therefore, some increase is expected in the prices of products like air-conditioners in the July quarter."

This comes just as cooling items are witnessing rising demand as heatwaves scorch many parts of the country.

For LED TV makers, prices of open cells, a critical component, have been rising since early this year.

Avneet Singh Marwah, CEO, SPPL, Indian brand licensee for Kodak and Thomson said, "We will have to raise LED TV prices by 5% in June and may need to increase it further by 3-4% in July."

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

TVS Supply Chain Solutions turns Q4 PAT of ₹5.4 crore

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

TVS Supply Chain Solutions Ltd. reported consolidated fourth-quarter net profit of ₹5.4 crore compared with a net loss of ₹9.4 crore in the year-earlier period. On a consolidated basis, revenue for the quarter rose 4.5% to ₹2,426.3 crore.

"The normalisation of freight rates and continuous growth in the integrated supply-chain solutions (ISCS) segment have helped achieve this topline growth," the company said in a filing with exchanges.

For the full year, the consolidated revenue was at ₹9,200 crore which was lower from ₹9,994 crore in the previous year mainly due to global trade cycle



Ravi Viswanathan

challenges in Network solutions (NS) segment which was compensated by additional business from ISCS segment.

The company during the year suffered a net loss of ₹57.7 crore compared with a net profit of ₹47.7 crore in the previous year.

Ravi Viswanathan, MD said the quarterly and annual results reflect the consistent growth in the ISCS segment and strong resilience, despite major headwinds,in the NS segment.

"We have made considerable progress in cross selling and customer acquisition strategy and significantly expanded our footprint within the Fortune 500 customers' segment. Our technology-led solutions are differentiating us in the marketplace as we embark on deploying AI at scale in our customer engagements across the U.S.A, Europe and India," he said.

"We are continuously strengthening organisation with process and technology to capitalise on growth opportunities and remain confident of our healthy business development pipeline, which will drive further growth in FY 25."

Adani Energy Solutions to raise up to $1.5 billion

Reuters
BENGALURU

Adani Energy Solutions said on Monday its board has approved a fundraise of up to $1.5 billion.

The power distribution firm will raise funds via share issuance or other securities by way of qualified institutional placements or through any other permissible mode, it added.

Adani Energy did not give reasons for the fundraise and the issue price of the securities.

Adani Group's flagship firm Adani Enterprises will also fundraise on Tuesday.

Adani Enterprises' shares recovered to pre-Hindenburg levels during intraday trade on Friday.

Ghana ties up with Reliance Jio arm, others for 4G, 5G infra

Press Trust of India
MUMBAI

Ghana has signed deals with a Reliance Jio subsidiary, Tech Mahindra and other vendors to build 4G and 5G infrastructure as the African country aims at enhancing its telecom capabilities.

Ghana's State-backed Next-Gen Infrastructure Company (NGIC) has partnered Jio's arm Radisys, Tech Mahindra and Nokia to build the necessary infrastructure for delivering affordable 5G mobile broadband services.

Ursula Owusu-Ekuful, the West African country's Minister for Communication and Digitalisation, told reporters here that India was a "strategic choice" due to its similar demographics and Ghana wants to replicate the Indian story on telecom penetration.



"Your (India's) demographics are just like us, the Jio model was rolled out just a few years ago, so the learnings are still fresh," she added.

Shared infrastructure

NGIC has been allocated 5G spectrum and local telcos will be utilising the shared infrastructure to roll out the services in the next six months. As per reports, the overall contract is over $200 million.

Ms. Ekuful said Ghana is a part of the 33-nation Smart Africa alliance, and other countries in the continent will be closely watching the rollout to see whether they can also emulate the same locally.

When pointed out that Indian vendors have not executed such deals in the past and why Ghana chose them over the Chinese suppliers, she said, "It was a strategic choice for us. We don't want to get caught up in any of the geopolitics that is currently going on. We want what is the best for our national interest." "Ghana wants to leverage India's experience in the field," she added.

Natco Pharma Q4 net profit surges 40% to ₹386 crore

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Natco Pharma reported consolidated net profit rose 40% to ₹386.3 crore for the quarter ended March as revenue from operations rose almost 19% on the back of higher formulations exports.

Revenue from operations rose to ₹1,068.3 crore (₹897.9 crore).

A more than 34% increase in formulations exports to ₹954.9 crore (₹709.2 crore) was the highlight even as contribution of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), domestic formulations as well as the crop health sciences segments to revenue declined.

NSE cuts tick size for select stocks to boost liquidity

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) has decided to introduce one paisa tick size for all stocks priced below ₹250 from June 10, in a bid to enhance liquidity and improve price discovery by allowing for more precise price adjustments.

Presently, the tick size for these stocks is five paise, which will be reduced to one paisa.

"The tick size determined for securities in T+1 settlement will also be applicable for T+0 settlement (series T0)," NSE said in a circular on Monday.

PE-VC investments soften to $39 bn: Bain

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU



Mirroring global trends, Indian private equity and venture capital (PE-VC) investment softened to $39 billion in 2023, returning to pre-COVID-19 activity levels, reported Bain & Company on Monday.

Traditional sectors, including manufacturing, healthcare, energy showed resilience and gained share, with some 75% of investments in 2023 compared with 60% in 2022.

The manufacturing sector in India emerged as an attractive bet for investors with investments of $2 billion growing by 20% CAGR over the last two years (2021-23), driven by supply-chain diversification, government incentives, and numerous scale assets coming to market, as per Bain & Company's India Private Equity Report 2024. With EV expansion in India expected to reach 40% by 2030, the past year saw OEMs drive more than 70% of deal value and large investments across vehicle segments.

Gokaldas Exports Q4 net dips

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Gokaldas Exports Limited on Monday reported a consolidated revenue of ₹818 crore for the fourth quarter compared with ₹530.1 crore in the year-earlier period and a consolidated profit after tax of ₹44.3 crore compared with ₹47.2 crore in Q4 FY23.

VC and MD Sivaramakrishnan Ganapathi said, "Our performance on a like-to-like basis reflects a strong performance."

KERALA MEDICAL SERVICES CORPORATION LTD
(DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE, GOVT. OF KERALA)
Head Office : Thycaud, Thiruvananthapuram-14,
(Telephone No. 0471-2945600),
E-mail : edrugs.kmscl@kerala.gov.in,
website : www.kmscl.kerala.gov.in, CIN No. U24233KL2007SGC021616

No.KMSCL/ED/17/2024 Date : 27.05.2024

E- TENDER NOTICE

Online bids are invited from manufacturers/direct importers/ loan licensees on behalf of Department of Health, Govt of Kerala for the Procurement of Drugs for NVHCP for the year 2024-25.

Sl. No.	Tender No. and Date	Category	No. of items
1.	KMSCL/ED/NVHCP Drugs/RC/2024/007 dtd. 27.05.2024	NVHCP Drugs	06

The last date and time of online uploading of tender will be 12.06.2024, 5.00 pm. The date and time of opening of Technical bid will be 15.06.2024 11.30 am. Tender shall be downloaded and submitted online through the e-tender portal www.etenders.kerala.gov.in.

(Sd/-) MANAGING DIRECTOR (Tender Inviting Authority)

KERALA WATER AUTHORITY e-Tender Notice

Tender No : E-Tender No : 02/2024-25/ SE/PHC/ALP/RC , JJM-WSS to Puliyoor, Budhanoor, - Construction of 16.00LL OHSR (R8) at Puliyoor, Supplying and Laying Distribution system Budhanoor and Puliyoor Panchayath Zone 10&11 and Railway Push through Work at Kulikkampalam-Pipeline Work. **EMD :** Rs.5,00,000/-. **Tender fee :** Rs.19,518/-. **Last Date for submitting Tender :** 10-06-2024 02:00:pm. **Phone :** 0477-2237954.
Website : **www.kwa.kerala.gov.in, www.etenders.kerala.gov.in**
KWA-JB-GL-6-8-2024-25 **Superintending Engineer, PH circle,** Alappuzha

MAHATRANSCO Maharashtra State Electricity Transmission Co. Ltd.

CORRIGENDUM

In continuation to this office RFx (e-Tender) Notice dated 23.02.2024 & Corrigendum Notice dt. 18.04.2024, the sale and submission date for the RFx. No. 7000030038 is extended as below :
Date of download & online submission of e-tender document is extended upto 12.06.2024 upto 15.00 Hrs.
All other Terms and Condition will remain unchanged. For detailed information visit our website: https://srmetender.mahatransco.in.

Sd/-
CHIEF ENGINEER, EHV PC (O&M) Zone, **Vashi**

MAHATRANSCO Maharashtra State Electricity Transmission Co. Ltd.

CORRIGENDUM

In continuation to this office RFx (e-Tender) Notice dated 23.02.2024 & Corrigendum Notice dt. 18.04.2024, the sale and submission date for the RFx. No. 7000030050 is extended as below :
Date of download & online submission of e-tender document is extended upto 12.06.2024 upto 15.00 Hrs.
All other Terms and Condition will remain unchanged. For detailed information visit our website: https://srmetender.mahatransco.in.

