

The Telegraph



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IN BRIEF

Srinagar boat tragedy

JAMMU: A mother and her two children are among six people who lost their lives while several others are missing after a boat carrying mostly schoolchildren and their parents capsized in the swollen Jhelum river in Srinagar early on Tuesday.

NATION

Assurance on VCs

CALCUTTA: The attorney-general, representing the Bengal governor, told the Supreme Court on Tuesday that six vacancies for vice-chancellors will be filled by appointing candidates from a list recommended by the state government.

Ramdev 'apology'

NEW DELHI: Yoga practitioner Ramdev and Patanjali managing director Balkrishna appeared in the Supreme Court on Tuesday to tender an "unconditional apology" for disparaging other forms of medicine like ayurveda to promote ayurveda.

NATION

PLAY OF THE DAY

Jos Buttler pulled off a thrilling run chase for Rajasthan Royals with an innings of character and poise at Eden Gardens on Tuesday. England's T20 World Cup-winning captain made 107 not out of 60 balls, his second IPL 2024 century, as the Royals reached the 224-run target against KKR off the last ball. He maintained his cool even as the asking rate kept spiralling and wickets tumbled to snatch a two-wicket win.

QUOTE

In the Lok Sabha elections this time, instead of voting for an outsider, please cast your votes for Trinamool

MAMATA BANERJEE

As fears grow, PM cites Ambedkar
Constitution has 'Modi ki gaaranti'

DEV RAJ

Patna: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday issued a new guarantee — no tampering with the Constitution.

The comments at an election rally in Bihar were seen as an attempt to counter the Opposition's charge that the BJP was harbouring such designs.

Asking the voters to ensure the decimation of his opponents in the polls, Modi asserted that nobody, not even Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar, had the power to change the Constitution.

The Prime Minister said the Constitution was the BJP's guiding beacon and clarified that the appeal for 400+ seats for the NDA was not aimed at changing it.

"These people (the Opposition) are playing a broken record for the last 25-30 years. Whenever the BJP progresses, they use the Constitution as a political weapon to spread lies that the party will change it. Note this down, leave aside Modi or the BJP, even Babasaheb Ambedkar himself cannot change it. So stop spreading such lies," Modi said.

Modi was campaigning in Gaya in favour of NDA partner and Hindustani Awam Morcha Secular leader Jitam Ram Man-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Buxar MP and Union minister Ashwini Kumar Choubey at an election rally in Gaya on Tuesday. Picture by Sanjay Choudhary

jhi before addressing another rally at Purnea to canvass for JDU candidate Santosh Kushwaha and flying to Bengal and Assam. Both seats go to polls on April 19.

In Gaya, Modi launched a scathing attack on the Opposition, devoting almost a third of his 39-minute speech to this.

Several top Opposition leaders, including Congress' Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge and RJD chief Lalu Prasad have recently alleged that Modi and the BJP wanted to change the

Constitution and the appeal for more than 400 Lok Sabha seats was a step towards it.

Reacting to the Opposition onslaught on the BJP's slogan of "abki baar, 400 paar", Modi said: "Let me tell you why 400-paar. The people of the country have decided this because they not only want to see a developed nation in 2047 but also want to punish the corrupt, those who have looted the country and those who played with the Constitution."

The situation in 2009 and 2014 (when he unsuccessfully contested) was different from what it is today. I am confident of defeating Abhishek Banerjee," he said.

"The bodies of 29 Maoists, along with a huge cache of weapons, including AK-47, SLR, Insas and .303 rifles, were recovered from the spot," the statement said.

29 'Maoists' gunned down in security citadel

PHEROZE L. VINCENT

Jagdalpur (Chhattisgarh): At least 29 suspected Maoists were killed on Tuesday in an encounter in the fortified security hub of Kanker, the gateway to the Bastar belt travelling south from Raipur.

Three security personnel suffered injuries in the gunbattle and a large quantity of weapons was recovered from the spot, police officials said.

According to a police statement, a joint search team comprising the Border Security Force (BSF) and the state police's District Reserve Guard (DRG) was mobilised on Tuesday for search operations in the Chhattisgarh police station area in Kanker district.

"At around 1400 hrs in the afternoon there was an exchange of fire between Maoists and security forces near Binagunda-Koragutta jungles," the statement added.

The operation was launched based on inputs about the presence of senior cadres of the north Bastar division of the outlawed CPI(Maoist) — Shankar, Lalita, Raju and others — the police said.

"The bodies of 29 Maoists, along with a huge cache of weapons, including AK-47, SLR, Insas and .303 rifles, were recovered from the spot," the statement said.

Shankar is among those



killed, PTI reported.

"Three security personnel sustained injuries in the gunfight and their condition was stated to be out of danger. They were referred to a hospital for treatment," a police official said.

This is the highest casualty suffered by the Maoists in a single incident since 2018 when 37 of them were killed in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district.

Earlier this month, 13 suspected Maoists were killed in a gun battle with the security forces in Bijapur district. Maoists claimed these were extra-judicial killings and that only two of the deceased were its members. The police denied the charge.

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SC posers on EVM safety measures

R. BALAJI

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the Election Commission whether there was any penal provision under any statute to punish people who manipulate or tamper with EVMs (electronic voting machines).

However, the apex court maintained that the existing machine-based voting system was better than any human intervention.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta was hearing a batch of PILs seeking direction to the EC to ensure a mandatory match of VVPAT slips with the votes actually cast in the EVMs or switch over to ballot papers.

Addressing senior advocate Maninder Singh, appearing for the poll panel, Justice Khanna said: "You tell us, if suppose there is some manipulation of the machines, what is the punishment if there is any manipulation that happens? It is a serious thing. There should be a fear that if something wrong is done then there should be punishment. There should be a fear of consequences."

The bench was not impressed with Singh's plea that Sections 132A and 134 of the Representation of Peoples Act provide for action against those violating the election rules.

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No funds, ailing city kids suffer

G.S. MUDUR

New Delhi: An absence of fresh funds from the Union health ministry has stalled the treatment of more than 30 children with rare diseases at one of Calcutta's foremost government hospitals, members of patients' coalition groups and doctors have said.

The Institute of Post-Graduate Medical Education and Research (IPGMR)-SSKM hospital has stopped treatment of 20 children and deferred initiating treatment for 13 other kids since it exhausted funds earmarked for rare diseases over eight weeks ago, the members and doctors have said.

Two doctors familiar with the plight of the children reg-

istered with SSKM said several children currently face disrupted or stalled treatment. "We're hoping to restart treatment as soon as we receive funds," a doctor at the IPGMR who requested not to be named told The Telegraph.

A representative of the coalitions called the Organisation for Rare Diseases India (ORDI) and the Rare Diseases India Foundation (RDIF) said two children — a two-year-old girl and a one-year-old boy — died in March this year while waiting for treatment to begin at SSKM.

The children awaiting treatment have rare congenital disorders called Fabry disease, Gaucher disease, or mucopolysaccharidosis that result from malfunctioning enzymes.

The diseases occur in about one in 20,000 to one in 500,000 live births. Many such conditions are treatable with enzyme replacement therapy that costs Rs 10 lakh to Rs 50 lakh per year, depending on the child's weight.

Given medication costs, most parents are involved in a poignant struggle, pleading with the Centre and state governments for financial support and timely release of funds, while government

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health officials search for pathways to establish a model for sustained funding.

The National Rare Disease Policy document produced by the health ministry in 2021 had said amid resource constraints and competing health priorities, "it will be difficult for the government to fully finance the treatment of high-cost rare diseases".

The policy document had proposed alternative mechanisms such as voluntary crowd-funding and corporate donor programmes to support treatment to fill the gaps between what the government provides and how much is needed to support patients.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4 ►



Rahul Gandhi at an election campaign in Kerala's Kozhikode district on Tuesday. (PTI picture)

Bond route to extort corporates: Rahul

K.M. RAKESH

Bengaluru: Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday likened the electoral bond scheme to extortion by unleashing central agencies against corporate bosses who are left with no option but to cough up huge sums.

On the second day of his election campaign in his Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency, Rahul told a road show that the electoral bond scheme was nothing better than street-side extortion, but on a much larger scale.

"How do you say extortion in Malayalam?" Rahul asked the interpreter, who responded by saying, "Kollayadikkal".

"Kollayadikkal, kollayadikkal," Rahul echoed, to loud cheers from the thousands who had gathered to see him.

"In Malayalam, you say kollayadikkal. Modi calls it electoral bonds," the Congress leader said.

Rahul went on to explain how the electoral bond scheme is comparable to "street-side extortion" by threatening the victims with violence.

"What the common thief is doing on the street, the Prime Minister is doing at an international level," Rahul said.

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CM's 2-week outreach raises north stakes

DEVADEEP PUROHIT



Siliguri:

Mamata Banerjee wrapped up the first round of her political engagements — 13 public meetings and three road shows in 14 days — in north Bengal on Tuesday afternoon ahead of the first phase of polls in the state on April 19.

The carpet bombing of programmes captured the Trinamool Congress's all-out effort to deal a blow to the BJP in a region where it bagged seven of the eight seats in the last Lok Sabha polls.

"I cannot recall any previous instance of Didi spending so many days in north Bengal and holding so many programmes," said Siliguri mayor Gautam Deb before the rollout of a road show led by Mamata and Darjeeling's Trinamool nominee Gopal Lama from Air View crossing here.

"In the Lok Sabha elections this time, instead of voting for an outsider, please cast your votes for Trinamool," Mamata urged the over 1.43 crore voters of the region during her five-minute speech at Bagha Jatin Park where the road show ended.

Before the road show at the heart of Siliguri, Mamata was 60km away in Jalpaiguri's Mainaguri — one of the storm-hit areas — where she addressed a public rally.

"I rushed to Jalpaiguri immediately after the storm hit the region.... I went to the hospital, met the families of the victims and tried my best to organise proper medical attention for the injured. Where were they (the BJP)? Mamata asked at the rally.

Mamata had reached Jalpaiguri on the night of March 31 after the storm hit the region, killing at least four people and ravaging over 2,000 homes.

During this leg of her north Bengal visit, Mamata spoke on the same theme several times, ruing how the voters had favoured the BJP over the TMC in most elections.

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IN IMPOVERISHED VILLAGE, ACTRESS CONJURES UP 'FILMCITY'

Dream Girl springs SRK dream, but no takers

PIYUSH SRIVASTAVA

Mathura: To Hema Malini, Junsuti may sound like "Filmcity", but the isolated village has nothing to do with Bollywood.

The people of Junsuti, tucked away in a dusty corner of Mathura, eke out a living through farming but their MP is wooing them with dreams of a stellar career at the movies like Shah Rukh Khan's.

Seeking reelection for the third time from Mathura on a BJP ticket, Hema reached the village at 5.20pm on Monday to address a gathering, the majority of whom had come with her from Mathura city. Some of the villagers who attended the meeting were those who live near Bihari Mandir, where a stage had been erected and loudspeakers installed.

"While entering the vil-



Hema Malini harvests wheat in a field during an election campaign in Mathura district on April 11. (PTI picture)

name is Junsuti. To me, it sounds like Filmcity, which we have in Mumbai. Something that doesn't exist

in real has been created there," Hema said.

Someone from the audience shouted: "If so, convert

Junsuti into Filmcity." Hema replied: "I wish that your Junsuti becomes Filmcity." A BJP leader who was accompanying her stretched his hand over his head and shouted while clapping: "Talyan (clap). Hema Malini ki kijai (long live Hema Malini)." The audience clapped. Encouraged, Hema continued: "Your children come to me in Mumbai to become actors. They think that since I made Shah Rukh Khan an actor... I launched Shah Rukh Khan with Dil Aashna Hai. I had directed and produced the film. I brought him to the industry and now he has become such a big star. Isn't it? He is a big hero."

Then she asked the audience: "You must be familiar with him?" There was silence in the audience.

She turned to a BJP leader standing near her and

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Sunita Kejriwal.
(File picture)**Kejri wife turns 'star campaigner'**

PHEROZE L. VINCENT

New Delhi: The AAP has named jailed chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and his wife Sunita — who doesn't hold a post in the party — the top two "star campaigners" for the Lok Sabha polls in Gujarat.

Punjab chief minister Bhagwant Mann is in third place, followed by Manish Sisodia, a jailed former minister, and Sandeep Pathak, the party's general secretary (organisation).

The AAP is contesting two seats in Gujarat as part of the INDIA bloc.

National and state parties can name up to 40 star campaigners. The expenses for their events are billed to the party and not the candidate. Parties have no cap on spending.

The AAP has been using Sunita — a former revenue officer like her husband — to make emotional appeals to the electorate on behalf of her husband who is in jail awaiting trial in the excise policy case.

Sisodia has appealed for bail to allow him to campaign for the poll. Kejriwal is expected to do the same, depending on the progress of Sisodia's plea.

Schoolchildren's boat on swollen Jhelum overturns as rope tethered to overhead cable snaps

Srinagar capsizes kills 6, lens on bridge delay

MUZAFFAR RAINA



Women mourn the death of family members in the boat tragedy in Srinagar on Tuesday. (PTI picture)



Family members carry the coffins of some of the deceased. (PTI picture)



Rescue operation underway in the Jhelum on Tuesday. (PTI picture)

Jammu: A mother and her two children are among six persons who lost their lives while several others are missing after a boat carrying mostly schoolchildren and their parents capsized in the swollen Jhelum river in Srinagar early on Tuesday.

The tragedy is a grim reminder of how many are forced to rely on archaic modes of transport in the absence of a bridge in the heart of Srinagar.

The deaths triggered an uproar in poll season as several politicians cancelled election rallies. Two former chief ministers, Mehbooba Mufti and Omar Abdullah, demanded a probe into the delay in building a bridge in the area.

There are conflicting reports about the number of people in the boat.

A survivor claimed the boat with over 20 persons capsized after the rope tethered to an overhead cable to help it cross the river snapped midway.

"Some of us could swim. We tried to help the others but many drowned. The passengers were mainly schoolchildren and their parents," a shaken-

survivor told reporters.

"Crossing the river by boat is a daily routine for many. If we had a bridge, these deaths could have been avoided."

Jhelum, in spate after heavy rains over the last few days, is flowing close to flood alarm level in Srinagar.

Officials said the dead included 35-year-old Firdous and her two schoolgoing twins Tanvir and Mudassir.

The district magistrate of Srinagar, Bilal Mohiuddin Bhat, said initial reports suggested around 15 people, including seven minors, were on the boat but he added that they were ascertaining the exact number.

He said three persons who were hospitalised were stable.

"Three persons, including two children, are still missing," Bhat said.

Search and rescue opera-

tions by several agencies, including the State Disaster Response Force, are on to locate those missing.

An Uttar Pradesh resident, Doodh Nath, said he and his brother rescued three persons. "I saw the boat hitting an iron pillar of an under-construction bridge after the rope snapped. The passengers were calling for help," he said.

The wailing relatives blamed the government for delaying the construction of a footbridge. They claimed it was under construction since the past two decades.

Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha said he was constantly monitoring the situation.

"I am deeply grieved by the loss of lives due to a boat accident in Srinagar. My thoughts are with the bereaved families,

and I pray to the Almighty to give them strength to withstand this immense loss.

Teams of SDRF, Army, and other agencies are carrying out relief and rescue work," Sinha stated on X.

"I request the government to hold a proper inquiry. Since 2018, we are under central rule. They (the Centre) talk of Naya Kashmir. If the bridge was there, the lives of our kids could have been saved," she said.

Ramdev says sorry. Prove it, says top court

R. BALAJI



Ramdev. File picture

New Delhi: Yoga practitioner Ramdev and Patanjali MD Balkrishna appeared in the Supreme Court on Tuesday to tender an "unconditional apology" for disparaging other forms of medicine like allopathy to promote ayurveda.

The duo also offered to tend a "public apology to show contrition" in the contempt proceedings in the misleading advertisements case against Patanjali.

A bench of Justices Hima Kohli and Ahsanuddin Amanullah listed the matter for further hearing to April 23 to enable the two contemnors to convey how they intended to "redeem" themselves and show their "good intentions" to never repeat such mistakes.

The court conceded the plea for adjournment after senior advocates Mukul Rohatgi, Balbir Singh and others — appearing for Patanjali and the duo — sought time to place on record their sincere and unconditional apologies along with some "unilateral" measures to demonstrate their sincerity.