Sd/-
CHIEF ENGINEER, EHV PC (O&M) Zone, **Vashi**

PATUAKHALI

At least 10 persons killed after Cyclone Remal strikes Bangladesh



AFP

Millions of people in low-lying areas of Bangladesh on Monday surveyed the tangled wreckage left by Cyclone Remal that killed at least 10 persons. “3.75 million people have been affected... 35,483 homes were destroyed and another 1,15,992 were damaged,” Bangladesh’s State Minister for Disaster Mohibbur Rahman said. AFP

CAIRO

Egypt military says border guard killed in shooting at Rafah crossing



REUTERS

Egypt’s military said on Monday that a border guard was killed in a “shooting” in the Rafah border area with Gaza, where Israeli forces are deployed, adding that it had launched a probe. “The Egyptian armed forces are investigating,” a statement said, after Israel’s Army reported a “shooting incident” on the Egyptian border. AFP

YEREVAN

Protests shut streets in Armenia’s capital calling for the PM to resign



AP

Protesters demanding the resignation of Armenia’s Prime Minister on Monday blocked main streets in the capital city and other parts of the country. The police said 196 people have been detained in Yerevan. Protests have roiled the country for weeks, sparked by the government's return of four border villages to Azerbaijan. AFP

MOSCOW

Russia to remove Taliban from ‘terror’ list, says Foreign Minister



AFP

Russia will remove the Taliban from a list of banned terrorist organisations, the state-run RIA Novosti news agency said on Monday. “Kazakhstan has recently taken the decision, which we are also going to take, to remove them from the list of terrorist organisations,” Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said. AFP

World leaders ‘outraged’ by Israel’s ‘barbaric’ attack on Rafah tent camp

Around half of the dead were women, children and older adults, says Gaza’s Hamas-run Health Ministry; Washington asks Tel Aviv to take every precaution possible to protect civilians; France, Turkiye and Italy also condemn the strikes

Associated Press
TEL AVIV

Israel faced new condemnation on Monday for strikes on the southern Gaza city of Rafah that local health officials said killed at least 45 Palestinians, including displaced people living in tents that were engulfed by fire.

Israel has faced surging international criticism over its war with Hamas, with even some of its closest allies, particularly the U.S., expressing outrage at civilian deaths.

Sunday night’s attack, which appeared to be one of the war’s deadliest, pushed the overall Palestinian death toll in the war above 36,000.



Little mercy: Fire rages following an Israeli strike on an area designated for displaced Palestinians in Rafah on Sunday. REUTERS

The Gaza Health Ministry said around half of the dead were women, children and older adults.

France, a close European ally of Israel, said it was “outraged” by the violence. “These operations must stop. There are no safe areas in Rafah for Palestinian civilians. I call for full respect for international law and an immediate ceasefire,” President Emmanuel Macron said.

Erdogan’s statement

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Monday that his country would do “everything possible” to hold “barbaric” Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to account over deadly strikes in Rafah.

Italian Defence Minister Guido Crosetto said that bombings like the one in Rafah will have long-standing repercussions for Israel. “Israel with this choice is spreading hatred, rooting hatred that will involve their children and grandchildren,” he said.

Qatar, a key mediator between Israel and Hamas in attempts to secure a cease-fire and the release of hostages held by Hamas, said the strikes could “complicate” talks.

U.S. remarks

Meanwhile, the United States said Israel must make every possible effort to avoid civilian casualties. “As we have been clear, Israel must take every precaution possible to protect civilians,” a U.S. National Security Council spokesperson said in a statement.

“We are actively engaging the IDF and partners on the ground to assess what happened,” the spokesperson added.

‘More than 2,000 buried in Papua New Guinea landslip’

Associated Press
MELBOURNE

A Papua New Guinea government official has told the United Nations more than 2,000 people were believed to have been buried alive by Friday’s landslip and has formally asked for international help.

The government figure is roughly triple the UN estimate of 670 killed by the landslip in the South Pacific island nation’s mountainous interior. The remains of only six persons had been recovered so far.

In a letter to the UN resident coordinator dated Sunday, the acting director of the South Pacific island nation’s National Disaster Center Luseta Laso Mana said the landslide “buried more than 2,000 people alive” and caused “major destruction” at Yambali village in the Enga province.



Taking stock: Locals gather at the site of a landslip at Mulitaka village in Papua New Guinea’s Enga Province on Sunday. AFP

Estimates of the casualties have varied widely since the disaster occurred.

Determining the scale of the disaster is difficult because of challenging conditions on the ground including the village’s remote location, a lack of telecommunications and tribal warfare throughout the province which means international relief workers and aid convoys require military escorts.

The government estimates Papua New Guinea’s population at around 10 million people, although a UN study, based on data including satellite photographs of rooftops, estimated in 2022 it could be as high as 17 million.

U.S. officials visit Taiwan after new leader assumes office, condemn Chinese drills

Agence France-Presse
TAIPEI

A senior U.S. lawmaker affirmed on Monday Washington’s support for Taiwan against Chinese “aggression”, on the first congressional visit to the self-ruled island since it swore in a new President.

Sitting down on Monday morning with President Lai Ching-te, Representative Michael McCaul – who heads the influential House Foreign Affairs Committee – said he and his colleagues stood in “strong support of this beautiful island”.



Continued support: Michael McCaul and Lai Ching-te during a meeting at the Presidential Office in Taipei. AFP

Three days after Mr. Lai was sworn in, Chinese warships and fighter jets encircled Taiwan in drills that Beijing said were a test of its ability to seize the island.

China claims democratic Taiwan as part of its territory, and says it will never renounce the use of force to bring the island under its control.

Mr. McCaul on Monday condemned those “intimidating military exercises”.

“Whether it’s Putin in Russia, the Ayatollah in Iran or Chairman Xi next door to us in China, an unholy alliance is eroding peace around the world,” he told Mr. Lai.

Mr. McCaul arrived in Taipei on Sunday accompanied by both Republican and Democratic lawmakers.

Beijing said on Monday it “firmly opposes” the lawmakers’ visit.

China agrees to revive cooperation with Seoul, Tokyo, but miffed by their U.S. ties

Associated Press
SEOUL

China’s Premier agreed on Monday to revive three-way cooperation with South Korea and Japan in the face of shared challenges, but issued a veiled rebuke against the two countries’ expanding security cooperation with the United States.

Chinese Premier Li Qiang met South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in Seoul in the countries’ first such trilateral meeting in more than four years.



Relations reboot: Fumio Kishida, Yoon Suk Yeol and Li Qiang attend a business summit in Seoul on Monday. REUTERS

In a joint news conference, Mr. Li said China wants to cooperate with South Korea and Japan on economic issues.

Mr. Yoon said the three leaders agreed to promote people-to-people and cultural exchanges, establish safe supply chain networks and work together to tackle shared environmental, health and other issues. Mr. Kishida said the three countries share a big responsibility for regional peace and that Japan will chair the next round of the trilateral leaders’ meeting.

Signs of disapproval

Despite the amicable mood, however, Mr. Li at one point expressed Chinese uneasiness about Japan and South Korea’s moves to beef up their security partnership with the U.S., which Beijing views as an attempt to form a bloc to contain China.

Sport

Coach Xavi ends Barcelona stint with a victory against Sevilla

EURO LEAGUES

Associated Press
MADRID

Xavi Hernandez ended his stint as Barcelona coach with a 2-1 win at Sevilla in the final round of the Spanish league on Sunday.

Robert Lewandowski and Fermin Lopez scored for Barcelona, which announced on Friday it was parting ways with the former midfielder with a year left on his contract.

“We didn’t want this to end, but these are decisions made by the club,” Xavi said. “We didn’t win titles but we were on the right track. But football is like this, the directors will make their decisions. The response by the players was wonderful.”



Getting better: Xavi said Barca was on the right track despite not winning any titles this season. AP

Barcelona players bid farewell to Xavi after the match.

“We will always wish Xavi the best,” goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen said. “He’s been a friend for many years and it’s not easy to let him go... he deserves the best.”

The results: LaLiga: Sevilla 1 (En Nesyri 31) lost to Barcelona 2 (Lewandowski 15, Lopez 59).

Serie A: Frosinone 0 lost to Udinese 1 (Davis 76); Lazio 1 (Zaccagni 60) drew with Sassuolo 1 (Viti 66); Napoli 0 drew with Lecce 0; Verona 2 (Noslin 17, Suslov 37) drew with Inter Milan 2 (Arnautovic 10, 45+1).

West Indies completes T20I series sweep

CRICKET

Agence France-Presse
KINGSTON

West Indies completed a 3-0 sweep of its T20I series with South Africa after an eight wicket crushing of the Proteas at Sabina Park on Sunday.

Set 164 to win, the Caribbean side raced to the target with 6.1 overs to spare. Openers Brandon King and Johnson Charles put on 92 in 6.4 overs with Charles in particular punishing the tourists as he battered 69 off just 26 balls.

SA had its stand-in captain Rassie van der Dussen to credit for even setting a half-decent target.



Charles. AFP

The scores: South Africa 163/7 in 20 overs (Van der Dussen 51, Mulder 36; McCoy 3/39) lost to West Indies 165/2 in 13.5 overs (Charles 69, King 44, Mayers 36 n.o.).
Toss: SA.
West Indies won by eight wickets with 37 balls to spare to clinch the three-match series 3-0.
PoM: Charles. **PoS:** Motie.

Boro posts win but Loura loses

BOXING QUALIFIERS

Press Trust of India
BANGKOK

Former World youth champion Ankushita Boro defeated Namuun Monkhor of Mongolia in 60kg category but Abhimanyu Loura lost against Ireland’s Kelyn Cassidy in 80kg division in the second boxing World qualifiers for Paris Olympics here on Monday.

Boro started strongly and effectively blunted Monkhor’s speedy movements by tactically shifting gears to carve out a 4-1 win after three keenly-contested rounds.

However, it was an opposite result for Loura. The National Championships bronze medallist came into the second-round clash high on confidence after beating Bulgaria’s 10-time National champion Kristiyan Nikolov in a thrilling bout. But Cassidy was well prepared for the long reach of his opponent and went on to win 5-0 despite Loura giving his all in the final round.

Nikhat Zareen (women’s 50kg), Preeti (54kg) and Lovlina Borgohain (75kg) have confirmed their Paris berths by winning bronze medals at the Hangzhou Asian Games. India has fielded seven men and three women boxers in the second World Qualifiers and five of them received opening round byes.

UNSUNG HEROES

BCCI announces cash reward for IPL's groundsmen and curators



EMMANUAL YOGINI

BCCI secretary Jay Shah on Monday announced that groundsmen and curators of all the 10 regular IPL venues will be given ₹25 lakh. "The unsung heroes of our successful T20 season are the incredible ground staff who worked tirelessly to provide brilliant pitches, even in difficult weather conditions," Shah posted on X.

WICKET-TAKER

Russell has got a magic wand: Knight Riders skipper Shreyas



K.R. DEEPAK

Skipper Shreyas Iyer said all-rounder Andre Russell has a magic wand as he has given Kolkata Knight Riders crucial breakthroughs. "He's got that magic wand... he's looking forward to pick wickets. When I look at him, I know he can look at me. It has been a flawless season," Shreyas said in the post-match presentation.

IPL CHAMPION

Couldn't have asked for a better birthday gift: Knight Riders' Narine



R. RAGU

Kolkata Knight Riders' Sunil Narine, who became the first player to win the 'Most Valuabe Player' award thrice, said winning the IPL on his birthday was the best gift he could get. "Coming into the ground, it felt like 2012. I couldn't have asked for a better birthday gift. I am enjoying my cricket at the moment," Narine said.

TOUCHDOWN

First batch of Indian players reach New York ahead of T20 World Cup



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The first batch of Indian players have reached New York to take part in the 2024 T20 World Cup. Earlier on Saturday, the cricketers including skipper Rohit Sharma, pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, and Suryakumar Yadav had left for the United States. BCCI shared a clip of the players reaching the US.

Free-spirited Knight Riders ace the T20 game, develop blueprint for future

Shreyas' side, with a good mix of youthful exuberance and experience, played a brand of cricket that proved too good for the others; Gambhir and Pandit, with their behind-the-scenes tactical acumen and man-management skills, brought out the best in the Purple and Gold brigade

IPL-17

N. Sudarshan
CHENNAI

Kolkata Knight Riders has always displayed a penchant to go off the beaten track. It was among the first sides in the Indian Premier League to focus on hitting a majority of the runs through boundaries.

It has bet on mystery spinners like Sunil Narine and Varun Chakravarthy, even punted on the former's batting as opener, kept faith in wrist spinners like Kuldeep Yadav, unearthed gems like Suyash Sharma and turned around careers like those of Rahul Tripathi.

The side also has a reputation of backing talents for long, an unheard of quality in the fickle world of T20s. Narine and Andre Russell have been at the franchise for more than a decade, and Rinku Singh since 2018. Kuldeep stayed for five years, at a time when he was far from fully formed.

KKR's IPL-17 campaign, which culminated on Sunday with a thumping eight-wicket win over Sunrisers Hyderabad and a third title, was the perfect amalgamation of all these qualities. The side just lost three matches as it played free-spirited cricket, trusted its experienced stars, mixed things up by blooding in youngsters and reaped the rewards.

KKR scored 200 or more six times this IPL and Phil Salt's 435 runs at a strike-rate of 182.01 was instrumental in this. Narine scalped 17 wickets at a splendid economy rate of 6.69, and scored 488 runs at a strike-rate of 180.74.



Flying high: Knight Riders, who had a season to remember, were served well by the established stars as well as players like Arora who scalped Head for a duck in the final. K.R. DEEPAK

Making a mark

Russell, who had seemed a spent force last year, chipped in with 19 wickets, and speedsters Harshit Rana (19 wickets) and Vaibhav Arora (11) had breakout seasons. Even the 18-year-old Angkrish Raghuvanshi had his moments under the sun.

Also among KKR's strengths was the solid Indian core. Along with Harshit and Arora, Venkatesh Iyer played a stellar role, highlighted by the two match-winning half-centuries in Qualifier 1 and the final.

Varun, with 21 wickets, was only behind Harshal Patel (24) in the top wicket-takers' list.

Top performers





BATTING	Inns	Runs	HS	SR	100s/50s
Kohli (RCB)	15	**741**	113*	154.69	1/5
Ruturaj (CSK)	14	**583**	108*	141.16	1/4
Parag (RR)	14	**573**	84*	149.21	0/4

BOWLING	Inns	Wkts	BB	Econ	5W
Harshal (PBKS)	14	**24**	3/15	9.73	0
Varun (KKR)	14	**21**	3/16	8.04	0
Bumrah (MI)	13	**20**	5/21	6.48	1

The tournament also highlighted Shreyas Iyer's astute handling of his team and his own redemption arc.

Proven leader

His captaincy skills were never in doubt, for he had led Delhi Capitals to the final in 2020. But Shreyas is not in the T20 scheme of things for India, and even lost out on a central contract amidst injury setbacks and signs of mistrust between him and the cricketing establishment.

"He is pretty level-headed," said Mitchell Starc, the Player-of-the-Match both in Qualifier 1 and the final, about Shreyas.

"Pretty calm in most situations, more so when things haven't gone our way.

"To be part of the group with him leading... there have been moments through the year where he has seen the game a certain way and gone with his instinct and that has paid off. He thoroughly deserves his success."

It will be a pity that such an all-conquering group – meticulously mentored and coached by Gautam Gambhir and Chandrakant Pandit – will, in all probability, be dismantled before the mega auction that will take place ahead of IPL-18.

But KKR's T20 blueprint is sure to stand the test of time and shape many a future outfit.

Price tag didn't bother me too much: Starc



Take a bow! Knight Riders' investment in Starc reaped rich rewards. VIJAY SONEJI

S. Dipak Ragav
CHENNAI

After a slow start to the season, Mitchell Starc hit top gear in the climactic phase of the IPL, returning match-winning performances in both the Qualifier 1 and final to help Kolkata Knight Riders clinch its third title.

The 34-year-old, who has not played many T20s in the last few years, spoke about taking time to find his rhythm and delivering on the big stage.

"I haven't played a lot of T20 cricket in the last few years. So, it was about trying to find that rhythm of the format, and staying ahead of batters," said Starc.

Elaborating on his work with bowling coach B. Arun, someone he knew from their time at RCB, the left-arm pacer said: "It wasn't technical. It was probably a bit more tactical; there were suggestions for trying different things. Certainly, for batters I hadn't seen or knew much about, I was going to him [Arun] or Shreyas [Iyer] or GG [Gautam Gambhir] with that sort of thing."

"I'm on the more experienced side. So, it's not a technical thing. Arun might suggest things here or there Glad to have made an impact when it mattered the most," he added.

In a year when batters have taken the game to a new level, with record-high totals, Starc spoke about how the key to success was to stay level-headed.

"I think T20 is a great leveller. You can have some good days, and two days later, you can have a shocking day," said the Australian pace spearhead.

Returning to the IPL after nine years, Starc became the costliest buy in the league's history at ₹24.75 crore, but the speedster said the price tag didn't bother him.

"You don't need extra motivation. I am here as an overseas [player], and it's [for] nights like tonight or the last game that I have been picked. I mean, there's been jokes throughout, and there's been friendly banter about price tags and what not. It doesn't bother me too much.

"I think the pressure of being an overseas player or price tag, you expect that coming to the best domestic league in the world. It's our job to perform or set an example to younger players."