The court was dealing with a contempt petition filed by the Indian Medical Association against Patanjali for putting out misleading ads in the media after assuring the top court in November to desist from indulging in such practices.

Responding to queries from the bench, Ramdev said they had no intention to defy the court's directive and everything had happened during moments of "excitement" over promoting Ayurveda.

"I assure that from now on I will be 100 per cent alert and desist from such behaviour. I am also not happy with what has happened. It (media conference) happened in a moment of excitement. We will not do it in future," Ramdev told the bench headed by Justice Kohli.

"You are not so innocent that you did not know what we said in our order," the bench

said, adding: "We are not saying at this stage that we are letting them off the hook."

This means the court will consider their apology based on further assurances at the next date of hearing.

Justice Kohli said the court was conscious of the fact that Ramdev had widely promoted yoga and ayurveda in the country, but the duo could not discredit other forms of medicines such as allopathy, homeopathy or unani.

Later, the court passed the following order: "Mr Mukul Rohatgi, learned senior counsel appearing for the proposed Contemnors No. 5 to 7, submits that to redeem themselves and demonstrate their bona fides, they propose to take some steps unilaterally.

"He requests one week's time to revert back on the aforesaid aspect. This Court has interacted with the proposed Contemnors No. 6 and 7 for some time and have heard their submissions. Both of them have tendered their unqualified apology for having called a press conference immediately after an order was passed by this Court on 21st November, 2023 and for continuing to issue misleading advertisements and making derogatory statements in respect of other systems of treatment..."

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'Fake encounter' slur on Kashmir parties

MUZAFFAR RAINA



Srinagar: Union home minister Amit Shah on Tuesday accused the National Conference and the Peoples Democratic Party-led Jammu and Kashmir governments of promoting militants and orchestrating the maximum number of fake encounters.

Shah also hinted that the BJP might not field candidates for three Valley seats and asked people to vote for anyone other than the Congress, NC and the PDP, suggesting a failure of its Valley outreach initiative.

"I want to tell the youth of Kashmir that in the name of security, all three parties exploited the Valley youth. I want

to ask Farooq Abdullah sahab (NC president) and the PDP, in whose tenure did the highest number of fake encounters take place? Who opened fire on Kashmiri's children? Who put guns in the hands of the Valley kids? It is these three parties," Shah told a gathering at an election rally in Jammu.

A former officer, requesting anonymity, said the claim amounted to raising questions on the conduct of the security forces.

"Politicians do not wield a gun, security forces do. If politicians were behind such things, then security forces also got involved. Besides, a fake gunfight essentially means killing somebody in custody, which is

Amit Shah at a rally in Jammu on Tuesday. (PTI)

a larger import," he said.

Another former officer said Jammu and Kashmir's chief ministers headed the Unified Command, which helmed the security apparatus that had top army officers as advisers.

Shah credited Narendra Modi for ending "fake encounters" and "terrorism".

"Narendra Modiji has restored peace in Jammu and Kashmir and put it on the path of development. Jammu and Kashmir was lagging behind for 70 years. There were agitations, terrorism continued and development stopped. Narendra Modiji stopped hartals and stone pelting and ended terrorism," he said.

Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed several alleged custodial deaths and fake encounters after the 2019 scrapping of special status.

Last year, the army faced allegations of torturing three tribal Gujjar men to death in custody. The videos of the event had gone viral on social media. In March, lieutenant governor Manoj Sinha handed over job appointment letters to the next

of kin of three civilians.

Shah hinted that the BJP was unlikely to field candidates in Kashmir.

"I have come to tell the voters of Kashmir that when we get love (of Kashmiris), the lotus will bloom in Kashmir as well," he said.

"I have come to appeal to the Valley voters to vote for anyone but three dynastic parties of Farooq sahab, Mehboobaji and Sonia Gandhi. All three work for their sons and daughters, not for you."

Valley parties claimed the BJP in Kashmir was supporting some leaders, including Ghulam Nabi Azad, Sajid Lone and Altaf Bukhari, who have a secret understanding with it. However, all three leaders have rebuffed the claims.

Cong ire at Ireland envoy's criticism

ANITA JOSHUA

New Delhi: The Congress on Tuesday took exception to India's ambassador to Ireland, Akhilendra Mishra's criticism of the Indian Opposition while defending Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a rejoinder to *The Irish Times*' editorial headlined "Modi tightens his grip".

While the Congress has no issue with the ambassador defending the government of India, the party has objected to his criticism of the Opposition. In the rejoinder, the ambassa-

dor says: "The fight against the deeply entrenched ecosystem of corruption (created by the 55-year rule, including first 30 years by a single dynastic party in India) is a major factor behind Mr. Modi's ever-growing popularity..."

Referring to the letter to the editor, Congress communications in-charge Jairam Ramesh said: "This is unprofessional and disgraceful behaviour... He (the ambassador) has actually breached service rules and should be sacked right away."

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While the Congress has no issue with the ambassador defending the government of India, the party has objected to his criticism of the Opposition. In the rejoinder, the ambassa-

EVM poser

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"We are not on the procedure. There is no specific provision with regard to manipulations done, if at all," Justice Khanna observed.

However, the bench maintained that despite the potential for manipulation, EVMs are comparatively more reliable.

Referring to advocate Prashant Bhushan's argument that the EVMs can be manipulated, the bench said: "The questions regarding human weakness including bias will always arise. Machines normally without any wrong human intervention will work properly and will give accurate results. The problem arises when there is human intervention to make manipulation or unauthorised changes."

Bhushan was appearing for one of the PIL petitioners.

Justice Datta also disagreed with the arguments of the petitioners that many European countries, including Germany, had switched to the paper ballot system.

"The population of my home state West Bengal is more than that of Germany. European examples don't work here. We need to repose some trust in someone. Don't try to bring down the system like this," Justice Datta said.

Maoists have been killed this year, more than triple the casualties last year.

The violence peaked after the BJP came to power in December. Maoists have killed three BJP leaders in the state this year.

Polling in the Bastar Lok Sabha seat will take place on April 19 in the first phase, while the Kanker constituency, part of the Bastar region, will vote in the second round of the general election on April 26.

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Salman house shooters arrested from Gujarat

IMRAN AHMED SIDDIQUE

New Delhi: Mumbai police's crime branch late on Monday night arrested the two shooters who allegedly fired at actor Salman Khan's house in Bandra last week.

Sources said the suspects, identified as Vicky Gupta, 25, and Sagar Shrijog Pal, 21, were arrested from a temple in Gujarat's Bhuj where they were hiding late on Monday night. Police said the duo originally hailed from Bihar's East Champaran district and belonged to gangster Lawrence Bishnoi's gang.

A police officer said the two accused had carried out a recce around the actor's house in Bandra. According



Salman Khan and his father Salim Khan with Maharashtra chief minister Eknath Shinde at their residence in Mumbai on Tuesday. (PTI picture)

to him, the accused shot five rounds — one of them hit the wall and another the gallery of Salman's residence.

A preliminary probe suggested that Sagar and Vicky had been hired by the Bishnoi gang to open fire at Salman's house.

The two accused were selected from a pool of professional shooters from Maharashtra, Delhi, Rajasthan, Haryana and Punjab.

Police and security agencies across several states in northern India are jointly probing the incident to unearth the web of connections and the crime network behind the attack.

Lawrence Bishnoi is lodged in Tihar jail for his alleged involvement in several high-profile murder cases including those of Sidhu Moose Wala and Rajput leader and Karni Sena chief Sukhdev Singh Gogamedi.

Bishnoi's brother Anmol and one of his close aides Rohit Godara — both based in

the US — allegedly



BJP MP Hema Malini campaigns in Mathura. Picture by Piyush Srivastava

Dream Girl springs SRK dream, but no takers

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Some of them clear their intermediate and take admission to a college in Mathura and then travel to big cities in search of jobs. There is hardly any influence of Bollywood on this village. Those who live here can identify filmstars by their names but don't have any interest in Bollywood movies.

"Those who are above 60 may have watched movies in cinemas in the past but the younger generation is not interested in films because their life is very tough. Although many of them may have smartphones, they don't watch movies," said Vijendra Singh, a middle-aged villager of Junsuti when The Telegraph asked him around 4pm whether he would attend Hema's public meeting a stone's throw from his house.

"Those who have done intermediate and are studying or living in the cities may be on social media and may be going to the theatres. But those who live here are either small and marginal farmers or labourers and their children. They have no time for entertainment," Vijendra added.

Describing his day, Vijendra said: "No brother, I was in my agricultural field since 6am and just took my meal. As you can see, I am smoking a hookah now. Thereafter I'll take a nap."

Perhaps sensing the mood of the audience and that her pitch was not striking a chord with the audience, Hema quickly changed the subject at the public meeting.

"I am talking about something not connected with today's programme. I am here to tell you that you must turn up at the polling booths on April 26. All those from the BJP or the Rashtriya Lok Dal (an ally) have to further strengthen Prime Minister Narendra Modi. I have been your MP twice. I feel proud of doing lots of development here under the guidance of the Prime Minister and the chief minister (Yogi Adityanath). I need five more years to work more," she said.

"There is no corruption under Yogiji and Modiji's rule. There is no suppression of anybody, poverty has been eradicated. The poor have their own houses.... The poor don't sleep without food. They all get electricity, food grains and free health services," Hema added.

When this newspaper asked Bachchu Singh, 65, after the meeting whether there were any poor in the village, he said: "There are 3,000 poor families in our panchayat who depend on free food grains given to them by the government every month. This is why we vote for the BJP."

Their house is hardly 10 metres from the venue of Hema's meeting, but Bachchu and his wife Jamuna Devi didn't go to see the actress. "I know she was once called the Dream Girl. But I neither have dreams nor is she a girl," Bachchu said.

When this correspondent asked Jagarath Maharaj, 28, whether he attended the meeting, he said: "No, I had other important work."

"There were less than 120 people at the meeting. This included 50 to 55 villagers and over 60 BJP members who accompanied the sitting MP to our village. They distributed flags and scarves with the lotus symbol of the BJP printed on it," said Krishna Kumar, a 60-year-old farmer of Junsuti who sat on a 3ft-high boundary wall of the local temple to catch a glimpse of Hema.

Poll gag

New Delhi: The Election Commission on Tuesday imposed a 48-hour ban on campaigning and public utterances by Congress MP Randeep Surjewala for his derogatory remarks on BJP MP Hema Malini.

The poll panel found by Surjewala in Haryana's Kaithal on March 31 "sexist, vulgar and unethical".

In Alwar, BJP hopes PM's appeal will trump caste, religion equations

1 answer to all hurdles: Modi's seal

J.P. YADAV

Alwar (Rajasthan): Driving through the narrow village roads on one of his daily campaign trails, Union environment and labour minister Bhupender Yadav spots a group of Muslims sitting outside their house. A dilemma briefly grips the BJP leader, contesting his maiden Lok Sabha polls from Alwar.

"Should I greet them?" he asks a party leader in the back seat. This leader, managing the campaign, looks unsure too. Bhupender signals the driver to stop, rolls down the window glass and greets the nearly half-a-dozen Muslims. "Sab thik hai? Roza thik se cala raha hai? (All well? Roza going well?)" he asks.

"Ji, ji chal raha hai. Ab kai Eid hai," the elderly in the group responded. Yadav drives ahead without directly seeking votes from them.

"The Muslims here are not going to vote for us. At some places (on the campaign trail) they welcome us but on the polling day they vote for the Congress," the BJP leader managing the campaign tells this correspondent. Bhupender listens to this without passing any remarks.

Alwar, bordering Haryana, has witnessed cases of mob lynching of Muslims by cow vigilante groups. In 2017, the lynching of Pehlu Khan in

described his day, Vijendra said: "No brother, I was in my agricultural field since 6am and just took my meal. As you can see, I am smoking a hookah now. Thereafter I'll take a nap."

Perhaps sensing the mood of the audience and that her pitch was not striking a chord with the audience, Hema quickly changed the subject at the public meeting.

"I am talking about something not connected with today's programme. I am here to tell you that you must turn up at the polling booths on April 26. All those from the BJP or the Rashtriya Lok Dal (an ally) have to further strengthen Prime Minister Narendra Modi. I have been your MP twice. I feel proud of doing lots of development here under the guidance of the Prime Minister and the chief minister (Yogi Adityanath). I need five more years to work more," she said.

"There is no corruption under Yogiji and Modiji's rule. There is no suppression of anybody, poverty has been eradicated. The poor have their own houses.... The poor don't sleep without food. They all get electricity, food grains and free health services," Hema added.

When this newspaper asked Bachchu Singh, 65, after the meeting whether there were any poor in the village, he said: "There are 3,000 poor families in our panchayat who depend on free food grains given to them by the government every month. This is why we vote for the BJP."

Their house is hardly 10 metres from the venue of Hema's meeting, but Bachchu and his wife Jamuna Devi didn't go to see the actress. "I know she was once called the Dream Girl. But I neither have dreams nor is she a girl," Bachchu said.

When this correspondent asked Jagarath Maharaj, 28, whether he attended the meeting, he said: "No, I had other important work."

"There were less than 120 people at the meeting. This included 50 to 55 villagers and over 60 BJP members who accompanied the sitting MP to our village. They distributed flags and scarves with the lotus symbol of the BJP printed on it," said Krishna Kumar, a 60-year-old farmer of Junsuti who sat on a 3ft-high boundary wall of the local temple to catch a glimpse of Hema.

Constitution

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A visibly annoyed Modi said the top leaders of the country had collectively framed the Constitution after months of discussions. He added that those who abuse the Sanatan religion must understand that the Constituent Assembly had

80 to 90 per cent Sanatanis (followers of the Sanatan religion) who assisted Ambedkar.

Modi said only the Constitution could be the guiding factor for a country like India, which is full of diversity.

The Prime Minister pointed out that the country had as much faith in the Constitution as in the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Gita.

"You (the Opposition) tried to politicise the Constitution, we continuously tried to induce faith in it. When we introduced a proposal in Parliament to celebrate Constitution Day across the country, Congress leader Kharge questioned its need and said January 26 is already there. He did not understand that we should always keep inducing trust and respect in the Constitution," Modi said.

The Prime Minister said his government started the tradition of reading the Constitution and its Preamble in schools on Constitution Day, the Supreme Court holds a two-day seminar and Parlia-

ment organises a discussion on the occasion. Also, the Constitution's diamond jubilee celebrations have been started.

"The Constitution could be a political tool for you, but it is a centre of our faith and the guide to fulfil our dreams for 2047. It has the power to provide social justice. We are marching ahead with it to make a developed Bharat. Brothers and sisters, there is no place in public life for people who kick the Constitution and there," Modi said.

He also said the Opposition had no right to say anything because the Centre had honoured Ambedkar by turning five important places connected with his life into places of worship.

Appealing to the voters, Modi said: "It is necessary to forever shut up the people who speak such lies. Your vote will make them quiet forever. I promise this to you."

Modi said this Lok Sabha election was an opportunity to ensure victory for the NDA and to punish those who had destroyed the country.

The Prime Minister said his government started the tradition of reading the Constitution and its Preamble in schools on Constitution Day, the Supreme Court holds a two-day seminar and Parlia-



BJP candidate Bhupender Yadav fixes his headgear in Alwar last week. Picture by JP Yadav

Bhupender is being labelled as an "outsider" as he hails from Ajmer, over 300km north-east of Alwar.

After two consecutive failures, the Congress has replaced former Union minister Jitendra Singh, the scion of the Alwar royals and a Rajput, with Lalit. The BJP too has replaced its two-term MP from the seat, Baba Balak Nath (a Yadav), to field Bhupender, seen as "Modi-Shah's nominee".

Despite being a senior minister, Bhupender lacks mass appeal and appears to be banking completely on "Modi ki guarantee".

Acute shortage of water has emerged as the biggest issue not only in Alwar but across Rajasthan. "Has a water tank been installed here?" Bhupender asks the villagers of Semli Dilawar. "No," the villagers said. The minister quickly blames the previous Congress government in the state.

"Modiji had sent money (for the water tank). But the Congress government here did not use the money prop-

erly.... But now a BJP government has come and I promise water will soon reach every home under Modiji's Jal Jivan mission," he said. "Yeh Modiji ki guarantee hai," he emphasises amid applause.