Nadal bows out in first round; Swiatek's title defence off to a good start

FRENCH OPEN

Associated Press
PARIS

Rafael Nadal lost in the first round of the French Open to Alexander Zverev 6-3, 7-6(5), 6-3 on Monday in what might turn out to be the 14-time Roland Garros champion's last match at his favourite tournament.

It is the first time in his long and illustrious career that Nadal has been beaten in two consecutive matches on clay courts and the first time he has dropped a match earlier than the fourth round at the French Open. His career record at the clay-court Grand Slam tournament is now 112-4.

The match was played with the retractable roof shut at Court Philippe Chatrier, and the loud cheers for Nadal from most in the capacity crowd of about 15,000 echoed throughout.

Nadal, who owns 22 Major trophies in all, turns 38 on June 3 and he has been dealing with hip and abdominal injuries since January 2023, limiting him to 15 matches and an 8-7 record since the start of last year.

His infrequent play dropped his ranking to No. 275 and he was unseeded for the French Open for the first time. That is why he ended up facing the No. 4-seeded Zverev.

Nadal has indicated 2024 likely would be his last season before retirement but he said Saturday that he is not 100% sure he won't play again at the French Open. And he reiterated that after Monday's defeat.

Iga Swiatek began her bid for a third consecutive French Open title with a straightforward 6-1, 6-2 victory over Leolia Jeanjean, stretching her winning streak to 13 matches.

Swiatek, who has been ranked No. 1 for nearly every week since April 2022, put together an overwhelming 26-2 edge in winners and had just one, brief blip at Court Philippe Chatrier in the one hour one minute match: she got broken to trail 1-0 in the second set.

But after nine unforced errors in the initial two games of that set, Swiatek made only two the rest of the way en route to a 15th consecutive win at Roland Garros. Three of her four Grand Slam trophies came in Paris – in 2020, 2022 and 2023.

Reigning Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner improved to 8-0 in Grand Slam play in 2024 by defeating Chris Eubanks 6-3, 6-3, 6-4, Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova eliminated Rebeka Masarova 6-1, 6-3 and two-time Major finalist Ons Jabeur beat Sachia Vickery of the US 6-3, 6-2.

Sumit Nagal's late resistance was not enough as his French Open debut ended with a defeat against big-hitting Russian Karen Khachanov. Nagal lost 6-2, 6-0, 7-6(5) in the opening round.

Tuesday's Picks

MEN

1-Djokovic *vs* Herbert
7-Ruud *vs* Alves
11-De Minaur *vs* Michelsen
12-Fritz *vs* Coria
13-Rune *vs* Evans

WOMEN

2-Sabalenka *vs* Andreeva
4-Rybakina *vs* Minnen
7-Zheng *vs* Cornet
10-Kasatkina *vs* Frech
14-Keys *vs* Zarazua



Tough break: Nadal's loss to Zverev was the first time he dropped a match earlier than the fourth round at Roland Garros. REUTERS

TOP RESULTS

First round:

Monday: Men: 4-Zverev (Ger) bt Nadal (Esp) 6-3, 7-6(5), 6-3;

2-Sinner (Ita) bt Eubanks (USA) 6-3, 6-3, 6-4; 9-Tsitsipas (Gre) bt Fucsovics (Hun) 7-6(7), 6-4, 6-1;

15-Shelton (USA) bt Gaston (Fra) 3-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-4; 18-Khachanov (Rus) bt Nagal (Ind) 6-2, 6-0, 7-6(5); 21-Auger-Aliassime (Can) bt Nishioka (Jpn) 6-2, 6-4, 6-4.

Women: 1-Swiatek (Pol) bt Jeanjean (Fra) 6-1, 6-2;

5-Vondrousova (Cze) bt Rebeka Masarova (ESP) 6-1, 6-3;

17-Samsonova (Rus) bt Linette (Pol) 6-1, 6-1; 8-Jabeur (Tun) bt Vickery (USA) 6-3, 6-2; 12-Paolini (Ita) bt Saville (Aus) 6-3, 6-4;

3-Gauff (USA) bt Avdeeva (Rus) 6-1, 6-1.

Sunday: Men: 8-Hurkacz (Pol) bt Mochizuki (Jpn) 4-6, 6-3, 3-6, 6-0, 6-3; Bergs (Bel) bt 24-Tabilo (Chi) 3-6, 7-6(5), 6-2, 6-2.

Moutet (Fra) bt 16-Jarry (Chi) 6-2, 6-1, 3-6, 6-0; Wawrinka (Sui) bt Murray (GBr) 6-4, 6-4, 6-2;

Gasquet (Fra) bt Coric (Cro) 7-6(5), 7-6(2), 6-4.

INBRIEF



Newgarden is first repeat Indy 500 winner in 22 years

Josef Newgarden of Team Penske warded off a late challenge from Mexican Pato O'Ward to win Indianapolis 500 on Sunday becoming the first back-to-back winner in 22 years. New Zealand's Scott Dixon finished third.

FMSCI Indian National Rally Sprint C'ship from June 1

The opening race of the six-round FMSCI Indian National Rally Sprint Championship 2024 (two-wheelers) will be held at the Madras International Circuit on June 1 and 2. The top five from each qualifier will feature in the finals, to be held on December 15 and 16 in Pune. Bengaluru (July 21-22), Chandigarh (October 5-6), Guwahati (November 23-24), and Goa (December 7-8) are the other venues. The competition will comprise 12 championship classes, with cash prizes awarded to the top three berths in each category.

Subhankar loses in semifinals of Austrian Open badminton

India's Subhankar Dey lost to Indonesia's Prahdiska Bagas Shujiwo 17-21, 15-21 in the Austrian Open International Challenge badminton semifinals at Graz on Sunday. He beat Poland's Mikolaj Szymanowski in the round-of-16, Germany's Matthias Kicklitz in the round-of-32 and Austria's Luka Wraber in the quarterfinals.

LIVE TELECAST

Roland Garros: Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 2.30 p.m.

England vs Pakistan: 3rd T20I, Sony Sports Ten 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 11 p.m.

Harmanpreet helps India beat Argentina

The skipper's sensational hat-trick guides the team to victory in a nine-goal thriller; Hundal and Gurjant also find the back of the net

FIH PRO LEAGUE

Press Trust of India
ANTWERP

Captain Harmanpreet Singh led from the front with a sensational hat-trick as the Indian men's hockey team recorded a thrilling 5-4 win over Argentina in the FIH Hockey Pro League here.

Besides Harmanpreet (29, 50 and 52), Araijeet Singh Hundal (7) and Gurjant Singh (18) also scored for India, while Federico Monja (3), Nicolas Keenan (24), Tadeo Marucci (54) and Lucas Martinez (57) were on target for Argentina on Sunday.

India made a good start, keeping the ball for most of the first quarter and came up with accurate passes to make its way into the Argentina striking circle.

However, Argentina drew first blood when Federico found the back of the net from a close range.

India equalised quickly as Araijeet scored a brilliant field goal. India also earned a penalty corner but failed to capitalize on it as the first quarter ended 1-1.

Counter-attack

India started the second quarter on a high note.

The fast counter-attacking aggressive approach helped India extend its lead after Gurjant scored an excellent field goal.



Captain fantastic: Harmanpreet led the way to overcome a stern test. X@THEHOCKEYINDIA

It was Nicolas Keenan who drove into the Indian circle, beating the defenders to strike the ball into India's goal levelling the score at 2-2.

However, India earned a PC with a minute remaining in the quarter and Harmanpreet made it 3-2 in India's favour.

Entertaining

The third quarter was entertaining with both teams displaying quick-fire hockey.

India secured a penalty corner but couldn't convert it as Harmanpreet's shot was blocked well by the Argentina goalkeeper.

India came out in top gear in the fourth quarter as it pushed Argentina to make errors, leading to a PC being awarded with 10 minutes remaining.

The decision was changed to a penalty stroke and Harmanpreet's low powerful shot found the back of the net as India took a 4-2 lead.

Two minutes later, India was awarded another penalty stroke, which was again successfully converted by Harmanpreet.

Quick goals

Argentina pulled two goals back in quick succession as Tadeo and Lucas found the back of the net to set up an exciting finish to the contest.

Indian junior women go down fighting to Germany

Press Trust of India
DUSSELDORF (GERMANY)

The Indian junior women's hockey team lost 4-6 to Germany in its fifth match of their tour of Europe, here on Monday.

After conceding six goals, India rallied to score four goals and asserted themselves in the second half of the match. Sanjana Horo, Bhinima Dan and Kanika Siwach scored for India.

Like their previous match, Germany scored early in the first quarter and doubled its lead soon after.

Despite trailing, the Indian defence did well to successfully defend multiple penalty corners.

In the final minutes of the first quarter, India won a penalty corner but the scoreline remained 2-0, in favour of Germany.

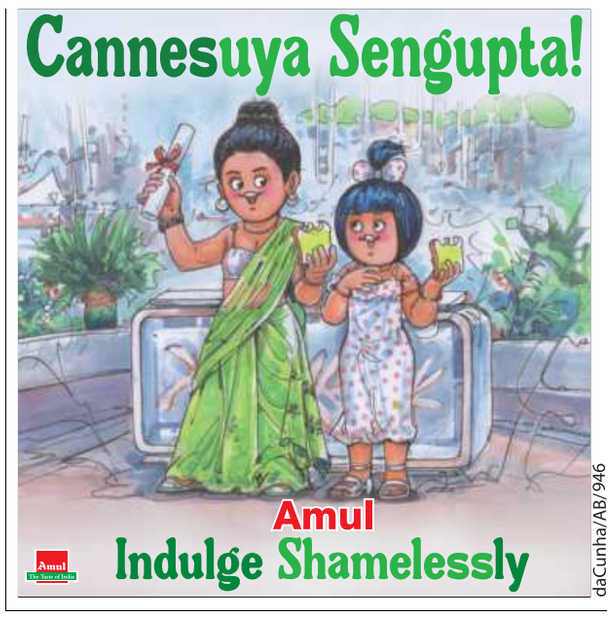
Germany struck their third goal soon to put themselves in a dominant position at half-time.

Germany continued to assert itself in the third quarter, scoring thrice, including a successful penalty corner conversion to take a commanding 6-0 lead.

India fought back and scored its first goal when Sanjana Horo sounded the board late in the quarter.

India turned up the pressure on Germany in the final quarter.

Sanjana Horo scored India's second goal before Binima Dhan and Kanika Siwach found the opposition net to reduce the margin to 4-6.





Pride of place: The champions and runners-up in the HCL Indian Open junior squash. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Aryaveer wins u-17 crown at Indian Open

SQUASH

Sports Bureau

Aryaveer Dewan bounced back to beat Subhash Choudhary 9-11, 6-11, 11-5, 11-6, 11-6 in the under-17 boys' final of the HCL Indian Open junior squash championship in Indore on Monday. In the girls under-13 event, M Goushika scored a 11-5, 7-11, 11-3, 12-10, 11-7 win over Diva Parasrampuria for the title.

The results (finals): Boys: Under-19: Yuvraj Wadhwani bt Tavneet Singh Mundra 11-8, 12-10, 11-8; **Under-17:** Aryaveer Dewan bt Subhash Choudhary 9-11, 6-11, 11-5, 11-6, 11-6; **Under-15:** Savir Sood bt Hridhaan Shah 12-10, 16-14, 11-6. **Under-13:** Shresht Iyer bt Dhruv Bopana 11-8, 9-11, 12-10, 11-9; **Under-11:** Amarya Bajaj bt Dhairya Gogia 11-8, 6-11, 11-2, 11-6. **Girls: Under-19:** Anahat Singh bt Reiva Nimbalkar 11-3, 11-0, 11-3; **Under-17:** Unnati Tripathi bt Navya Sundararajan 11-3, 4-11, 11-3, 11-3; **Under-15:** Anika Dubey bt Riyansika Verma 14-16, 11-6, 13-11, 11-2. **Under-13:** M. Goushika bt Diva Parasrampuria 11-5, 7-11, 11-13, 12-10, 11-7; **Under-11:** Divyanshi Jain bt Kareena Sashikumar 11-9, 12-10, 11-8.



Sanjana. X@MEDIA_SAI

Sanjana finishes third in 76kg category

WEIGHTLIFTING

Sports Bureau

Sanjana finished third in women's 76kg category in the World youth weightlifting championships in Lima, Peru, on Sunday. She lifted 90kg in snatch and 120kg in clean and jerk to total 210kg and take the bronze. Her snatch effort fetched another bronze, while her clean and jerk resulted in a silver.

Preetismita Bhoi (40kg) and Bedabrat Bharali (73kg) were adjudged the best lifters among girls and boys respectively.

Atwal tied-17 for best finish in a senior Major

Associated Press
BENTON HARBOR

Arjun Atwal produced a four-under 67 to sign off tied 17th, with 5-under 279, at the Senior PGA Championship, for his best finish in a senior Major. Richard Bland, 51, scored a a three-shot victory over Richard Green with a 17-under 267.

Indian shuttlers eye productive outing at Singapore Open

BADMINTON

Press Trust of India
SINGAPORE

Top Indian shuttlers, including P.V. Sindhu, H.S. Prannoy and Lakshya Sen, will look to hit top gear at the $850,000 Singapore Open, beginning here on Tuesday, with an additional objective of fine-tuning their preparations for the Paris Olympics.

The Summer Games are just two months away and the Olympic-bound shuttlers will have three more tournaments – Australian Open super 500, Indonesia Super 1000, Canada Open super 500 – to hone their skills and shake off any cobwebs ahead of the quadrennial mega event.

The recently-crowned Thailand Open champions Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty have looked in the best shape for the Olympics, while Sindhu too has geared up with a runner-up finish at the Malaysia Masters on Sunday. Lakshya and Prannoy will also hope for a deep run into the event to receive the ideal boost in the build-up to the Paris Games.



Lakshya Sen. AFP

However, it will be a tough test of their temperament as some big guns stand in their way in the Super 750 tournament.

Eighth seed Prannoy, who is recovering from a health issues, had a forgettable outing in his last tournament when he was ousted by compatriot Meiraba Luwang Maisnam in the opening round of Thailand Open.

Prannoy, a world championships and Asian Games bronze medallist, will have to find his best footing when he opens against Belgium's Julien Carraggi.

Among others in fray, K. Srikanth will square off against Japan's fifth seed Kodai Naraoka, while Priyanshu Rajawat will meet Hong Kong's Lee Cheuk Yiu in men's singles.

Olympic-bound Ashwini Ponnappa and Tanisha Crasto also will hope for a good outing as they take on Polina Buhrova and Yevheniia Kantemyr of Ukraine in their opener.

NEW DELHI ROUND-UP

Carpediem India enters semifinals

Shivam Bansal's 54-ball 101 and half-centuries by Priyam Garg and Yash Garg helped Carpediem India beat Food Corporation of India (FCI) by four wickets to enter the semifinals of the 47th all-India Lala Raghubir Singh hot weather cricket tournament.

The scores: FCI 279 in 39 overs (Mayank Rawat 96, Chetan Sharma 61, Vishal Choudhary 3/30) lost to Carpediem India 280/6 in 29 overs (Shivam Bansal 101, Priyam Garg 52, Yash Garg 51 n.o., Kunal Singh 41 n.o.).

Easy for Victory Club

Ansh Kaushik scored 95 and Parth Bishnoi made 46 as Victory Club defeated Delhi Gymkhana by four wickets in the fourth Harcourt Butler cricket tournament.

The scores: Delhi Gymkhana 197/7 in 40 overs (Manpreet Singh 68, Udit Malik 58) lost to Victory Club 199/6 in 29 overs (Ansh Kaushik 95, Parth Bishnoi 46).

Ace Academy lifts title

Kabeer Juneja claimed four wickets while Aradhya Chawla top-scored with 61 as Ace Cricket Academy beat Hans Raj Model School (HRMS) by five runs in Super Over in the final of the second Kashipur Jim Corbett under-17 cricket tournament.

The scores: HRMS 165 in 31.5 overs (Mayank Mallick 56, Yash 40, Kabeer Juneja 4/53) lost to Ace 165/9 in 35 overs (Aradhya Chawla 61, Suryaveer Maggo 42, Saksham Choudhary 3/33).