As he rushes to reach his next stop, the women of the village confront him with a barrage of complaints.

"Panai bilkul nahi hai; Yahan bahut garibi hai; NREGA me koi kaam nahi ho raha hai; Gas ki tanki bhar na hain pa raha hain (There is no water at all; There is extreme poverty here; No work is available under NREGA; We don't have money to fill LPG cylinders)," the women tell Bhupender.

"Sab thik ho jaaye ga (Everything will be fine)," he assures them and leaves.

Asked if the water scarcity combined with the "outsider tag" and the possibility of a significant split in the Yadav vote bank could pose a big challenge for him, Bhupender said: "Not at all. This election is not about electing Bhupender Yadav but making Modiji Prime Minister

(Alwar votes on April 19)

CPI ties broken, crusader's fight for Bastar state

PHEROZE L. VINCENT

Dhurli (Chhattisgarh): The tallest communist in central India is likely to chart a new political path.

Manish Kunjam quit as Chhattisgarh CPI state secretary and national council member in February saying he would now focus on statehood for the Bastar division in south Chhattisgarh.

"I don't want to wage this struggle under any party's banner. I welcome people of all communities and all parties who agree with our call (for statehood).... Neither the Adivasi Mahasabha nor the CPI, this (proposed statehood movement) will be a separate organisation," he told The Telegraph.

Although Kunjam quit party posts, he remains a member and is campaigning for the CPI's candidate in Bastar. When he quit, he accused CPI's national leadership of conspiring with the Congress by delaying its application for the use of its symbol during the Assembly polls last year, thereby denying its use in Bastar where it is the third largest electoral force after the BJP and the Congress.

He publicly said that the party should have taken its members here into confidence. The CPI has not acted against Kunjam, who is synonymous with the party in Bastar.

"Our statehood movement is not a reaction to not getting the symbol. This has been a demand of our activists for a long time," he told this paper on the sidelines of a campaign meeting for CPI candidate Phul Singh Kachlam in Dantewada district's Dhurli village.

Asked if he would quit the party, he said: "I will remain silent on this. When our movement starts, then I will see.... I have not attempted to convince the party on statehood for Bastar."

The CPI had initially supported but later opposed the Gorkhaland movement. The party, however, supported the formation of Telangana.

"It is very difficult to carry out political activities in this climate. Police stop us, people don't come for events, we can't reach certain places, cops suspect us of speaking on behalf of the Maoists.... If there is a separate state, we can solve these problems because local people will be in power," he said.



Manish Kunjam during a campaign for the CPI in Dhurli village of Chhattisgarh on Monday. Picture by Pheroze L. Vincent

No funds, ailing city kids suffer

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The ministry had in 2022 also pledged Rs 50 lakh for each patient registered with any of the 11 designated hospitals, including IPGMR-SSKM, and said it would work towards a programme for "sustained funding", the IPGMR doctor said.

The university has been named after Gandhi and has nurtured secular education, he said. No building or facility inside the university should be named after any RSS or Hindu Mahasabha leaders, he added.

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The university has a statue of Gandhi. The university spreads over five hills. One of the hills is known as Vivekananda Hill. The committee also recommended that the hill in front of Vivekananda Hill should be named after Narendra Modi. A swadeshi vriksha would be developed where statues of Gandhi, Jamnalal Bajaj, social reformer Vinoba Bhave, and Dattopant Thengdi, founder of the RSS-affiliated Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, would be installed.

According to the minutes of the meeting of the committee, a garden to be named Panchavati will be set up on Vivekananda Hill. The guest house will be named after Swami Premananda, the brother of Vivekananda. A canteen in Vivekananda Hill will be named after Swami Sadananda, a disciple of Vivekananda.

An email has been sent to acting registrar Dharvesh Katheriya to understand his perspective on the criticism that the university is drifting away from its secular legacy and also about the change in the name of the girls' hostel.

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BJP's David

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The selection of Das, 44 days after the BJP released its first list of candidates on March 2, prompted a section of party insiders to raise questions about the justification of consuming so much time to announce the name considering he was not new in the party circuit. They also questioned the party's seriousness about winning the seat considering Das has been fielded against TMC's number 2.

"If Abhijit Das aka Bobby was the choice, then there was no reason for such an inordinate delay in announcing his name as it allowed the TMC to mock the party's organisational strength," said a BJP leader.

Senior TMC leaders, including Abhishek, have repeatedly criticised the BJP for its failure to find candidates in at least four Bengal seats, including Diamond Harbour, citing poor organisational skills of the saffron party in Bengal.

Abhishek had even made a sarcastic remark against the BJP, asking it to field the directors of central agencies such as ED, CBI, NIA and income tax to contest from the Diamond Harbour seat and other constituencies where the party had failed to find a befitting face against the TMC nominees.

"The BJP has not been able to find a candidate for Diamond Harbour. Let them field the ED or the CBI director to contest the elections," Abhishek told a political rally at Kulpur in South 24-Parganas on March 30.

Among the 42 Lok Sabha seats in Bengal, Diamond Harbour emerged as the most hyped constituency since November last year when Bhagirath MLA and chairman of Indian Secular Front (ISF) Nawsad Siddique expressed his desire to contest from there as a candidate of the Left-Congress-ISF alliance.

A section of BJP leaders in private had expressed their happiness with Siddique's announcement to contest from the Diamond Harbour seat as he could have played a pivotal role in slashing the minority votes of the ruling TMC.

However, earlier this month, Siddique stepped back and his party fielded Maznu Laskar, a little-known face, against Abhishek, slamming the doors on the Left and the Congress which wanted the ISF MLA to join hands with them to put up a strong fight against the TMC and the BJP. After the ISF decided to go solo, the CPM fielded its young face Pratikur Rahaman against Abhishek.

After the BJP announced its Diamond Harbour candidate on Tuesday, TMC leaders mounted a sharp attack against the BJP over the party's choice.

"Why didn't the BJP field Suvenud Adhikari or the CPM name Md. Salim against Abhishek? They are the ones who repeatedly criticise Abhishek. They even tried to pitch Nawsad Siddique but failed. Those who consider themselves heavyweights must have shown courage to contest from Diamond Harbour," said TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh.

The BJP, however, defended its choice of candidate.

"Das is a victim of Trinamool's atrocities and the candidate has very good academic career. He is enough to deal a mighty blow to the TMC in Diamond Harbour," said BJP Rajya Sabha MP Samik Bhattacharya.

DON'T MIX RELIGION & POLITICS: IFTU**Trade union peace plea**

SNEHAMOY CHAKRABORTY AND SAIBAL GUPTA

Calcutta: The Left-leaning Indian Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) will on Wednesday hold a sit-in in Hooghly's Rishra to demand a peaceful Ram Navami celebrations in the area that saw violent clashes last year.

The IFTU will also urge people not to turn the religious event into a political one.

Rishra, by the river Hooghly, is an industrial hub with a mixed population. It saw communal strife last year over Ram Navami celebrations. The BJP and the Trinamool Congress

PM makes Ram Navami a Bengal poll plank

AVIJIT SINHA AND KOUSIK SEN

Siliguri/Raiganj: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday campaigned in north Bengal, accusing Bengal's Trinamool Congress government of having "conspired" to stop Ram Navami celebrations.

Modi held public meetings in Balurghat and Raiganj, both BJP turfs, a day ahead of the festival. In north Bengal, the BJP won seven of eight Lok Sabha seats in 2019.

"Across the country, people are gearing up to celebrate Ram Navami with renewed vigour as the Ram Mandir (in Ayodhya) has been built and Ram Lalla is being venerated there. However, in Bengal, the TMC government had conspired to halt Ram Navami

celebrations. It is unfortunate that devotees had to go to court for permission. They have got it now. Tomorrow (Wednesday), there will be celebrations across Bengal," Modi said in Balurghat.

Continuing his diatribe against the Mamata Banerjee government over Ram Navami, he said that in Bengal, people who want to take out processions for Ram Navami don't get permission.

"However, the TMC government here has given khuli chhuth (full freedom) to those who throw stones on Ram Navami and Durga Puja processions. Criminals and extortions here have permission to torture women like in Sandeshkhali...." he said in Raiganj.

Mamata recently voiced fears that the saffron ecosys-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi greets people, on the outskirts of Raiganj, on Tuesday. Picture by Kousik Sen

tem may try to spread violence on this occasion.

"The chief minister said that the first and second phases of polls have been scheduled near Ram Navami as a part of a plan. The BJP wants to play the religious card to draw votes. It was proven today. Instead of speaking on

development, the prime minister spoke on a religious event," said a Trinamool Congress leader.

Modi also took on the Trinamool Congress over "corruption". "TMC means corruption and nepotism. The party doesn't even want voters to vote. Its leaders are allowed

to openly intimidate voters. The party provides shelter to infiltrators and Rohingyas to change the demography of Bengal and to jeopardise law and order. Sandeshkhali is a glaring example of how criminals under Trinamul's patronage tortured women," the prime minister said in Raiganj.

Modi also tried to defend his government by elaborating on the central funds allotted to Bengal for social welfare schemes.

"We have provided funds to the state but here, the money was siphoned by corrupt people associated with Trinamool. The state government here tries to stop the implementation of central schemes or plasters new stickers (on display boards of central schemes)," he said.

In Balurghat, Modi also referred to the atonement ritual

that three tribal women had to perform last year under the order of a local Trinamool Congress leader. The trio had joined the BJP briefly. When they sought to rejoin Mamata's party, they were asked to perform an atonement ritual. Amid the subsequent outrage, the party sidelined the leader, a woman, who was reportedly behind it.

"The BJP has put a tribal woman in the post of the President. But in Balurghat, people know about the torture meted out to tribal women by Trinamool. The party will be on its knees," said Modi.

TMC counter

Bengal's ruling Trinamool Congress has also lined up a series of Ram Navami processions on Wednesday. The party, sources said, will organise a mega rally in Howrah where its nominees Prasun

Banerjee and Saayoni Ghosh and senior leaders like Arup Roy and Manoj Tiwari will join. Howrah had seen tension over Ram Navami celebrations last year.

The party has taken similar initiatives in Hooghly, where nominee Rachna Banerjee will take part. It will also organise processions in Birbhum's Suri and West Burdwan's Asansol.

CPM reacts

CPM general secretary Sitaram Yechury filed a complaint with the Election Commission of India on Tuesday, alleging parts of the prime minister's speech amounted to inciting religious sentiments that violated the model code of conduct. Yechury urged the EC to "immediately intervene".

Additional reporting by Snehamoy Chakraborty in Calcutta

Small parties set to sway Sikkim results

VIVEK CHHETRI



PS Tamang during his campaign at Jorethang in Sikkim on Tuesday

gins in most seats have been wafer-thin.

The winning margin in Yangthang was 47 votes, Martam-Rumtek was 73, Yoksam-Tashiding was 79, Saligari-Zoom was 93, and Barfug was 97. The victory margin was less than 500 votes in 11 constituencies and between 500 and 1,000 votes in nine constituencies.

"With 20 of the 32 seats (more than the halfway mark of the Assembly) being decided by less than 1,000 votes in 2019, it would be interesting to see what kind of an impact the CAP and the BJP could swing the results," said a Gangtok resident who refused to be identified.

Sikkim has been a peaceful state but in the last few years, there has been an increase in political attacks, which has not gone down well with the voters," said a source.

The SKM believe the government's welfare measures will help the party sail through this election.

"The Sikkim janta (people of Sikkim) have made up their minds. The Sikkim janta have understood the work done by the SKM government in the past five years. The people of Sikkim love SKM from the bottom of their hearts," said Goyal.

Rai, however, alleged only SKM cadres could reap the benefits of the welfare schemes and the deserving ones got nothing.

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"The Sikkim janta (people of Sikkim) have made up their minds. The Sikkim janta have understood the work done by the SKM government in the past five years. The people of Sikkim love SKM from the bottom of their hearts," said Goyal.

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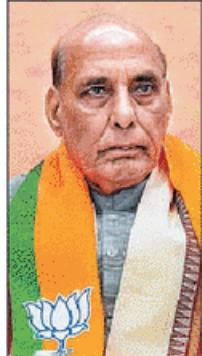
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Eat fish, pig, pigeon, elephant or horse. What is the need to show? This is only for votes, for appeasement politics

Rajnath Singh
in Jamui, Bihar

The Telegraph

WILL TO WIN

THE BATTLE OF 2024



2 DAYS TO PHASE 1

CALCUTTA WEDNESDAY 17 APRIL 2024

XXCE

THIS & THAT

Lakha, but not from Lagaan

■ The Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar), a splinter group of the Shiromani Akali Dal, has named Lakha Sidhana as its candidate from the Bathinda Lok Sabha seat. Sidhana used to be a much-feared gangster. Among the nearly 20 charges against his name are booth capturing, attempt to murder, murder, loot, violation of the Arms Act and so on and so forth. But most likely not all of India was aware of his existence until 2021.

That year, on Republic Day, farmers protesting over the three farm laws clashed with police, stormed into the Red Fort, and hoisted religious flags on its domes. Sidhana, in his activist avatar, was said to be one of the prime instigators.

N or M

■ Speaking of Punjab, it was from Ludhiana that Jawaharlal Nehru kicked off his electoral campaign for India's first general elections. Ludhiana had been battered by Partition riots and speaking from there, Nehru spoke of an "all-out war against communalism". In a piece titled *Democracy's Biggest Gamble: India's First Free Elections in 1952*, Ramachandra Guha quotes one commentator as saying the Congress campaign was a "one-man affair — Nehru, Nehru and more Nehru". Fast forward, 72 years and it is still a one-man affair. Narendra Modi started his election campaign last month from Meerut in Uttar Pradesh. His war cry: "I am fighting against corruption..." The BJP's candidate from the constituency: Arun Govil aka Ram.

YOUNG INDIAN

First-time voters between the ages of 18 and 19 will be an integral part of the elections and PM Modi has already made an outreach to them. What are the issues that drive them?

■ Name: Ambu Jung

■ Age: 19

■ Occupation: Student. Is preparing for National

Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test. She wants to be a doctor.

■ Place: Dharchula,

Pithoragarh district,

Uttarakhand

■ Constituency: Almora

■ Will you vote? Yes

■ What are the key issues that will determine your vote? Employment opportunity. The old pension system for govt employees should restart.

■ What the new govt should do: The new government should generate employment opportunity here in Pithoragarh; should also start running the medical college, which was built during Congress rule in nearby Rudrapur in Udhampur Singh Nagar district; and restart the old pension system.

■ What the new govt shouldn't do: I have not thought about it. I think the government will do good.

PIYUSH SRIVASTAVA

Almora votes on Apr. 19

Idea of India: Dare and home truths

SANKARSHAN THAKUR

One of several ways in which the theatre we are about to enter is singular is that the people have never ever been asked to deliver to the incumbent a mandate so sweeping it would resemble a clean slate likely intended for writing India — Bharat — anew. *Abki baar, 400 paar*.

The last and only time one party has secured Brian Lara grades in the Lok Sabha was in 1984, the unintended and widely unforeseen triumph of hope over the insecurities of a shuddered nation. 1984 was a year so cataclysmic it gave truth to the allegory of George Orwell's undying eponymous classic.

Indira Gandhi sent the army into Amritsar's Golden Temple, Sikhdom's holiest shrine, to destroy Bhindranwale's formidable terror nest. Operation Bluestar did more than just pulverise the Temple and scar Sikh psyche; it ended in Indira's assassination months later and triggered the madness of wanton vengeance against the community whose backwash hounds us to this day.

Columns of the army rose in pyrrhic revolt that year.

The sudden loss of a figurehead Prime Minister and a western borderland, from Kashmir down to Rajasthan, suddenly turned vulnerable by operatives across, sparked a migraine in our minds. India felt like it was under siege like never before. Then, on a dark early December's night, a rotten tanker valve blew at a Union Carbide facility in Bhopal and toxic methyl isocyanate spewed uncontrollably — the worst chemical disaster the world has known. It was confirmation of the curses the nation believed had befallen it.

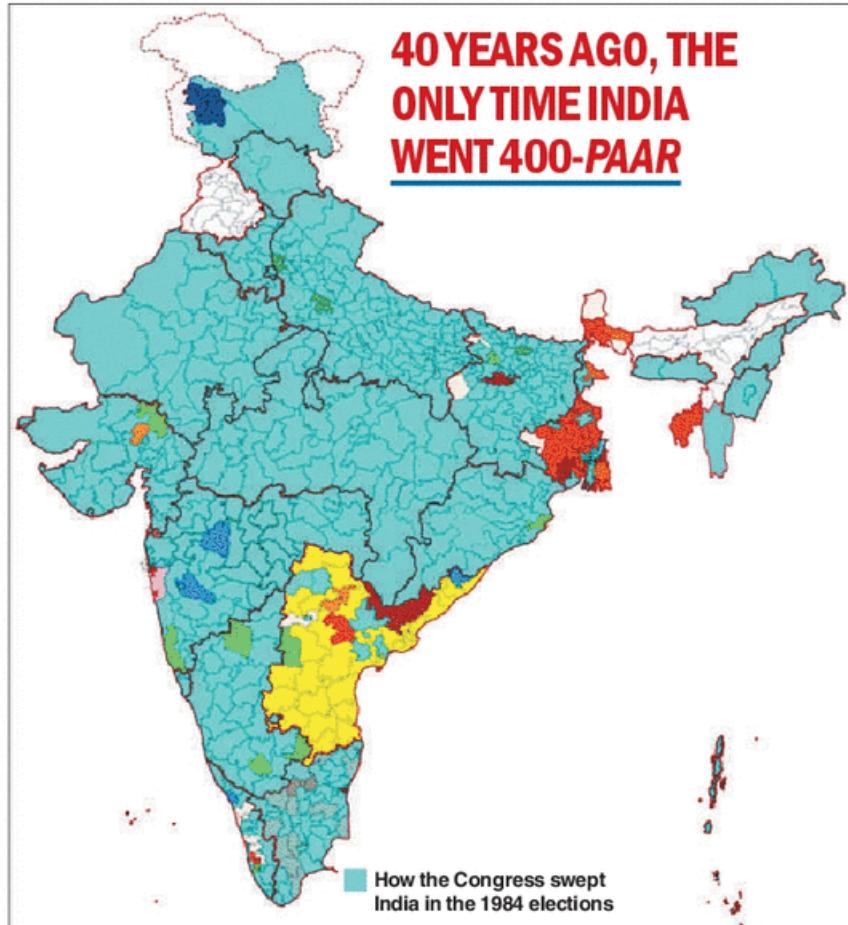
Such was the setting that gave Rajiv Gandhi 400-plus in the Lok Sabha, an overwhelming empowerment to blow away the apparitions.

Rajiv, swiftly ascended to a darling poster boy of a Prime Minister, put a silver hem to the darkness: he called the verdict his licence to take India into the 21st century.

It may not be entirely misplaced to recall here what happened to 400-paar by 1987. All, or most, of it had gone up in the Bofors smoke.

Call it ambition, call it audacity, Modi's 400-paardare — or demand — is no less astonishing for emanating from a Prime Minister seeking a third successive term.

Modi is seeking a repeat of



CAN & ABLE? Narendra Modi and (right) Rahul Gandhi

the Rajiv leap with rhetoric of his own minting — as he gives shape to the New India aka Vishwaguru Bharat, he must line the road to the centennial of India's Independence 23 years down.

Please read into that an essential subscript seldom put out in writing but seldom left to the imagination: it is to be the re-investiture of a high-voltage propaganda-fest cult that seeks to loom over all it surveys, a menhir of a monolith that is at once India's most insistent political reality and material of popular myth, both raja and rishi, elected chief executive and self-appointed regent of the faith — priests of Ayodhya, bearer of the parliamentary sengol and the unmistakable symbolism that surrounds it.

One of the intractable things about Modi for his political opponents must surely

be that he has conjured and become the manifestation of so many descriptions, tangible and intangible.

Rahul Gandhi, his chief

adversary, seldom defaults on the necessary articulations for the singular, and mesmerising, diversity India remains.

He has consistently intoned the lofty and noble ideas of the Constitution and of the requirements of pluralist India.

He has, through the course of his crisscross yatras of India,

spoken of the non-negotiable obligations of neutralising the politics of "hatred and bigotry" which he insists Modi and his regime represent.

What Rahul, critically, has not cared to do is to give his ideals muscular legs to run on, rebuild the party that has gone amnesiac on how to attain power.

Modi, a matchless and vigorous pulpit communicator,

has pushed on with his New

India rhetoric whose definition, beyond unapologetic majoritarian ultranationalism, remains a work that Modi reveals as Modi wills. Very often, the Modi design spell out in his silences — or his absences. The Modi stylebook is to message his constituency also by what he does not say or do. Illustration: his obdurate refusal to travel to Manipur, a stained metaphor for how prejudice, peddled actively by the state and its instruments, can scald and set people intensely apart.

As the seven-phase 2024 vote approaches, it is hard not to note, and spell out, the imbalance embedded in the contest. It is a narrative of accumulation on one side and depletion on the other.

The Modi-led alliance has

shopped and grabbed partners aggressively over past weeks. INDIA has suffered emaciation from where it began; it lost Nitish Kumar in Bihar, it is a non-starter in Bengal and Jammu and Kashmir.

The Modi government has shown little embarrassment in using institutions of state; it has scarcely mattered whether they are under the executive's direct control or not.

The Opposition has suffered targeted chasing and hounding by agencies such as the En-

forcement Directorate.

The treasury has lorded

over the legislature as never

before, often turning to obfuscation and abuse; the Opposition, depleted and divided, has

endured record refusal and

suspensions.

There can probably be no

finer index of how lop-sided

the contest is than the reve-

lation of who got what from

the electoral bonds. Beyond

the bonds too, the Modi pro-

ject's access to resources not

merely financial is immeasur-

ably greater.

It is beyond astonishment

how and where India's

traditional party of power

lost the keys to the kingdom,

the tricks to acquiring power

and holding on to it. It is nothing

short of astonishing that

they seem not only to have

fallen in the hands of the Nar-

endra Modi-Amit Shah enter-

prise but are also being put to

vigorous and profitable use.

The swiftness and swag with

which they began to manouevre

and manipulate the han-

des of power and the divisive

social impulses to appropriate

advantage after assuming

power in 2014 remain a most

dramatic, and no less worri-

some, work in progress.

What has rolled out in the

general elections since is an

undeclared open-ended refer-

endum on what the arrival

of Narendra Modi in power

should really come to mean.

The code of these elections

needs to be understood beyond

the numbers in the Lok Sabha.

This is no ordinary time. And

the time to come may be even

less ordinary. For if there is

one thing the last two general

elections have done, it is this:

validate the values Modi and

his worldview embody and

vacate the values of several,

or all, of his predecessors.

Majoritarian India has

never been so audaciously

enthroned. The majoritarian

ethic has never appeared so

unflinching in its determina-

tion to impose itself.

Postscript: As you read this, we are two days from the first

vote for 2024. Save the orches-

trated outings of the chief

competitors — and the rau-

cous battles of television

studios — you'd probably have

discerned barely a ripple on

the landscape of waves our

elections usually are. A si-

lence, even sullenness, hangs

in the air, an anti-excitement.

Nobody can be sure what it is

telling us, if anything. Does

it tell us of a contest whose

outcome there's no thrill or

suspense over? Or is this the

silence of a voter intending

a surprise? We do not know;

we shan't until June 4. It's

when the people speak and

India listens.

The Modi-led alliance has

shopped and grabbed partners

aggressively over past weeks.

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tion from where it began; it

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Jammu and Kashmir.

The Modi government has



Previous 73399.78

CURRENCIES	
US \$	Rs 83.54
UK Pound	Rs 104.02
Euro	Rs 88.81

INDICES

BSE	Sensex	72943.68	-456.10
Midcap	40315.36	+21.64	
Smallcap	45423.98	+257.11	
NSE			
Nifty	22147.90	-124.60	
Next 50	62057.50	+49.39	
Nifty 500	20423.00	-55.75	

*In Rs; #In Rs crore

COMMODITIES

Gold (1 gram in Rs)	Pure	73850	+700
Hallmark	70550	+650	
Silver (kg in Rs)	Bar	83500	-100
Portion	83600	-100	
Crude*	7104	-83	
Copper#	824	-6.75	

*per barrel in Rs; #per kg in Rs

MONEY MARKET

	Yield (%)
Call rate	5.00-6.70
91-day T-Bill	6.86
1-year Gilt	7.02
5-year Gilt	7.20
10-year Gilt	7.19

IN BRIEF

Starlink permit push

Zee will not press for Sony merger

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Mumbai: Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd on Tuesday said it has decided to withdraw its application filed before the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) that sought implementation of its merger with Sony.

"After seeking appropriate legal advice and reviewing the action-oriented steps implemented by the management, the board of directors of the company in its meeting held today (Tuesday) considered and approved to withdraw the implementation application filed before the Hon'ble National Company Law Tribunal, Mumbai bench," Zee said in a regulatory filing after market hours.

The company added that it would continue to pursue all its claims against Sony in the ongoing arbitration proceedings at the Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC) and in other forums.

Zee had moved the NCLT against Sony's decision to call off the merger of its Indian arm with Zee.

Zee sought directions from the tribunal to implement the \$10-billion merger.

Commenting on its latest decision, Zee said in a press statement that the step to withdraw the implementation application is based on the advice received by the board after a detailed consultation with legal experts.

OPTOUT

- Withdraws application before NCLT
- Arbitration proceedings at Singapore to continue
- Zee to devote more time to other growth opportunities
- Will focus on targets set by the company

"This decision will also enable the company to pursue growth and evaluate strategic opportunities to generate higher value for all shareholders. The board remains committed to reviewing the strategic action-oriented steps taken by the management and providing timely guidance," Zee said.

Zee chairman R. Gopalan said the immediate priority for the company is to focus on performance and achieve its targeted goals for the future.

"We have reviewed the key steps taken by the management over the last few months that are result-oriented, and we believe that the company is well poised to chart a stronger growth trajectory," R. Gopalan, chairman, Zee said.

"Hence, after seeking an independent legal opinion, the board has advised the management of the company to withdraw the implementation application filed before the NCLT," he said.

The company plans to set up new 4G and 5G sites and expand the capacity of existing 4G sites.

It will pay around Rs 2,175 crore in the form of deferred dues to the DoT and GST.



GQG likely to invest in FPO of Voda

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Mumbai: The anchor book for the Rs 18,000-crore follow-on public offering (FPO) of Vodafone Idea Limited (VIL) opened on Tuesday amid expectations that Rajiv Jain-led GQG Partners will be one of the entities that could look to participate in the share float.

Apart from GQG which could invest up to \$400 million, the other institutions which reportedly could participate include Fidelity apart from several other domestic mutual funds.

The price band for the offering has been fixed at Rs 10-11 per share.

Bids can be made for a minimum of 1,298 equity shares. For other investors, the FPO will open for subscription on Thursday, and close next Monday.

Vodafone Idea proposes to utilise the proceeds from the fresh issue of equity shares towards the purchase of equipment for the expansion of its network infrastructure amounting to Rs 12,750 crore.

The company plans to set up new 4G and 5G sites and expand the capacity of existing 4G sites.

It will pay around Rs 2,175 crore in the form of deferred dues to the DoT and GST.

Motilal Oswal to raise Rs 1000cr

A STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta: Motilal Oswal Financial Services will raise Rs 1000 crore through non-convertible debentures (NCDs). The company's shares at Rs 2,032.35 were up 2.2 per cent on the BSE on Tuesday.

The company proposes to raise through the secured redeemable NCDs of the face value of Rs 1,000 each an amount of up to Rs 500 crore (base issue size), with a green shoe option of up to Rs 500 crore.

There are eight series of NCDs carrying fixed coupons and having a tenure of 24 months, 36 months, 60 months, and 120 months with annual, monthly and at-maturity interest options. Effective annual yield for NCDs ranges from 8.85 per cent to 9.70 per cent," the company said.

The issue is scheduled to open on April 23 and close on May 7. At least 75 per cent of the funds raised through this issue will be used to meet working capital requirements and repayment of existing liabilities and the balance will be used for general corporate purposes.

Birla group floats digital platform

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Mumbai: Aditya Birla Capital (ABC) is looking to add three core customers in three years through its digital platform.

The conglomerate is set to enter the jewellery retail business after a foray into paints.

In June last year, it announced plans to enter retail jewellery at an investment of Rs 5,000 crore.

The business will be housed under a new venture, Novel Jewels Ltd, and will build large-format exclusive jewellery retail stores across India, featuring in-house jewellery brands.

ABC on Tuesday launched its omnichannel D2C platform ABCD (Aditya Birla Capital Digital). The group feels the launch would mark a pivotal moment in its ambitious journey to drive growth and leadership and become a full-stack financial services provider.

The platform will offer a portfolio of 22 products and services, including facilities of a payment platform — such as UPI, bill payment, and online recharge, with financial



Kumar Mangalam Birla in Mumbai on Tuesday. PTI

services such as loans, insurance, and investments along with comprehensive personal finance tracking such as 'My Track' among others.

Speaking at the event, group chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla said it is also aiming for a 19-21 per cent per annum growth in insurance, credit and asset management businesses over the next three-five years.

ABC's chief executive Vishakha Mulye said the company has invested Rs 100 crore over the last year to build the platform, aimed at acquiring new customers.

Aditya Birla Capital serves over 3.5 crore customers across businesses, a wholly-owned subsidiary of

Washington:

The International Monetary Fund on Tuesday raised India's growth projection to 6.8 per cent for FY2024-25 from its January forecast of 6.5 per cent citing bullish domestic demand conditions and a rising working-age population.

With this, India continues to be the fastest growing economy in the world, ahead of China's growth projection of 4.6 per cent during the same period.

Growth in India is projected to remain strong at 6.8 per cent in 2024 and 6.5 per cent in 2025, with the robustness reflecting continuing strength in domestic demand and a rising working-age population," said the latest edition of the World Economic Outlook released by the IMF ahead of the annual spring meetings of the IMF and the World Bank.

IMF in its January update had projected 6.5 per cent growth for India in 2024-25. The IMF presents data for India on a fiscal year basis,

while for others it is on a calendar year basis.

World growth

The IMF has upgraded its outlook for the global economy this year, saying the world appears headed for a "soft landing" — reining in inflation without much economic pain and producing steady if modest growth.

The IMF now envisions 3.2 per cent worldwide expansion this year, up a tick from the 3.1 per cent it had predicted in January and matching 2023's pace. And it foresees a third straight year of 3.2 per cent

growth in 2025.

In its latest outlook, the IMF, a 190-country lending organisation, notes that the global expansion is being powered by unexpectedly strong growth in the US, the world's largest economy.

The IMF expects the US economy to grow 2.7 per cent this year, an upgrade from the 2.1 per cent it had predicted in January and faster than a solid 2.5 per cent expansion in 2023.

The IMF foresees global inflation tumbling from 6.8 per cent last year to 5.9 per cent in 2024, and 4.5 per cent next year.

While others are projecting a calmer year ahead, the IMF says inflation will remain high in 2025.

For the rest of the world, the IMF projects growth of 3.2 per cent this year, up from 3.1 per cent in 2023.

India's growth is projected to slow to 6.8 per cent this year, down from 7.0 per cent in 2023.

China's growth is projected to slow to 4.6 per cent this year, down from 5.5 per cent in 2023.

Russia's growth is projected to slow to 3.2 per cent this year, down from 3.5 per cent in 2023.

Brazil's growth is projected to slow to 2.2 per cent this year, down from 2.5 per cent in 2023.

Other countries' growth is projected to slow to 2.7 per cent this year, down from 2.9 per cent in 2023.

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**IN BRIEF****Car hits auto, bikes, divider**

TOLLYGUNGE: Three people were injured when a car hit an autorickshaw, crashed into the divider and collided with a scooter and a motorcycle on Deshapran Sashmal Road on Tuesday afternoon. Kakali Naskar, 35, Subhankar Haldar, 24, and Subhajit Nandi, 30, were treated at MR Bangur Hospital, police said. The driver has been arrested.

Hospital fire

WEST PORT: A fire broke out in the operating theatre of the eye department of the South Eastern Railway hospital on Garden Reach Road on Tuesday. Three fire tenders doused it. No one was injured.