Vinayak shines with the ball

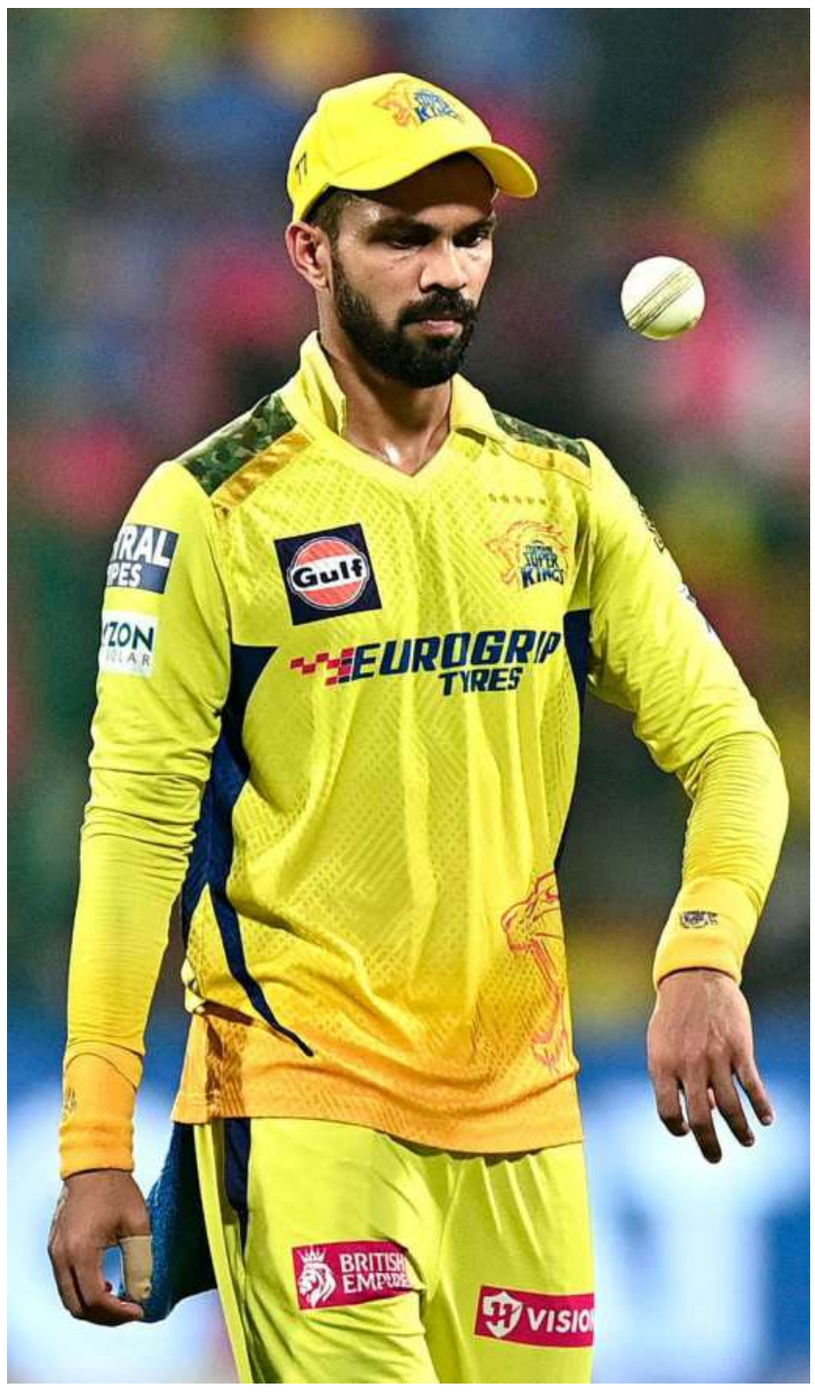
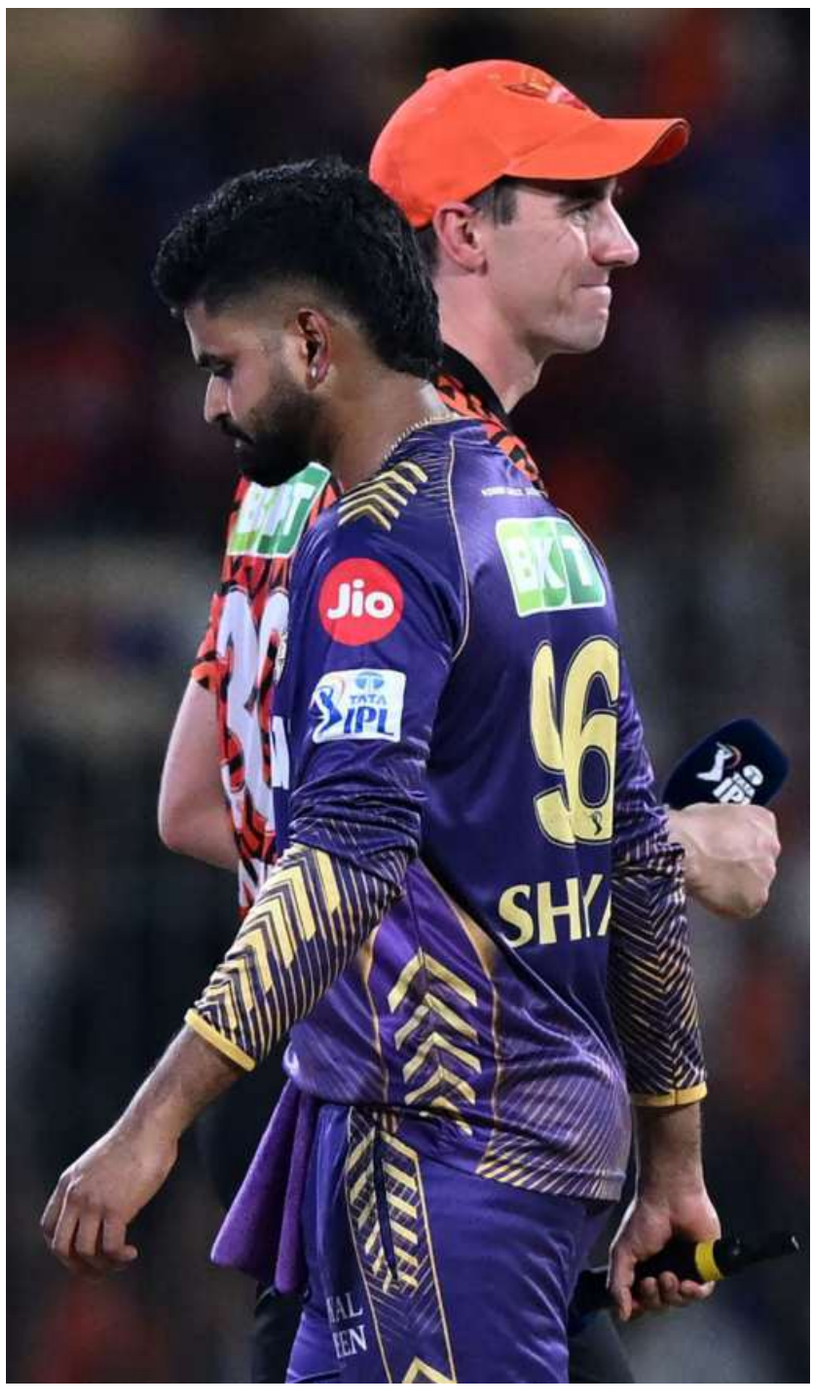
Man-of-the-match Vinayak Choudhary took six for four as Modern Warriors beat Turf Sultans by three wickets in the Turf Junior League under-14 tournament.

The scores: Turf Sultans 100 in 15.5 overs (Utsav Aanand 31, Vinayak Choudhary 6//4, Grihith Gambhir 2/29) lost to Modern Warriors 103/7 in 18.1 overs (Shivansh Avilashi 3/21, Hardik Kathuria 2/16).



Cracking the complex code called captaincy in the IPL

Shreyas balanced both leadership and captaincy well while leading Knight Riders to their third title; despite a star-studded support staff, Cummins and Ruturaj displayed individual traits while Hardik had a tough time at Mumbai Indians


Contrasting journeys: While Ruturaj's Super Kings blew hot and cold, Shreyas' Knight Riders were remarkably consistent. Cummins' Sunrisers redefined T20 batting while Mumbai Indians' Hardik had a season to forget. AFP & AP

R. Kaushik

Cricket is the only major team sport where the captain doesn't sport an armband. It's also the only sport where having (capt) against one's name entails greater responsibility than merely turning up for the spin of coin and deciding whether to attack or receive, and which is the favoured end at the start of a contest.

Then again, there is captaincy, and there is leadership. Captaincy loosely translates to being on top of the game cricket-wise, in terms of understanding the conditions and the opposition, working out strategies, zeroing in on field placements, making bowling changes, sometimes revisiting the batting order to address the demands of the situation. Leadership is more far-arching, encompassing various non-sporting elements including but not limited to calmness under pressure, the propensity to lift the spirits of when things go south, and motivational and man-management skills which recognise that there is no one size that fits all.

Captaincy and leadership can't, and shouldn't, be mutually exclusive, but not all captains make good leaders. There are plenty of 'fair-weather' skippers whose outlook is bright and sunny when everything pans out according to plan, but who slip into lackadaisical indifference when plans come unstuck for one reason or the other. To be on top of one's leadership game when doing the front-running is natural and uncomplicated; it's adversity that tests the true mettle of a leader because it's in a crisis that the rest look up to you for inspiration and encouragement.

Perfect amalgam

Before IPL 2024, few had pigeon-holed Shreyas Iyer as the perfect amalgam of captaincy nous and leadership skills and yet here he is now, only the eighth skipper in the tournament's 17-year existence to lift the trophy. Shreyas ran an excellent campaign; there will be whispers that he was only doing the bidding of the team mentor (Gautam Gambhir) and the head coach (Chandrakant Pandit) and there will be an element of truth to that. After all, especially in T20 cricket, the coach becomes cricket's equivalent of a footballing manager whose lot it is to draw up game-plans and alternative game-plans. The fast pace at which the action unfolds sometimes calls for a dispassionate, outsider view and that's what the back-room staff sitting on the sidelines often provides, but no matter what, the buck stops with the captain.