Fall from bus

MUCHIPARA: A man fell while getting off a bus on the Sealdah flyover on Monday night. Police said Miraj Ansari, 34, was admitted to NRS hospital.

Found hanging

JADAVPUR: A 73-year-old man, Swapan Kumar Mukherjee, was found hanging from the ceiling of his house in Regent Estate on Tuesday.

YESTERDATE

April 17, 1899

The first thermal power plant of Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation (CESC) was commissioned on this day. This began thermal power generation in India. This was only 11 years after London's electrification and 17 years after New York's.

The Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation Limited was registered in London in 1897.

In Calcutta, the initial charges for electricity were the same as in London: Re 1 per unit of power.

According to the CESC website, a newspaper reported on December 6, 1898, that on a trial basis, electricity was being supplied to the Bank of Bengal, The Bengal Club and a few private residences.

Newspapers reported that the electric corporation is "spending 100,000 pound sterling" on lighting Calcutta. "Mains have been laid for the supply of 60,000 lamps, which can be increased to 200,000. The supply will be continuous throughout the twenty-four hours and each day, and is well-adapted for working *punkals*," the website quotes a report.

It adds that the first plant, located in Emanbaugh Lane, "consists of three boilers of 500 horse-powers which can be extended to 800 horse-powers, if desired, with eight dynamos and a storage battery... The chimney will be the highest in Calcutta, being 40ft higher than the water works chimney which is close by."

Chandrima S. Bhattacharya
For suggestions on dates/
events mail us at:
yesterdate@abp.in

WEATHER

YESTERDAY
Maximum: 39.4°C (+3.8)
Minimum: 28.6°C (+2.5)

RAINFALL: Nil

HUMIDITY: Max: 89%,
Min: 34%

THE FORECAST
Maximum: 39°C Minimum:
29°C

EXPECTED:
Hot

SUNSET
5.58pm

SUNRISE
5.15am

How city copes with soaring Celsius

Lunch tables empty, noon shows scrapped

DEBRAJ MITRA

Calcutta: The lunch tables are empty at restaurants.

Cinema halls have suspended the noon show.

The blistering assault of the sun has affected the city in ways more than one.

The Met office recorded a maximum temperature of 39.4 degrees in Alipore on Tuesday. It was four notches above normal. A heatwave alert is already in place for the districts in south Bengal. The days in Calcutta are also set to get hotter, according to the forecast.

No show

Basusree in Hazra has a capacity of 750 people. On Monday, less than 30 tickets were sold for the noon show (from 11am). From Tuesday, the noon show has been suspended on a temporary basis.

"There are hardly any people on the streets," said Debjiban Basu of Basusree.

Menoka, on Southern Avenue, also with a capacity of 750, registered less than 50 viewers for the noon show (12pm to 3pm) on Tuesday. "I will scrap the noon show for a while from this week. The hall will open with the matinee show," said Pranab Roy, owner of the hall.

Arijit Dutta, the owner of Priya, has already done away with the noon show. Priya is now opening with the matinee show.

But Dutta did not blame the weather alone. "The weather is very harsh. But the dearth of good films is also to blame," he said.

More curd for bear

The Alipore zoo authorities have introduced a slew of measures in the wake of the Covid-induced lockdown.

Dinner was much better in terms of footfall, said restaurateurs.

Summer special mocktails and fresh lime soda with black salt and sugar were in demand.

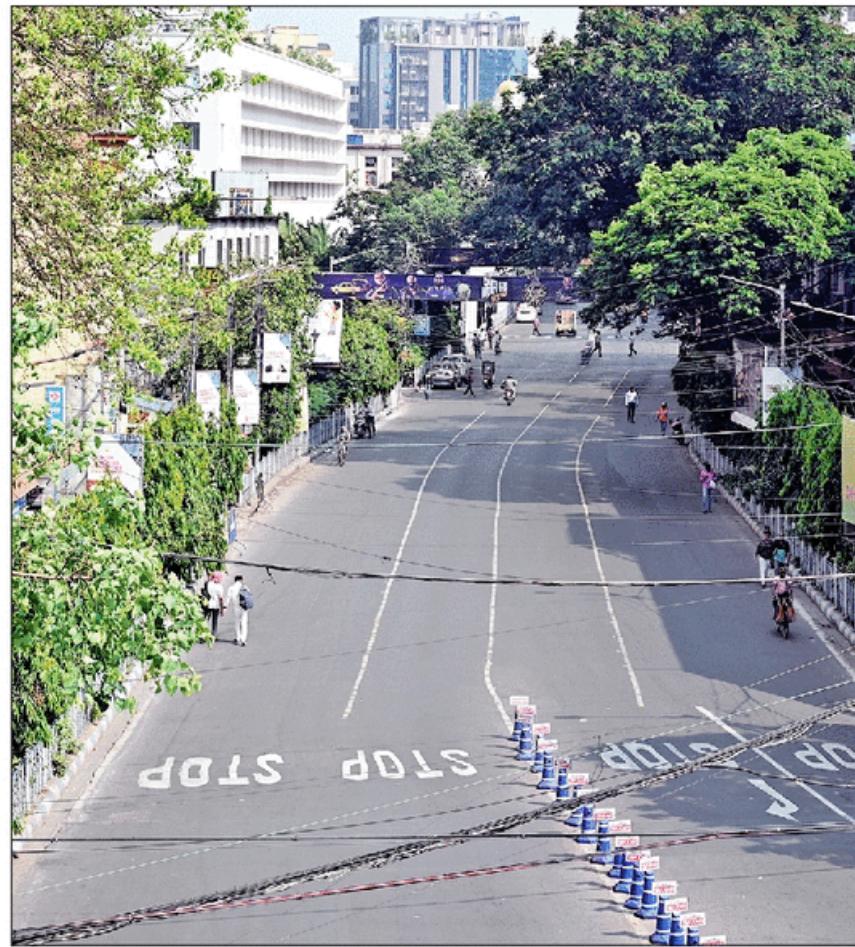
Beer is the more popular booze. "Seven out of 10 drinkers are having beer now. Bars across the city have stocked up on beer," said Sudesh Poddar, the president of the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Eastern India and the owner of Manthan, Songhai and MS Bar and Lounge.

Beer sales have surged by almost 50 per cent, said Daryanani.

Green coconut sellers did

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9►

Boys shield themselves from the sun on Casuarina Avenue on Tuesday afternoon. Picture by Gautam Bose



A nearly-deserted Park Street on Tuesday afternoon. The day's maximum temperature was 39.4 degrees Celsius, four notches above normal. Picture by Pradip Sanyal

Uniform of traffic cops made lighter

KINSUK BASU

Calcutta: Leather belts, anklets and headgear strapped to the chin — some of the basics of a uniform for a police constable on traffic duty are being done away with this summer so the personnel out on the roads can remain light in this searing heat.

A recent advisory from the police headquarters in Lalbazar to all traffic guards across the city has said certain relaxations in the police uniform, which traffic constables don, would be allowed.

The advisory has also said their duty hours could be scaled down to six, from eight, depending on the staff strength and arrangements should be made to keep all personnel adequately hydrated.

Packets of ORS have been sent to the personnel and sunglasses and umbrellas have been distributed in abundance.

Senior officers said almost all traffic guards are short of personnel and the officers in charge want to

ensure no one reports "sick" during this time, when a series of political rallies and IPL matches are lined up amid a soaring heat.

"At certain key intersections and spots where there is no shade, we are trying to rotate the constables on duty so that the exposure to heat is partly reduced," said an officer in a traffic guard in the city's central area.

Some schools do not have AC classrooms but their auditoriums or halls do.

In the last two years, schools had to shut down early for summer after state government orders because of the scorching weather.

Several principals said ACs could not be a solution.

"If there are ACs in classrooms, even when the weather cools down students would demand it," said Terence Ireland, principal, St James' School.

"Senior officers and traffic sergeants have been asked not to drink chilled water immediately after returning from their rounds."

"We were finding it diffi-

cult in classrooms because of the noise and air pollution.

Although our primary reason for installing ACs was to cut out noise pollution, it has addressed the problem of heat," said Damayanti Mukherjee, principal, Modern High School for Girls.

The discomfort level of students has gone down and they are far more alert and comfortable in class, said Mukherjee.

Some schools do not have AC classrooms but their auditoriums or halls do.

In the last two years, schools had to shut down early for summer after state government orders because of the scorching weather.

Several principals said ACs could not be a solution.

"If there are ACs in classrooms, even when the weather cools down students would demand it," said Terence Ireland, principal, St James' School.

"Senior officers and traffic sergeants have been asked not to drink chilled water immediately after returning from their rounds."

"We were finding it diffi-

6 VC posts to be filled from state's list: Gov to SC

SUBHANKAR CHOWDHURY

Calcutta: The attorney-general, representing the Bengal governor, told the Supreme Court on Tuesday that six vacancies for vice-chancellors will be filled by appointing candidates from a list recommended by the state government.

The attorney-general made the submission while the apex court was hearing the state government's challenge to the governor's powers in appointing an interim VC bypassing the higher education department.

An order signed by a division bench of the Supreme Court said: "Learned Attorney General, at the outset, points out that six vacancies of Vice-Chancellors will be filled up by appointing the candidates out of the list recommended by the State Government. In the interest of educational institutions, let the needful be done within a week. The State Government may, meanwhile, send some more names for the remaining vacancies."

The court will hear the case next on April 30.

The governor is the ex-officio chancellor of state-aided universities. An official of the department said the six universities where the vacancies would have to be filled up include Jadavpur University, Gour Banga University, Darjeeling Hills University, Rani Rashmoni Green University, Harichand Guruchand University and Sadhu Ram Chand Murmu University of Jhargram.

Job racket busted

SNEHAL SENGUPTA

Calcutta: Two men from Purulia have been arrested for allegedly duping job aspirants by promising them placements in private banks and companies against payment.

Haradhan Bauri, 22, and Avijit Bauri, 25, were arrested on Tuesdays.

The police had started a probe based on a complaint they had received in February.

Manas Dasgupta and his friend Swati Chakraborty had complained that they had lost more than Rs 2.17 lakh that they had paid to get jobs.

The two arrested men are part of a gang, the police said.



Boys shield themselves from the sun on Casuarina Avenue on Tuesday afternoon. Picture by Gautam Bose



The Eden Gardens ahead of Tuesday's IPL match. Picture by Pradip Sanyal

Horses released early to prevent tragedy rerun

MONALISA CHAUDHURI

Calcutta: The horses of the mounted police deployed for IPL outside the Eden Gardens this year are being released from duty a few hours before the end of the matches to eliminate their chances of reacting to the sound of firecrackers after any match.

"On Tuesdays, their duty ended around 8.15pm. They were not made to wait till the match was over," a senior officer of Kolkata Police said.

The match ended several hours later.

Last year, a five-year-old mare — Voice of Reason — had panicked hearing the sound of firecrackers during the India-South Africa match of the ICC Cricket World Cup and died after crashing into multiple vehicles.

The death prompted the authorities to decide on releasing the horses a few hours before the end of each match and made to return to their stable.

In the last two matches of the current IPL season that were played at Eden, on March



A mounted policeman in front of the Eden Gardens on Tuesday evening. Picture by Pradip Sanyal

sound of sudden bursting of crackers, he said, may scare the mounted police horses.

"This has been done keeping in mind about last year's incident. Sometimes, animals feel inconvenienced by loud sounds. Why subject the horses to it," the officer said.

"Earlier, the horses would be the last to return. They would stay put outside the stadium till the players would pack up and leave the venue," said an officer of the mounted police.

The duty of a mounted police horse includes maintaining law and order outside Eden during cricket matches, on the Maidan during football matches and at the ticket counters in the Maidan area.

Veterinary surgeon Swapan Kumar Ghosh who has worked at the Alipore Zoo and also with the Kolkata Police dog squad and the mounted police said it was a "sensitive move" by Kolkata Police to ensure the fitness of the horses.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9►

arguably the quickest and bounciest wickets on the planet. Top-tier international games and Big Bash league games are now played at Optus Stadium.)

The atmosphere at the grounds will often depend on who is playing. But Optus at a (Perth) Scorchers (*the home team*) game is pretty high energy.

I have watched matches at the Waca stadium and the new Optus Stadium in Perth, and the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground.

(Until recently, all international cricket in Perth was played at the Waca — the name derived from the abbreviation of Western Australian Cricket Association and known for

just walked into the game. I can't imagine how it would be if he hit the winning runs or a few 6es like he did in Mumbai on Sunday.

If Optus is the benchmark crowd support and atmosphere as a 10, (they call Optus the Furnace as the Western Australia crowds are parochial and usually has a one-sided supporter base), Chennai would be a 15. The other crowds were all very similar; probably

with Jaipur and Calcutta being very similar on a 12 and Lucknow similar to a Scorchers game on a 10.

Facilities
The best stadium (*that he has been to in India so far*) has most definitely been Ekana (*in Lucknow, home of the Super Giants and rechristened in 2018 after Atal Bihari Vajpayee*).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9►

CODE READ

The Bharatiya Janata Party's eagerness for women's rights is manifested in its election manifesto. The party is convinced that only a uniform civil code will achieve women's empowerment. Yet experts have said that changing specific laws would be more effective than a sweeping law that would be difficult to implement. The Constitution does refer to a uniform code, but the ideal for it is progressive equalisation. Equality and uniformity are not identical, neither is equality an excuse to stifle all beneficial personal laws of minority communities, even when they protect women. But that fear is unavoidable in the present atmosphere. The apprehension of regression was made more acute when the BJP said that the UCC would draw upon the best traditions and harmonise these with modern times. Its allusion to tradition may be ominous for many — certain castes, for example, and certainly women. Its notion of modern times is puzzling too. Does it show in its resistance to same-sex marriage or in its belief that acknowledging marital rape would destabilise society?

Such doubts have been further fuelled by Uttarakhand's UCC brought earlier this year. If that is to be the template, then it largely means, in spite of a few progressive measures, the replication of Hindu civil and personal laws and the erasure of even the best parts of the largest minority community's personal laws. Besides, live-in relationships must be registered at the cost of imprisonment. Scrutiny by State powers will decide if they are against 'public policy and morality'. Not only does this violate autonomy, privacy and personal choice of life and partner, but it may also threaten inter-caste and interfaith relationships. Penalties abound — men of the minority community face penalties for oral triple *talaq*, although men from the majority community can desert their women in silence; women from the minority community have lost their unique right to divorce through *khula*. *Iddat* has been disallowed and *halala* made punishable by imprisonment. All women will face lengthy divorce proceedings and the old struggle for maintenance, and must also register divorces. The minority community's protection for women and children who are heirs by capping the amount that can be willed away was dropped too. Women's rights have little to do with the Uttarakhand UCC. Will the UCC for the country, then, focus on what is best for women?

DEBT TRAP

A report from a notable financial services firm has revealed that India's household debt had surged to an all-time high of 40% of the gross domestic product in December 2023. The household sector's financial savings were also at a low of 5% of GDP in December 2023. A high growth rate would depend on domestic capital formation, which, in turn, would depend on the economy's savings and investments. The household sector is important in this context since it contributes about 70% of gross domestic savings to the economy. India's savings as a fraction of GDP is unchanged at 30.2% over FY2022 and FY2023. China, on the other hand, has clocked a savings rate of over 40%. India's investment rate was 32.2% in FY2022. Obviously, India's growth rate will climb if the savings rate can be pushed up. The prevailing consumption-led growth can lead to a constraint when current capacities are hit. Pushing investment now would ensure that capacity constraints would be less severe going forward. The household sector having a low financial savings rate implies that there is a strong preference for physical over financial assets. This, in turn, might reflect an inadequate penetration of financial institutions, or a trust deficit that individuals have towards financial institutions. For an economy to have efficient financial intermediation, financial assets must be the major form of savings that can be mobilised quickly across different sectors.

The government has indicated that the low financial savings of households bear indication of the fact that they are taking more loans from banks and financial institutions to buy real estate. Hence, the high level of household debt includes a part of domestic investments. Although this assertion might be true to some extent, banking sector data reveal that there has been a noticeable growth of personal loans in recent times which does not reflect capital formation. Indeed, the Reserve Bank of India has indicated that caution must be exercised in allowing an unrestricted growth in such loans. It is more likely that the data in the report are suggestive of a high-consumption sector that lives beyond its current income. Competition among banks, along with new forms of fintech, allows for a quick and steady disbursement of loans that, from the macroeconomic point of view, are unproductive. This point has to be noted by the RBI as well as the finance ministry if the claims of becoming a much larger economy are not to end up as hot air.

SCRIPSI

'Abundance is a process of letting go; that which is empty can receive.'

BRYANTH. MCGILL

Humanity's slide into collective aphasia A visual triumph

G.N. DEVY

The three superlative inventions that humans made include the making and the using of tools, the domestication of fire, and the articulation of thought through the use of signs. These three set apart *Homo sapiens* from all other species. Although quite arbitrary, language is a 'system of signs'. Until writing emerged as a mark of civilisation, linguistic signs were essentially signs formed out of sound waves. Scripts and writing were the 'surpluses' of language, its mirror image, its representation, but never 'language itself'. The idea that a mature language is one that has gained its representation in writing, printing and long-distance distribution is not scientifically accurate even though it is culturally irreversible.

Humans have used language for millennia prior to the emergence of writing. With the inception of scripts, natural languages acquired a new ability. Humans became capable of carrying speech far beyond its immediate space and time, particularly when printing technology came in. Of course, the meanings of words shift from location to location and, more decidedly, from one epoch to another epoch. But that slide or shift is a limitation — one may even say it is a gift — that natural languages have to carry with them as a kind of a birthmark. Scripts were conceptualised initially to record complicated economic transactions involving production that was getting to be seen not just as material but also as material with economic value. It included human labour. It also included inheritance or property. Thus, in ancient times, natural languages started demanding to be scripted when the speech communities using them developed production practices, giving rise to the concepts of 'surplus', 'exchange' and 'value'.

Yet, whether entirely oral or having representation through writing, the languages used by humans are described as 'natural languages'. At the beginning of the present century, Unesco's estimate of the number of natural languages in existence was about 6,000. What is common to all those languages — except the sign languages — is that all of them use voice or sound to signify meaning. There is widespread fear that a large majority of them may not be around by the end of this century. The 1961 Census of India had reported 1,652 mother tongues. In 2011, the number had gone down to 1,369, marking a loss of 283 mother tongues in the intervening period of 50 years. It is a daunting task to determine as to which languages have come closest to the state of aphasia, which ones are decidedly moving in that direction, and which ones are merely going through the natural linguistic process of transmigration. Language is not only a social system of verbal icons, arbitrarily assembled

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through ages, but it is also a 'means' of carrying forward the cumulative human experience of millennia to future generations. When the trajectories of languages get snapped, the accumulated wisdom in those languages, too, gets submerged and continues to survive in severely truncated, irreparable and insensitive forms.

Various modes of representation of language have impacted language as speech, so much so that many alluring possibilities of languages that are almost entirely dissociated from speech have started beckoning the human mind. The digital/visual world with its limitless virtual space provides one such possibility. The digital/visual exchange of meaning, liberated from sound, can be compared to a shadow play where shadows signify substance in the absence of what the shadows stand for within the visual field of the viewer. The idea that a shadow has a remarkable referential capacity and versatile signification is not recent. It occurs in ancient Greek philosophy, as it does in the *Upanishads*. In our time, as the 6,000 or so living languages are caught in a survival crisis, there has been an amazing growth in the universe of the 'shadow-meaning' in the exchange of human thought and memory through a phenomenally speedy dissemination of the digital and the visual. It is a move towards not only a new manner of communication but also an altogether different mode of existence.

Two remarkable books can help one grasp the enormity of the shift. One of these is *Proust and the Squid*, a study of dyslexic children by Maryanne Wolf, a professor at the Centre for Reading of Tufts University. The subtitle of Wolf's book is "The Story and Science of the Reading Brain". After examining the neurological history of reading, she comes to the conclusion that probably the 'non-reading' dyslexic-types are a necessary part of human evolution. Their relative increase in schools indicates that after artificial memory started occupying a greater space in language transactions, the human brain started relating to language more through visuals than through sound-based signs.

Edge of war

■ Sir — Iran on Sunday fired a flurry of missiles and drones at Israel in what is believed to be its first direct attack on the latter after years of shadow war ("Iran escalates long shadow war", April 15). This will further destabilise the Middle East, which is already reeling from the war in Gaza. Iran's unprecedented attack was in response to the Israeli strike on an Iranian consulate in Syria a fortnight ago. Although the Joe Biden-led administration in the United States of America has communicated to the Israeli prime minister that it would not participate in any offensive against Iran, it is unlikely that Tel Aviv will refrain from taking retaliatory action.

The fresh tensions between Israel and Iran have dimmed the chances of achieving peace in Gaza. One hopes that better sense prevails and the warring nations work towards de-escalation.

Bal Govind,
Noida

■ Sir — Peace has become elusive for the strife-torn Middle East. With Iran's Revolutionary Guards seizing a container ship off the Strait of Hormuz that had 17 Indian crew members aboard, New Delhi, too, seems to have been affected by the conflict ("Iran assures India ship crew access", April 16). Although the Indian government has been assured access to the detainees, its strategic silence on the ongoing Israel-Hamas war is bound to dent its long-standing ties with Iran.



Music mania

■ Sir — Be it screen adaptations of Broadway productions or dulcet remakes of blockbusters, song and dance seem to be at the core of recent Hollywood releases. This is because musicals have often proved to be box-office successes. But do all movies require a mellifluous treatment? Take, for instance, the upcoming sequel of the 2019 film, *Joker*, depicting Arthur Fleck's romance with Harley Quinn. A recent trailer of the film has led fans to become exasperated by the abandonment of the dark tone of the story, which deals with psychological trauma and crime, in favour of musical performances. However, even Greek tragedies featured song-and-dance sequences. Perhaps fans would do well to introspect about the healing power of music during tragic times.

Harsha Sinha,
Calcutta

Geopolitical relations have come under strain because of the vested interests of each nation. The United Nations must initiate a strong measure to put out the fires of conflict raging in different parts of the world.

Kirti Wadhawan,
Kanpur

■ Sir — There is no greater misfortune than being at the

wrong place at the wrong time. The capture of the 17 Indian crew members aboard the container ship, *MSC Aries*, by Tehran is an example. The Indian foreign ministry must keep negotiating with the Iranian government to facilitate the release of these Indian nationals at the earliest.

The lack of employment opportunities in India pushes people to take up jobs in the

maritime transport industry, which is fraught with risks. A recent report by the International Transport Federation highlighted that 400 Indian crew members were abandoned on ships in 2023. They then become vulnerable to trafficking and human rights abuse.

Khokan Das,
Calcutta

■ Sir — The unprovoked strike on an Iranian consulate in Damascus by Israel prompted Iran to fire more than 300 missiles and drones at Israel ("Pick peace", April 16). Iran has justified its aerial strike as an act of "self-defence" and warned Israel of painful consequences if it considers even the "slightest" response. However, Israel and its allies have intercepted 99% of the Iranian missiles and drones. Further, the American president, Joe Biden, has assured a "diplomatic" response to Iran's brazen attack. Another full-scale conflict seems to be on the Middle East's horizon.

D.P. Bhattacharya,
Calcutta



On the edge

When the mind's on a leash

PRAMOD K. NAYAR

Neurotechnologies are expanding faster than the speed of light. Brain-based lie detection, devices to assess moods and emotions, recognition of memories and personal knowledge and sexual or political inclinations have already been deployed in several nations, with varying degrees of success. The manipulation of brain activity has also been around for some time now and has been ramped up with AI-based 'interventions'.

Neurointerventions are not just examination and alteration of brain physiology. They could have profound effects on the personhood of a person. Alterations to the brain's functioning can possibly produce entirely or partially new persons. If, at some point in the future, the law enforcement process includes procedures to 'correct' criminal behaviour by modifying brains, then we are looking at a sci-fi scenario where a person could be remade.

This kind of a situation opens up the field of neurorights that have two key components. The first is the right to bodily integrity (in Article 3 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and elsewhere) where a person's body cannot be violated without her/his express consent. The second is the right to mental integrity where a person's mind cannot be violated without her/his express consent. The first prohibits — we can see this injunction in the world's first legislation on the use of AI promulgated by the European Union to be enforced from 2026 — violations of the physical/corporeal person. The second prohibits violations of the mind (not just the brain). Taken together, these rights call for respecting the bodily and the mental autonomy of a person, unless she/he is willing to have these modified (for example, those who take recreational drugs or voluntarily choose implants/prostheses are using their autonomy to

inhuman. There is concern that if contradictions are to be regularised, moods managed, and desires monitored, we would be a step away from overwhelming technological surveillance. This surveillance, as George Orwell demonstrated, is itself a prelude to interventions in the political thought processes of an individual. We are already in the era of curbs on freedom of thought and expression, where curriculum and pedagogy, art and literature, are all examined by fringe elements. What prevents such elements from calling for neural management of artists, teachers and writers?

There is thus reason to believe that neurotechnologies could become weapons of mass surveillance and mass management. Persons with dissenting political ideas or those with low thresholds for socialising, apart from deviants, could then be modified to fit the template of the ideal human. The latter would be a law-abiding, socially pliant, controlled citizen. There would be no deviations from this norm.

Pramod K. Nayar teaches at the Department of English, the University of Hyderabad

nating about confronting Beijing and disingenuous failure with endless rounds of military-level negotiations. India's reluctance perhaps stems from its humiliating defeat in the 1962 war.

Hemanta Sasmal,
Howrah

Mercury rises

■ Sir — It is appalling that Calcutta's maximum temperature on Monday — 38.7 degrees — exceeded that of Churu in the Thar desert which was 33 degrees ("Frying-pan city beats



Rising discomfort

"desert heat", April 16). Bengal has been experiencing discomforting weather conditions owing to climate change. Only *kaalboishakhis* can bring respite from this scorching heatwave.

Sourish Misra,
Calcutta

■ Sir — The editorial, "The 'C' word", highlights the Narendra Modi government's shiftness in dealing with China regarding the border incursions. The Centre has been procrasti-

Letters should be sent to:
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**THE TIP**

It's never too late to start pumping iron. It is not only a great way to stay healthy but can also delay dementia.

The Telegraph

WELLNESS

CALCUTTA WEDNESDAY 17 APRIL 2024

XXCE

Wondering how much water you need to drink? Melinda Wenner Moyer has the answers

#WaterClock

How much water does the average person really need to drink? And is there such a thing as too much? If you're not sipping from a 64-ounce (1.9 litre) Stanley cup all day, are you even alive? Hydration is once again having a moment — TikTok videos with the #watertok hashtag now have more than 1 billion views.

Whether you're drinking from a trendy tumbler or a plain old glass, there is no "one-size-fits-all" answer to how much water you should drink in a day. The closest thing the United States has to a water consumption recommendation comes from the National Academy of Medicine, which, in 2004, reported that healthy men usually stay adequately hydrated when they drink at least three litres (nearly 13 cups) of water per day and that women are typically hydrated when they drink at least 2.2 litres (just over nine cups) per day, not including the water they consume via food.

But these guidelines should not be taken as gospel, experts said.

"Most people, even if they stay below that recommendation, will be just fine," said Dr Siddharth P. Shah, a nephrologist at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania in the US who specialises in hydration and electrolyte balance.

Water is, of course, crucial for our survival. It helps us eliminate waste, maintain blood pressure, regulate body temperature and more. But when should you drink it, and, more important, just how much is necessary?

Some people need more water than others. People who are especially active — who have physically demanding jobs or who exercise a lot — lose more water through sweat and will need to compensate

by drinking additional water, said Dr George Chiampas, an emergency medicine specialist at Northwestern Medicine, US, and the chief medical officer for the US Soccer Federation.

People may also need to drink more if they live in hot climates, have larger bodies or lots of muscle mass, have loose stools, are pregnant or breastfeeding, or have had kidney stones or recurrent urinary tract infections, experts said.

Over the course of life, a person's water needs change, too. Typically, with age, people lose muscle and gain fat, Dr Shah

level of dehydration "that would make you thirsty at the age of 40 years might not make you as thirsty when you are 80 years old," he explained.

If you do feel thirsty, you're probably dehydrated and should drink water, said Dr Alycia Robichau, a family and sports medicine physician at Houston Methodist in the US.

There can be much more subtle signs of dehydration, too, such as feeling constantly cold or having dry skin, Dr Robichau said. People who are acutely or chronically dehydrat-

ed may also have headaches or dry eyes, she added.

Because people go without water while they sleep, "most people wake up and they're already dehydrated," Dr Chiampas said. It's generally a good idea, he said, to start the day with a glass.

It's perfectly fine to add flavours to your water or to drink carbonated water, Dr Robichau said — but she warned

that coffee and other caffeinated beverages may not be as hydrating as uncaffeinated drinks. Drinking a caffeinated beverage, especially if you don't drink them regularly, can reduce the ability of the kidneys to absorb water, leading you to lose additional water through urine. Alcoholic beverages are dehydrating, too.

Keep in mind that you can also get water from food. Some fruits and vegetables, such as watermelon and celery, are mostly water, Dr Shah said. The National Academy of Medicine estimated that people get, on average, 20 per cent of their water through food.

Most people are unlikely to drink too much water, but it is possible, especially among endurance athletes who drink lots of water quickly, Dr Chiampas said. Doing so can disrupt the body's balance of sodium and potassium and lead to potential fatal water intoxication.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises not to drink more than 48 ounce (1.24 litre) of water per hour. Keep in mind,

too, that there is probably no health benefit to guzzling tons of water.

"There are a lot of excessively large water bottles being carried around by people these days," Dr Shah said. "But the overwhelming majority of people do not need to drink an excess of water."

NYTN



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AUCTION NOTICE

It is hereby notified for Public Auction for right to collect fish from Defence owned 08 Ponds/Tanks of 12.29 acres period of one year, renewable for another two years subject to certain terms and conditions at Barrackpore Cantonment is being conducted on 30th April, 2024 in the office of Defence Estates Officer, Kolkata Circle.

2. Interested bidders may report at Barrackpore Cantonment office on 19.04.2024 at 1100 hrs for the site inspection with conveyance and proof of Identity, in original and EMD in single Demand Draft of Rs.40,000/- for participation. Further, details notice can be obtained from office Notice Board and PPP Portal.

Dated: 15 April, 2024
DEFENCE ESTATES OFFICER
File No. B-6/4/VOL-III/24

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নববর্ষ শৈলে গাল

একটি শৈলে শতকের 'গালচারাল' বাতাসির
জাতীয়ভাবে কোথায়?

রসনা বিলা দ

রকমারি পাহুঁচি, তিনি বাদের মাঝ, আবির
ও নিরামিয় করবাবের রেপিপি, গুরুরে দীর্ঘ
ভাঙা ধারণ নির্মাণ, চাল দিয়ে ফ্রেশাল ভেজাও

ফ্যাশন কেব স

'আমদানি' শৈলিতে উষ্ণী রায় ও খৃতি-

পাঞ্জাবিতে সাহেবের ভার্তায় সার্বিক সাজে

ব্যবহার, এবং রং সজান

ব্যাক্স কেব স

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পাঞ্জাবিতে সাহেবের ভার্তায় সার্বিক সাজে

ব্যবহার, এবং রং সজান

ব্যাক্স কেব স

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GUKE SH
REMAINS
IN JOINT
LEAD
P13

KICK OFF WITH The Telegraph

SPORT

PEP CAUTIONS HIS BOYS AGAINST DREAMING TOO EARLY **P14**

CALCUTTA WEDNESDAY 17 APRIL 2024

XXCE

IN BRIEF**Wrestler falters**

BISHKEK (KYRGYZSTAN): Wrestler Rohit Dahiya lost his bronze medal bout to a top-ranked Uzbek grappler as India finished their Greco-Roman campaign at the Asian Championships without a single podium finish here on Tuesday. Dahiya (82kg) lost to Mukhammadkodir Rasulov, ranked No.1 here, on points. PTI

Serie A

ROME: Fiorentina mounted a second-half comeback to draw 1-1 with Genoa at home in a Serie A game marked by VAR decisions against both teams. The draw on Monday extended Fiorentina's winless run to five league matches and left it in 10th place, trailing in the race for European competitions next season. Verona also came from behind to draw at Atalanta 2-2 and secure a vital point in its relegation fight.