Some coaches, like Ashish Nehra, are firm believers in sending out explicit instructions, which not even a first-time skipper like Shubman Gill would have enjoyed. We are talking about international players, not 15- or 17-year-old kids who might require hand-holding in the nascent stages of their captaincy journey. There is something to be said for constant outside interference and suggestions/tips/orders that might be in direct conflict with the designated captain's thinking, but that's the direction in which T20 cricket, especially, might head going forward, what with data and analytics becoming as integral a tool in preparation as range-hitting and adding variations to one's bowling repertoire.

Shreyas impressed with his composure and his poise under pressure, though truth to tell, Kolkata Knight Riders was seldom put under serious sustained pressure during most of IPL 2024. KKR lost just three of 14 matches - two of their fixtures were abandoned without a ball being bowled - and were an extraordinary force in the final week of the competition when they schooled Sunrisers Hyderabad twice in six nights. It might be tempting to point out that, given the resources at his disposal, Shreyas didn't have the most challenging of tasks. After all, he had a gun opening combine in the blazing duo of Phil Salt and Sunil Narine, a charged-up No. 3 in Venkatesh Iyer, and a versatile, skilled, balanced bowling group with Mitchell Starc and Varun Chakravarthy at the forefront. But how often have we not seen a team packed to the gills with proven performers come unstuck in the heat of battle? How can captaincy not be a factor when a team runs as dominant a campaign as KKR did, brushing aside all-comers with the confidence and assurance of an outfit that knows that when it is purring along, it is well-nigh invincible?

Shreyas and Pat Cummins, a first-time IPL captain with Sunrisers Hyderabad, caught the eye the most and not necessarily because their teams finished 1-2. But unlike his KKR counterpart, Cummins is no stranger to captaincy, or leadership, having led Australia to the World Test Championship and 50-over World Cup titles in the last 12 months. That being said, leading a franchise brings vastly magnified and varied challenges compared to captaining a national side. By his own admission, Cummins didn't know anything at the start of the tournament about many of the players that comprised the SRH family. It is to his great credit that he walked the extra mile to not just get to know their names and put faces to those names, but also to get to know them in the real sense in the limited time available, thereby nurturing a climate of trust and faith that manifested itself in exciting, exhilarating cricket.

Magnificent accomplishment

SRH had finished bottom of the pile last season, to finish runners-up 12 months on is a magnificent accomplishment that Cummins can, and must, be justifiably proud of. Daniel Vettori, the head coach, complemented rather than competed with him, the perfect recipe for success.

Of the other first-time skippers, Ruturaj Gaikwad stood out for his individualism and for not being fazed at stepping into the giant shoes vacated by Mahendra Singh Dhoni. If he was intimidated by Dhoni's presence, Ruturaj did a great job of concealing it. He did seek out the legend for suggestions and ideas, obviously, but he didn't crave for his approval or approbation. He sometimes had the 'temerity' to overlook Dhoni's tips, but not out of spite or because he wanted to prove a point. Ruturaj might not have succeeded in steering his team to the playoffs, but there is every indication that he will get better with time. Crucially, the responsibility of leadership didn't weigh him down when it came to his primary skillset, batting. The right-handed opener finished with 583 runs, the second highest in the tournament after Virat Kohli and nearly 200 runs ahead of Shivam Dube, Chennai Super Kings' second-best batsman numerically.

Ruturaj avoided the banana skin that had tripped up Ravindra Jadeja's flirtation with CSK's captaincy a couple of seasons back with Dhoni preparing for life for the franchise after him. Where Jadeja seemed flustered and out of his depth, hurtling from one disaster to another, Ruturaj negotiated the potential pitfalls with dexterous nimbleness, portents of a long, strong alliance.

Which brings us to the elephant in the room, aka Mumbai Indians and Hardik Pandya. The latter wasn't a first-time captain in the real sense, having led Gujarat Titans to the title and to a final in their two years of existence. But it was his first taste of captaincy at a franchise where he cut his teeth as a cricketer, and by no accounts was this a happy homecoming.

Contentious, controversial

The transfer of captaincy from the popular and universally liked Rohit Sharma to Hardik was both contentious and controversial, perhaps not helped by the manner in which the leadership succession was handled by the franchise. Hardik was well within his rights to seek MI's captaincy when he was traded from GT; with an eye on the short- and long-term future, MI had every reason to effect a change at the top, even though Rohit had marshalled five glorious winning campaigns. The whys of the decision were anything but questionable, but the hows most certainly have been.

Without verbalising his misgivings, Rohit made it amply clear that he wasn't amused at being deposed as captain. That the change was effected not long after he led India to the final of the 50-over World Cup, and thrilled millions of fans with his wondrously attacking batting, incensed the followers of the franchise, who turned their ire on Hardik, perhaps unfairly. The ace all-rounder was roundly booed at most venues, not least at MI's home, the iconic Wankhede Stadium. The belief that these emotional boos would settle as the season unspooled proved ill-founded; as MI stumbled from one loss to another, Hardik was catapulted to villain No. 1, and it reflected in his returns as both batter and bowler.

It perhaps didn't help that Hardik had to run a house divided. At various times, it appeared as if all the players were not on the same page, even though they were united by the common goal of victory. Having been on top of his game in every sense at GT, Hardik looked lost and bereft of ideas, often cutting a solitary, lonely figure with Rohit banished to the boundaries he hasn't manned for a long time. He wouldn't be human if that didn't play on his mind; for all his breezy exterior, Hardik must have felt the world was unfairly picking on him, which might explain modest dividends of 216 runs and 11 wickets in 14 matches.

The dynamics will change next week in New York when Hardik lines up as Rohit's deputy at the T20 World Cup. Rohit is far too seasoned to let the bitterness of the past cloud the immediate task at hand; after all, his brand of leadership needs no elaborate detailing, though he won't be alone in feeling that a global title will complete his legacy.

THE GIST

- Shreyas impressed with his composure and his poise under pressure
- Cummins nurtured a climate of trust and faith that manifested itself in exciting, exhilarating cricket
- Among the other first-time skippers, Ruturaj stood out for his individualism
- It perhaps didn't help that Hardik had to run a house divided

At extremely high strain rate, copper surprises with the strength of steel

The hotter a metal gets, the softer it becomes; it has been found that this rule also holds when the metal is subject to very low to very high strain rate; but researchers have discovered an unusual exception to this rule: at ultra-high strain rate and high temperature, copper responds more like steel

Vasudevan Mukunth


A worker monitors a process at a smelter of Europe's largest copper producer Norddeutche Affinerie, in Bulgaria. FILE PHOTO

The discovery of steel transformed the course of human civilisation. The stone age ended with the invention and widespread use of copper smelting and alloying copper with other elements, thus introducing metalworking, new and more durable agricultural implements, the development of culture, trade, and governments, and new weapons of war. When heated, copper turns to liquid, after which it can be moulded into a desired shape. When the mould is cooled, the metal returns to its original solid state, this time in the mould's shape.

Iron replaced copper and tin in the iron age, but it also did something neither metal could: dissolve carbon. If iron is heated and cooled repeatedly, such that the dissolved carbon is removed until a small amount remains, the powerful iron-carbon alloy known as steel is born. Unlike copper or tin, or even iron, steel is *hard* – and this made all the difference.

As the economist Yanis Varoufakis wrote in his new book, *Technofeudalism: What Killed Capitalism*: "The swords of their ironclad enemies sliced through their bronze shields, their ploughs failed to cultivate the less fertile soils, the metal braces holding together their dams and temples were too weak to fulfil the ambitions of forward-thinking architects. In contrast, communities that mustered the *techne*, the art, of 'steeling' iron thrived in the fields, on the battlefields, at sea, in commerce, in the arts."

If only the people of the bronze age had kept heating copper while straining it greatly, they'd have come across a form of the metal that could rival steel.

Deformation and strain rate

A pair of researchers, from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Northwestern University, both in the U.S., has reported in a study that when pure copper is heated and also subjected to an extreme strain rate, it behaves like a much harder material would. They attribute this counterintuitive behaviour to new "strengthening mechanisms" that are activated in the material by the higher strain rate. The study was published in the journal *Nature* on May 22.

"The findings could give rise to new strategies for designing devices to use in extreme conditions like high-speed manufacturing or aerospace engineering, where high temperatures and strain rates are common," according to a video released by *Nature* to accompany the paper.

Scientists have already subjected many materials to high strain rates and studied their properties in detail. In the new study, the researchers breached new ground by imparting an even greater strain rate using cutting-edge material-testing technologies.

Strain is how much a material deforms when stress is applied. Say you have a cuboidal ingot of iron and you try to push on one of its sides to change its shape into a solid parallelogram. The extent of deformation – i.e. how slanted the parallelogram is – for a given amount of force will be the strain the ingot is experiencing. A steel ingot is stronger and will require a lot more stress to achieve the same amount of strain. Those of copper or iron will require less.

Strain rate measures the rate at which strain changes. Its unit is (metres per second) per metre, effectively per second. Materials scientists know that when a pure metal is heated, it becomes softer, and they know this to be true when the material is strained anywhere between 0.000001/s and 10,000/s.

Sources of strength

In their study, the researchers – Ian Dowding and Christopher Schuh – accelerated aluminium oxide microparticles using lasers and shot them at a copper substrate at around 860 km/hr.

The use of such small stressors prevented the formation of shockwaves, which would have disrupted the material's structures too much for the changes to be measurable.

They tracked the particles' path using high-speed cameras and, after each impact, measured the minuscule crater that formed. And they repeated these tests at three temperatures: 20, 100, and 177 degrees C.

In their paper, they reported that "as the temperature is increased, the impact crater depth and width decrease", meaning the copper was behaving at the impact spot like a harder material. Note that the hardness is restricted to the neighbourhood of the impact even if the whole material is maintained at that temperature.

As an alumina bullet strikes the metal at a high velocity, it rapidly deforms the metal at the site of impact, inducing an ultra-high strain of around 10 million/s.

This brutal imposition forces the material to respond – and how it responds is controlled by how the material's strength is organised.

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> *Nature*

The copper in the researchers' test had three sources of strength: drag-strengthening, thermal, and athermal. The purpose of each source is to prevent a particular dislocation from propagating through the material. Drag-strengthening refers to interactions between parts of the material dislocated by a stress and vibrational energy in the atomic lattice.

Thermal strength refers to the kinetic energy of the atoms in the lattice and their ability to suppress the effects of certain defects in the material.

Athermal strength refers to barriers to dislocation other than the atoms' kinetic energy, such as the interface between two crystal structures (if different parts of the copper object have differently oriented crystal structures).

The strength inventory changes

According to the researchers, when the temperature of the copper object was increased while the strain rate was 10 million/s, the contributions of thermal and athermal strength dropped – but the contribution of drag-strengthening increased so much that the overall strength of the material (at the site) also increased. At strain rates lower than 1 million/s, the thermal and athermal sources of strength dominated, so as the temperature was increased, the copper became softer.

The result, to quote from the paper: "although pure copper is a soft metal at low strain rates and would normally be expected to soften at high temperatures, the strength of copper measured here at 10,000,000/s and 177 degrees C is more than 300 MPa; this is comparable with the conventional strength of 304 steel at this temperature." (SAE 304 steel is the most common form of stainless steel today.)

The researchers also reported similar effects with pure titanium and gold.

Since the bronze age, metals have penetrated almost all walks of life – from cookware to spaceflight, from office stationery to weapons of mass destruction. In many of these applications, they need to withstand sudden, intense impacts (either from other components from the system they're part of or external stressors). Materials scientists thus engineer these metals in order to achieve a specific 'strength inventory': i.e. to have sources of strength that will resist different kinds of deformation in different operating conditions.

The new study throws a spanner in this thinking by revealing a change in the material's strength response above a strain rate of around 1 million/s. Even at room temperature (20 degrees C), for example, the study found that the copper substrate had four-times more dynamic strength under a strain rate of 1 million/s than without any strain.

(The author is a mechanical engineer by training)


A cinnabar moth caterpillar. FILE PHOTO

Caterpillars may sense threats using electric fields

Karthik Vinod

Caterpillars have a sixth sense that most land-based animals do not. They can sense electric fields around them with small bristles called setae on its body – a feat called electroreception. British researchers have discovered this in laboratory experiments and their findings were published recently in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. They studied four species of caterpillars: cinnabar moth, scarce vapourer moth, European peacock butterfly, and common wasp.

Researchers have long known that aquatic and amphibious animals use electroreception to detect both predators and prey. Since 2013, scientists have also found electroreception in arthropods like bumblebees, hoverflies, and spiders. However, none of these land-based creatures use the ability to defend against predators. Caterpillars, which are also arthropods, may break this mould, using electroreception to sense predatory insects nearby.

As an insect's wings flap through the air, static charges build up on them. When it nears the caterpillar, the setae sense these charges by building up charges of its own

"It works exactly the same way as [brushing a] rubber balloon on your hair," said first author Sam England. He is a postdoctoral researcher at the Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin and was at the University of Bristol before.

Static charges accumulate on both the balloon and the hair, leading to a mutual electrostatic attraction. The balloon can then move the hair without needing contact. As an insect's wings flap through the air, static charges build up on them. When it nears the caterpillar, the setae sense these charges by building up charges of its own. This mutual interaction gives rise to an oscillating electric field.

In the study, researchers stimulated caterpillars with a live electrode carrying a voltage oscillating at 180 Hz, to mimic an approaching wasp. In response, the caterpillars flailed and coiled, a sign that they were stressed. Caterpillars around an electrode without the voltage didn't behave this way. The caterpillars' setae responded to frequencies of 50-350 Hz, possibly to help distinguish between threats and non-threats, Dr. England said. The setae vibrated the most when the field frequency was 220.3 Hz – close to the rate at which many predator insects flap their wings. He suspected the caterpillars could have evolved to tune to their predator's wingbeats. "These animals have had a lot of evolutionary pressure upon them to evolve defences because so many animals like to eat them."

That said, scientists also "already know" that caterpillars don't rely on electroreception alone to sense predators, Dr. England added. It supplements the other five senses. He also said that "sensory pollution" could damp the caterpillars' electroreception. The setae are sensitive to voltage frequencies also present in overhead power cables, around 50-60 Hz. This 'exposure' could desensitise the setae and diminish the caterpillars' ability to spot predators with them.

(Karthik Vinod is an intern with The Hindu)

Please send in your answers to science@thehindu.co.in

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

The unusual life of promethium

Vasudevan Mukunth

QUESTION 1
Scientists first synthesised the element promethium in 1945 even though the Czech chemist X had predicted its existence 43 years earlier. X was in fact renowned for his study of rare-earth elements. Name X.

QUESTION 2
In the earth's environment, promethium is produced in two ways: when europium-151, an already very rare isotope, breaks down by a rare alpha decay to promethium-147, or when uranium undergoes _____ _____. Fill in the blanks with the name of a process that heavy radioactive nuclei commonly undergo.

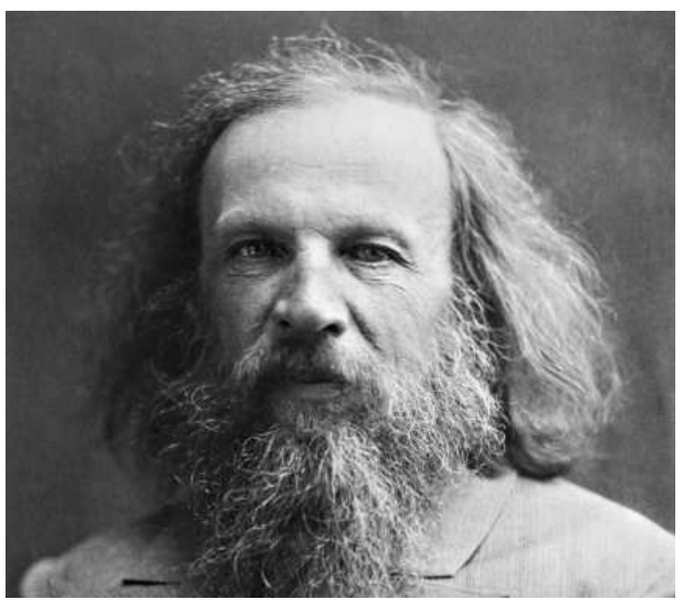
QUESTION 3
Promethium is unusual in many ways. For example, the radii of the atoms of elements 57 to 70 (by atomic number in the periodic table) shrink rather than increase as the atomic number increases. This phenomenon is called Y. Promethium, with atomic number 61, is a notable exception to this trend. Name Y.

QUESTION 4
Promethium is also unusual because it is one of only two elements — the other being Z — in the first 82 elements of the periodic table (by atomic number) that doesn't have a stable isotope and is the element with the lowest stability of the first 84. Name Z.

QUESTION 5
On May 22, researchers the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in the U.S. reported that they had managed to produce the first known lanthanide complex involving promethium by combining promethium ions with a ligand called _____ _____. Fill in the blanks.

Answers to May 23 quiz:
1. Pigments that impart yellow colour to pumpkins, canaries, etc. – **Ans: Carotenoids**
2. Complementary colour of yellow in the RGB colour scheme – **Ans: Blue**
3. Acid whose salts are primary components of Indian yellow – **Ans: Euxanthic acid**
4. Compound responsible for yellow-red hues of saffron dye – **Ans: Crocin**
5. Principal component of chrome yellow discovered in crocoite – **Ans: Lead chromate**

Visual: **Gamboge (from Cambodia)**
First contact: Ishita Sharma | Poonam Uikey | Lekshmy Harikumar | Ravita Wadhwa | Jagrati Shukla


VISUAL QUESTION: X (from Q1) corresponded regularly with this man, a Russian chemist famous for discovering that groups of chemical elements had the same number of regions around their atomic nuclei in which electrons could be present, and that they could be grouped in this way to reveal other similar properties. Name him. PUBLIC DOMAIN

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