AP/PTI

Women's T20

CALCUTTA: LRS Bangla Sports Academy emerged champions of the All Bengal Women's T20 cricket league, which concluded last Saturday. They beat Pal & Chatterjee Cricket Academy by 91 runs in the final.

Our Bureau

Double victory

PUNE: Multiple-time national champion Hemanth Muddappa of Mantra Racing began the season with a double victory at the summer edition of the Valley Run 2024 at Ambi Valley here on Tuesday. PTI

SAYAK BANERJEE**IPL STANDINGS**

	P	W	L	NR	NRR	PI
RR	7	6	1	0	+0.677	12
KKR	6	4	2	0	+1.399	8
CSK	6	4	2	0	+0.726	8
SRH	6	4	2	0	+0.502	8
LSG	6	3	3	0	+0.038	6
GT	6	3	3	0	-0.637	6
PBKS	6	2	4	0	-0.218	4
MI	6	2	4	0	-0.234	4
DC	6	2	4	0	-0.975	4
RCB	7	1	6	0	-1.185	2

Updated till Tuesday's match

Calcutta: Sunil Narine had scripted what appeared to be a perfect night for the Kolkata Knight Riders. But it wasn't to be.

Returning to the side as Impact Player, Jos Buttler (107 not out off 60 balls) produced an exceptional, unbeaten innings that drove Rajasthan Royals to chase down a daunting 224-run target and record a two-wicket win at Eden Gardens on Tuesday.

If Narine's innings was that of authority, Buttler's was that of quality, patience, determination and composure. All these four facets helped him pull off an unbelievable win for the Royals, which did look impossible once they were six down for 121 with still 103 needed on 46 balls.

Precisely, Buttler won the game single-handedly for the Royals, who cemented their place at the top with 12 points. Even KKR principal owner Shah Rukh Khan couldn't help but clap for Buttler's marvel-

ous knock that overshadowed Narine's maiden IPL hundred earlier in the evening. Just as he had done after Virat Kohli had scored a century in Jaipur earlier in this IPL.

Royals overcame a number of obstacles. Shimron Hetmyer had perished for nought. The Royals had also erred by sending Ravichandran Ashwin, who also returned to the team, ahead of both Hetmyer and Rovman Powell.

But the game gradually began to change during Buttler's seventh-wicket stand of 57 with Powell (26 off 13 balls). Narine, despite cramping up a bit, managed to trap Powell lbw after he had picked up Dhruv Jurel earlier. But that

was not before Powell had hammered him for a four and couple of sixes in that 17th over.

The Royals lost their eighth wicket in the form of Trent Boult, who was run out. The task looked seemingly impossible then for the Royals as Buttler had to get all of those remaining 38 runs if they had to win.

He made sure he did it, unleashing fours and sixes one after another and ensuring No.10 batter Avesh Khan didn't face a single delivery of those remaining 15 balls. Off the final over of the game, he slammed Varun Chakravarthy for a six, but didn't panic at all with those dot balls. And with one needed off the last ball, he calmly got the run to take the Royals home.

Earlier, Narine smashed leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal through the mid-wicket region for a four, sprinted towards the non-striker's end and celebrated with a leap in the air as he registered his maiden T20 ton. It was a masterful exhibition of clean striking.

KKR

P. Salt	c & b Avesh	10 (13)
S. Narine	b Boult	109 (56)
A. Raghuvaran	c Ashwin b Sen	30 (18)
S. Iyer	bw Chahal	11 (7)
A. Russell	c Jurel b Avesh	13 (10)
R. Singh	not out	20 (8)
V. Iyer	c Jurel b Sen	8 (6)
R. Singh	not out	1 (1)
Extras (b-4, lb-4, w-13)		21
Total (6-2, 20 overs)		223
Fall of wickets:	1/21, 2/106, 3/133, 4/184, 5/195, 6/215	
Bowling:	Boult 4-0-31-1, Avesh 4-0-32-2, Kuldeep 4-0-45-2, Chahal 4-0-51-1, Ashwin 4-0-49-0	

ROYALS

J. Jasprit	c Iyer b Arora	19 (8)
J. Buttler	not out	107 (60)
S. Samson	c Narine b Rana	12 (8)
R. Parag	c Russell b Rana	24 (14)
D. Jurel	bw Narine	2 (4)
R. Ashwin	c R. Vaishali b Varun	8 (11)
S. Heimburger	c Iyer b Varun	0 (1)
R. Powell	bw Narine	26 (13)
T. Boult	run out	0 (1)
A. Khan	not out	0 (0)
Extras (b-1, lb-1, w-14)		16
Total (8 wickets in 19.6 overs)		224
Fall of wickets:	1/22, 2/47, 3/97, 4/100, 5/121, 6/121, 7/178, 8/188	
Bowling:	Starc 4-0-50-0, Arora 3-0-45-1, Rana 4-0-45-2, Narine 4-0-30-2, Chakravarthy 3-0-36-2, Russell 1-0-17-0	
No. of balls faced in brackets		
Mkt: Jos Buttler		

GAME OF CHASE

Among the top targets chased in the IPL, Rajasthan Royals occupy the top two positions. Here's the list:

- 224 — RR (vs KKR, Calcutta, 2024)
- 224 — RR (vs KXIP, Sharjah, 2020)
- 219 — MI (vs CSK, Delhi, 2021)
- 215 — RR (vs Deccan Chargers, Hyderabad, 2008)
- 215 — MI (vs PBKS, Mohali, 2023)
- 215 — SRH (vs RR, Jaipur, 2023)

KKR's Sunil Narine pulls one during his innings of 109 off 56 balls against Rajasthan Royals at Eden Gardens on Tuesday.

Picture by Sanat Kumar Sinha



Delhi Capitals skipper Rishabh Pant during practice in Ahmedabad on Tuesday. (PTI)

dhiman Saha.

Delhi, on the other hand, are disadvantaged with David Warner's injury. The veteran Australian opener is unlikely to play against the Titans and Prithvi Shaw may have a new opening partner, with Abhishek Porel being a likely contender.

There are other points too which point at the Titans' advantage. South African batsman David Miller, who missed three games with a niggle, is set to return to the team. So too can keeper-batter Wriddhiman Saha.

There are other points too which point at the Titans' advantage. South African batsman David Miller, who missed three games with a niggle, is set to return to the team. So too can keeper-batter Wriddhiman Saha.

"I guess Abhi and I at the top of the order try to maximise that (Powerplay) as much as we can. It may be fours, it may be sixes. But yeah, we want to try to maximise the Powerplay with the two of us and then obviously we've got a lot of power through that middle-order," Head added.

"It wasn't a mere tall claim as was evident during SRH's Powerplay scores in six matches this season: 65/1,

81/1, 58/1, 78/1, 40/3 and 76/0, and none of the other nine teams have come close to those numbers."

But it was not blind hitting. Head revealed his approach in the initial six overs.

"Depending on the field positions, I try to sum up what the bowlers are trying to do. In the Powerplay, with just two fielders out, I try to think about hitting the ball 360, around the whole ground, as you only have to go over the infield or through the outfielders for boundaries.

"I'd worked on a few things over the last couple of days. I did not execute the way I would have liked (in the last two matches). But today, especially in the Powerplay, I was able to strike the ball

The Titans have been buoyed by the form of captain Shubman Gill, their highest run scorer. With Afghan spinners Rashid Khan and Noor Ahmad doing well, the Titans look more confident.

For Delhi, much of the onus will once again be on skipper Rishabh Pant. The keeper-batter has looked good so far and will probably get even better with more games.

Wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav though remains their main weapon.

TODAY'S MATCH

Gujarat Titans vs Delhi Capitals, 7.30pm, Ahmedabad, live on Star Sports Network & JioCinema

Out of form, Maxwell opts for a break

Bengaluru: Royal Challengers Bengaluru all-rounder Glenn Maxwell has decided to take an indefinite "mental and physical" break from the Indian Premier League, blaming his wretched batting form (average 5.33) for the decision.

Maxwell's absence from RCB's match against Sunrisers Hyderabad here on Monday was initially attributed to a finger injury he suffered during the previous match against Mumbai Indians.

But he later admitted to dropping himself from the squad.

"It was a pretty easy decision. I went to Faf and the coaches after the last game (vs Mumbai Indians) and said it was probably time we tried someone else (in his place)," Maxwell said in the post-match media meet.

"It's actually a good time to give myself a bit of a mental and physical break, get my body right."

"If I'm required to get in during the tournament, I can, hopefully, get back into a solid mental and physical space where I can make an impact," Ponting said, coach of Delhi Capitals, said.

RCB, losing six of their seven games, are placed last among the 10 teams. "If you see what they have done in the tournament so far, pressure builds up on individual players as well. I read that article today (Tuesday) morning that Glenn wants to step aside, just have a few games off and try and refresh."

"Every individual is different, right? Some guys would want to get going and push through that and get some runs on board and thus will change their way of how they think about the game..."

With inputs from PTI

and some guys need to step back and have a break," the former Australia captain said.

Speaking on the mental well-being of the players, Ponting said: "That's why one needs to be really understanding as a coach now that anyone who is around the cricket team, their health and well-being and welfare of the players is something you think about first."

Ponting believes that for elite athletes and coaches, it is important to have their loved ones around them. "With more and more cricket being played, a lot of times you are away from home when you play international sport. You are away from all the things that make you happy, that certainly is the biggest part of what we do, coaching or playing."

"I am lucky to have my family now and I have had them here for a few weeks. It makes it a bit easier for me having spent a lot of time away from my family."

With inputs from PTI



Rajasthan Royals' Jos Buttler during his majestic innings of 107 not out off 60 balls against Kolkata Knight Riders at Eden Gardens on Tuesday. This was Buttler's seventh IPL ton and he is second only to Virat Kohli (8) on the all-time list. While Kohli has played 244 IPL games, this was only Buttler's 102nd match. Picture by Sanat Kumar Sinha

Chahal needs a look-in

INDRANIL MAJUMDAR

to be fatal.

A big spinner of the ball unlike Bishnoi or Rashid Khan, he gets a lot of drift or swirl towards the right-hander or away from the left-hander which could come in handy. Moreover, the control in his trajectory often leaves the batters confused.

The Rajasthan Royals wrist spinner had come into the contest having taken a wicket every 12 balls in IPL 2024, his best strike rate in any edition of this tournament. That however was thrown out of the window as he was smashed for 22 in his first two and then Narine cracked two boundaries and two sixes in his final over.

It didn't make for a pretty sight but Chahal remains the Purple Cap holder with 12 wickets in seven matches. He remains the only spinner in the top-10 wicket-takers list.

His only wicket at the Eden was that of Knights' captain Shreyas Iyer who was struck on the back leg in front of the middle and leg stumps while going for a slog sweep. This match has exposed that he needs to dwell on better lengths when the conditions aren't in his favour.

He has been fairly consistent and is firmly in the race to be the third spinner in the World Cup XV with Axar Patel and Ravi Bishnoi. Ravinder Jadeja and Kuldeep Yadav are confirmed on the list.

Chahal has the uncanny ability to turn the ball both ways. His varied range of deliveries, including the googly, the flipper, and

Like a spider, Derek, the quiet assassin, weaved his deadly web to trick batters

GUEST COLUMN

GEOFFREY BOYCOTT

Until 1979, we played cricket on uncovered pitches — we did not cover them when it rained. We called them sticky dogs. Derek Underwood was absolutely deadly on a sticky dog, hence his nickname Deadly!

I don't know anybody that could play him or hit him after it had rained on those pitches. Once it had rained, he was unbelievable because he bowled at a slightly quicker pace than the orthodox left-arter.

Derek did not spin the ball so much as cut it and because he was faster and flatter than most slow bowlers, he was on to you and making you hurry any stroke.

Deadly cut the ball using the seam — just like fast bowlers bowl an off-cutter. He did not have to wait for the pitch to start drying or become tacky like a normal spinner; his left-arm cutters would grip, turn, jump and sometimes take a piece out of the pitch. Try playing that. The Australians at The Oval in 1968 didn't. Derek took seven for 50 on the last afternoon, bowling brilliantly on an uncovered pitch, to help England secure a drawn series. That was one of his greatest performances but there were so many it is hard to pick out the best.

Modern players would try to whack Derek with their big bats, but trust me they would have no chance. No way. He would be too clever and too good for them. And if they tried all those sweeps and reverse sweeps they would definitely need a helmet with a grill otherwise they may get a smack in the mouth.

Nobody ever bashed him. Derek was a one-off, brilliant, extraordinary bowler — unique. There was nobody else like him in English cricket. The nearest was Bob Appleby in the 1950s, who bowled right-arm off-cutters on uncovered pitches and took 200 wickets in his first full season. Deadly was left-arm, so he turned the ball the other way — away from the right-handers, which was much more dangerous because of the number of right-handers to bowl to.

We did not have speed guns in those days, but Derek was too quick to get down the pitch to. People always talk about him on wet pitches because he was so lethal on those. But he could bowl you out on dry ones because he was so accurate, he did not give you anything. Derek built pressure on batsmen and did not give them loose balls. You could not score easily off his bowling and once

could do the job.

Everybody is under pressure — average players, good players and great players. It is how you handle the pressure that counts. Derek could handle it, no problem whatsoever. That is why he was a great bowler.

One year, Yorkshire were at Canterbury playing Kent. It rained and I went in the dressing room to have a chat with him because I played a lot with him for England.

I said 'I bet you're pleased about this rain, you'll take six for 40 when we're back on'. He said 'yeah, but if it rains for a couple more hours, I'll take eight for 20.' That's how he thought.

He was not a bombastic guy. He was a little bit quiet and did not say a lot but Deadly was the quiet assassin.

In the dressing room with England, he knew exactly what he wanted to do at practice. He would come in, change and then he would just like to sit quietly before he went out for 20 or 25 minutes with a cup of tea in his right hand and a fag in his other hand contemplating.

People always talk about him on wet pitches because he was so lethal on those. But he could bowl you out on dry ones because he was so accurate, he did not give you anything. Derek built pressure on batsmen and did not give them loose balls. You could not score easily off his bowling and once

the pitch helped him, he was very, very difficult to play.

He did not really have to change his style, even when he was bowling on good batting pitches. If he needed to, he could bowl a little slower and 20 or 30 overs was never a problem. He was metronomic and had great concentration.

Derek loved bowling with four people around the bat — just like a spider weaving its web to catch a fly. And he did not want you to escape to the other end to get a single.

If you were a fielder and not on your toes, maybe nodding off a bit and you allowed the batsman to sneak a quick single, he would glare at you. He would never say anything but you could tell that he was cross.

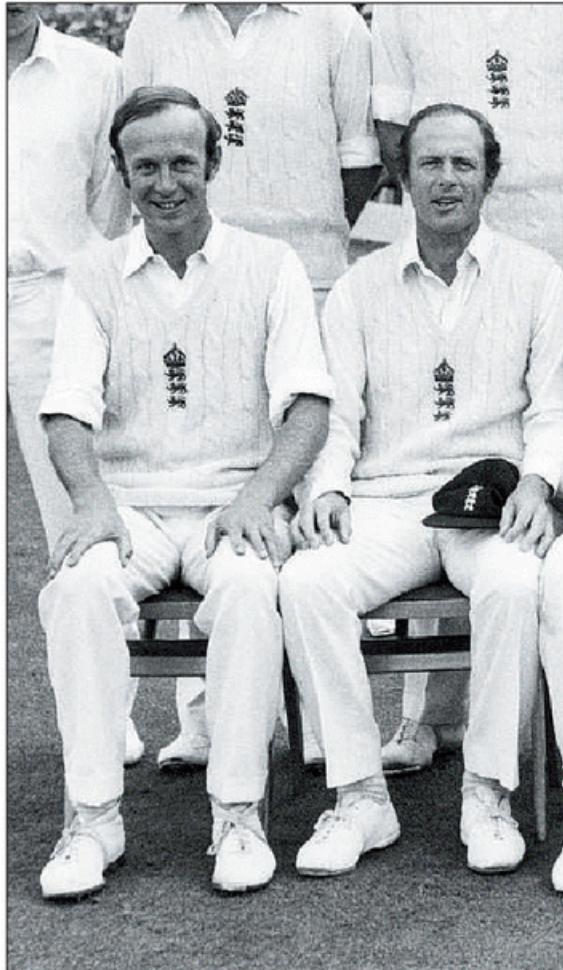
You could only get on top of Derek when he was batting. When he went out to bat, we all got ready to field — he was not going to last long. He could not bat for toffee.

We would have been better off declaring before he went in and saving the time! He got sent in as nightwatchman for a time against some very, very fast bowlers and his nerve got shredded.

Derek was one of the greatest bowlers I played with, without a shadow of a doubt. He had a rare gift and was a magic bowler. There has not been anything like him since.

I loved him to bits. He was one of my favourite cricketers.

The Daily Telegraph in London



Derek Underwood (left) and Geoffrey Boycott during a team photoshoot after England won the 1977 Ashes against Australia. (Getty Images)

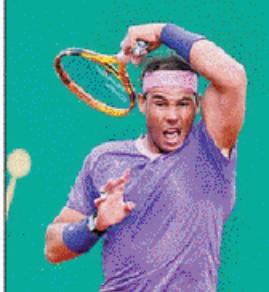
Nadal returns to action with easy victory

Barcelona: Rafael Nadal looked good in a comfortable 6-2, 6-3 win over Flavio Cobolli at the Barcelona Open in his first competitive match in more than three months on Tuesday.

6-4 to set up a meeting with 11th-seeded Alejandro Davídovich Fokina.

Alcaraz unsure

World No.3 Carlos Alcaraz has cast doubt on his Madrid Open title defence later this month as the Spaniard nurses a right-arm injury that has forced him to miss key tune-up events for the French Open.



Rafael Nadal

The 20-year-old successfully defended his Indian Wells title last month and then reached the Miami Open quarter-finals before sustaining the injury in his first practise session for the Monte Carlo Masters. The two-time grand slam champion was unable to play in Monaco and then had to pull out of the Barcelona Open.

"My feeling isn't right, but it is what it is. Now I'm fully focused on recovery and I have a little more time," Alcaraz said in Barcelona on Monday, a day after he decided not to defend his title.

AP/PTI, Reuters



Neil Darashah

Neil, Neeraj bag titles

STAR RACER

Calcutta: Trainer Neil Darashah and jockey Neeraj bagged the respective championship titles as the winter racing season concluded on Tuesday.

RESULTS

1st race: Eleos (Chisty) 1, Historic 2, Intense Belief 3. Win Rs 51; (P) 24, 13. Winner trained by Quinn.

2nd race: Regency Gold (Chisty) 1, Eastside 2, Tres Bien 3. Win Rs 19; (P) 14, 26, 32. Winner trained by Rutherford.

3rd race: Xtravagant Star (Chisty) 1, Nationwide 2, Cuban Pete 3. Win Rs 43; (P) 15, 14, 14. Winner trained by Rutherford.

4th race: Dragon's Gold (Bhati) 1, By The Book 2, Ivanhoe 3. Win Rs 57; (P) 15, 18. Winner trained by Anil Kumar.

5th race (Whomakesterheres Cup): Black Eagle (Trevor) 1, Iron Clad 2, Vijaya Falcon 3. Win Rs 13; (P) 10, 24. Winner trained by Quinn.

6th race: Blackstone (Trevor) 1, Dali Swirl 2, Parker 3. Win Rs 19; (P) 14, 11, 26. Winner trained by Quinn.

7th race: Dynamic Force (Bhati) 1, Speculator 2, Power Racer 3. Win Rs 44; (P) 18, 15, 17. Winner trained by Awale.

Gukesh, Nepo play out a draw



GM D. Gukesh during his Round X match against Russian GM Ian Nepomniachtchi (not in picture) at the Candidates Chess tournament in Toronto on Monday. (PTI)

ing part and in the endgame, the players exchanged another pair of rooks and a few pawns to reach a theoretically drawn position.

CANDIDATES CHESS

Praggnanandhaa has also been very solid with just a lone loss early in the second round against Gukesh. The 18-year-old faced the Berlin defence by Gujrathi who equalised easily after 10 rounds.

The Ruy Lopez as white gave the Russian just an optical advantage after the opening and the 17-year-old Gukesh ensured parity with some timely exchanges leading to a rook and pawns endgame.

The contest was almost uneventful other than the open-

ing part and in the endgame, the players exchanged another pair of rooks and a few pawns to reach a theoretically drawn position.

Caruana faced the Sicilian Najdorf by Alireza and secured the advantage out of a side variation. The players overlooked a simple tactic but Caruana still remained ahead in endgame after winning a pawn on the 29th move.

Alireza fought on but the result of the game was never in doubt.

Nakamura transposed to a French exchange out of a Petrossian defense and piled up pressure on the queen side.

At one point in a complex middle game, Abasov missed the thread of the position

and ended up losing a rook for a Bishop. The American wrapped the issue in 58 moves.

Vaishali prevails

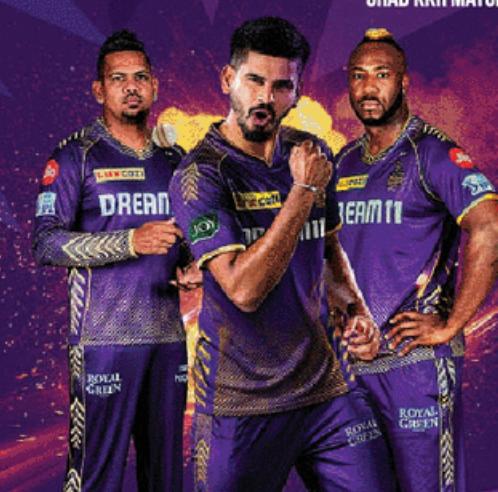
In the women's section, Tin-jie Lei of China ended the unbeaten run of Aleksandra Goryachkina of Russia and regained joint lead with compatriot Zhongyi Tan who played out a draw with Koneru Humpy.

R Vaishali bounced back with a win after a string of losses in a game with Nuryul Salimov of Bulgaria while Russian Katerina Lagno drew with Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine.

PTI

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Swapna reboots mission after snub

MADHUMITA GANGULY

Calcutta: In the 'cruellest month' of April, it is time for Swapna Barman to take a few tough decisions, standing as she is at the crossroads of her career.

The last few months have not been good for the heptathlete. She failed to defend the gold she won at the Jakarta Asian Games. She has been struggling with a spine injury for many months. The final blow came when her political ambitions hit a roadblock.

"Yes, I was promised a ticket for these elections (and no, I will not disclose the name of the party). I had mentally geared up accordingly. So much so that I was all set to retire from sports and plunge full-time into politics," Swapna told The Telegraph from her home near Jalgajpur.

"However," continued Swapna, "at the last minute, I was dropped like a sack of hot potatoes."

"The party has the right to deny a ticket to someone it does not deem fit. But is it too much to expect an intimation from the people who

have been leading me on to believe I would get a chance to serve my people?"

She suffered a mental setback following the denial and is still struggling to come to terms with it.

Swapna had clinched a silver at the Asian Athletics Championships in Bangkok in July, making it a hat-trick of medals at the prestigious meet. This made her believe that her defence of the Asian Games gold was possible.

But not only did she not finish on the podium — she finished fourth, behind compatriot Nandini Agsar — this disappointment was followed by a much-avoidable controversy.

Swapna had, after the Games, taken to X and alleged that she lost the bronze medal to a 'transgender athlete', sending shockwaves across India's athletic spectrum.

Within days, Swapna had offered an unconditional apology, saying it was an emotional outburst after she missed out on a medal at the Asian Games.

To a depressed Swapna, the opportunity to join politics with the promise of a

ticket seemed god-sent and she jumped at it.

"I stopped practising at Sports Authority of India (Calcutta). In fact, I have not donned my practice shoes for even a day since I returned from the Asian Games. And this is what I get."

From here, what next?

"I intend to return to heptathlon," said the 27-year-old. "I still have a few years of the sport left in me. And injury? That is a part and parcel of every athlete's life. I, like all athletes, can overcome it."

Pain and Swapna have been synonymous. She had won the Asian Games gold in Jakarta fighting an excruciating toothache and she had clinched a gold at the 2022 Federation Cup tested by a severe bout of food poisoning.

Born with six toes and never able to find a comfortable shoe growing up, she's been fighting adversities all her life. And overcoming them too.

Swapna is now ready to reinvent herself. If she devotes her dedication solely to sport again and works hard, no one can deny her the ticket to success.



Swapna Barman, during the javelin throw of women's heptathlon at the Hangzhou Asian Games on October 1, 2023

আনন্দবাজার পত্রিকা

তারকা প্রার্থীদের কেল্লে কেমন আছেন আজনকতা?

তারকা প্রার্থীদের কেল্লে তোমার অথবা অন্যান্য কেল্লে ভোটের ভোটের মত নিন।

ভোটের ২৪

বিশেষ জোনে নিন, নিজের ভোটের মত নিন।

১০৫



Bernd Hözlenbein
German
1974 World
Cupper
no more

Frankfurt: Bernd Hözlenbein, who won a crucial penalty in West Germany's victory over the Netherlands in the 1974 World Cup final, has died. He was 78.

Hözlenbein's former club Eintracht Frankfurt said in a statement Tuesday that he died Monday while with his family, without giving further details. "One of the greatest we have ever had," the club wrote on social media.

Hözlenbein played 40 games for West Germany but is best known for his role in the 2-1 comeback victory over the Netherlands to win the World Cup on home soil in 1974.

Playing in Munich, the Germans had gone behind to an early penalty from Dutch midfielder Johan Neeskens. Hözlenbein he dribbled into the crowded Dutch box and was brought down by a lunging tackle from Wim Jansen. Paul Breitner converted the penalty to level the score at 1-1. West Germany went on to win thanks to Gerd Müller's goal just before halftime.

Hözlenbein went on to play another major final with West Germany at the 1976 European Championship, where he scored in the final against Czechoslovakia to level the score at 2-2 before his team lost on penalties.

AP/PTI

Everton's appeal

London: Everton have lodged an appeal against a two-point deduction in relation to their breach of the Premier League's Profit & Sustainability Rules (PSR), the club said on Monday.

The Premier League said the appeal will be heard urgently with a decision before the end of the season.

Everton were charged in January for violations of the Premier League's PSR in their financial records for a period beginning in 2019-20 and ending in 2022-23.

They were then docked two points by the Premier League on April 8 — their second points deduction this season — which meant they dropped to 16th place in the standings.

"Everton can confirm that it has formally lodged its appeal of the two-point deduction imposed last week by a Premier League commission following a breach of the Profit and Sustainability rules in FY23," the club said in a statement.

The Premier League added: "For clarity and certainty for all clubs and fans, the Premier League will be seeking to have the appeal resolved urgently with the outcome confirmed in advance of Sunday 19 May, the last day of this season."

Everton were also deducted 10 points in November.

Reuters

CITIUS, ALTIUS, FORTIUS: The first torchbearer Greek rower Stefanos Ntouskos (right) lights the torch of the second torchbearer French swimmer Laure Manaudou during the torch relay after the flame-lighting ceremony for the Paris 2024 Olympics in Ancient Olympia on Tuesday. (Reuters)

Kane determined to keep fans hoping for a victorious climax to the season

Pep warning: Too soon to dream of a double treble

Manchester: While Manchester City midfielder Bernardo Silva said he and his teammates are motivated by the possibility of winning their second consecutive treble, manager Pep Guardiola cautioned against dreaming too far ahead.

City host Real Madrid in the second leg of their Champions League quarter-final tie on Wednesday at the Etihad, having overcome them in the semi-finals last season on their way to winning the competition for the first time.

They also lead the Premier



Bayern Munich's Harry Kane during training on Tuesday. (Reuters)

League standings and are in the final four of the FA Cup.

"I am not going to say 'don't feel this' to my players, but I have a different opinion. We are far away from those hypothetical dreams," Guardiola told reporters on Tuesday.

"When we are in the final of the FA Cup and two or three games (remaining) in the Premier League and in the final of the Champions League I will start to think about that."

"I started to think of the treble last season only when we beat Manchester United in the FA Cup final," he added.

Guardiola's team can book their spot in this year's FA Cup final with a win over Chelsea in Saturday's semi-final at Wembley. They also have a two-point lead over Arsenal and Liverpool in the Premier League with six games remaining.

City captured the treble — Champions League, FA Cup and Premier League — for the first time last season to match Manchester United's treble win in 1998-99. No team has won it in consecutive seasons and no English side has won it twice. Silva said being on the

brink of history can drive the squad for the rest of the season.

"Obviously, it is an inspiration and motivation," he said. "We want to create the legacy. We want four Premier Leagues in a row. We want the Champions League twice in a row and two trebles in a row."

"In one week we could be out of all the competitions. But

we are fighting."

Real Madrid and City slugged out a thrilling 3-3 draw in the first leg last week to leave the tie wide open.

City will have midfielder Kevin De Bruyne back after he sat out the match at the Bernabeu with an illness.

"When Kevin is present, everything is different because he is one of the best play-

ers of our generation," Silva said. "When he is on a good day it's difficult to stop him."

Defender Kyle Walker is also available after returning to the bench for City's 5-1 league thrashing of Luton Town on Saturday.

Former Barcelona player and manager Guardiola said he relished once again facing old rivals Madrid, who have an

eight-point lead at the top of the LaLiga standings.

"Always has been and always will be (a big game)," he said. "It's Real Madrid and in this competition it is always a big game. It's special for me. Of course it is."

Practical Tuchel

Bayern Munich have a slight edge over Arsenal in the Champions League given their rich history in the competition, but they still have to be at their best to beat them, coach Thomas Tuchel said on the eve of Wednesday's quarter-final second leg.

Bayern have not gone beyond the quarters since winning their sixth European Cup in 2020, while Arsenal are yet to get their hands on the

Cup. "It has been a disappointing season in the league. Credit and congratulations to Leverkusen for what they've achieved," Kane said.

"We haven't achieved the standards we want. We have had better performances in the Champions League. We have a great opportunity to keep the season alive and keep some hope among the fans that we can achieve something special."

Reuters



Arsenal players during a training session at London Colney on Tuesday, the eve of their Champions League quarter final second leg match against Bayern. (Getty Images)

Palmer season's top scorer with Haaland

PREMIER LEAGUE

CHELSEA	6
EVERTON	0

London: Chelsea midfielder Cole Palmer scored four goals, including a hat-trick in the first 30 minutes, as his side hammered Everton 6-0 on Monday to maintain their push for a European spot and leave the visitors still hovering above the relegation zone.

The 21-year-old Palmer underlined his England credentials with a classic left foot, header, right foot treble and then added a second-half penalty as Chelsea ran riot.

Nicolas Jackson and substitute Alfie Gilchrist were also on target as Chelsea remain ninth on 47 points but with games in hand on all the teams above them.

"When we signed him (Palmer) he was a great tal-



Chelsea's Cole Palmer (left) in an aerial tussle with Everton's Dwight McNeil during the EPL match at Stamford Bridge on Monday. (Reuters)

son shot straight to Palmer, who nodded the ball into the empty net.

Pickford also handed Palmer his third goal as the midfielder intercepted a poor clearance 30 metres out and, with his weaker right foot, chipped brilliantly over the retreating keeper after 29 minutes.

Jackson made it 4-0 just before the break and Palmer's fourth came from the penalty spot in the 64th minute but only after captain Conor Gallagher had to intervene to shove away Jackson and Noni

Madueke as they squabbled for the ball after the latter was brought down in the box.

The calmly-taken penalty took Palmer alongside Manchester City's Erling Haaland at the top of the league scoring charts with 20 and his tally in all competitions to 23 as he became the first Chelsea player to reach 20 since Eden Hazard in 2018/19.

Young substitute Gilchrist smashed home the sixth goal in the final minute to leave the Chelsea fans dreaming of Europe.

Reuters

Pochettino rebukes boys



Chelsea manager Mauricio Pochettino at Stamford Bridge on Monday. (Reuters)

London: An unseemly squabble involving six Chelsea players over who should take a penalty angered manager Mauricio Pochettino because of the message it sent around the world about his squad's behaviour.

"You cannot behave like kids," Pochettino said in reference to a minute-long series of bizarre confrontations in the second half of Chelsea's 6-0 victory over Everton on Monday.

After Chelsea was awarded a spot kick in the 63rd with the team leading 4-0, Noni Ma-

duke and Nicolas Jackson both attempted to take the ball from Malo Gusto, who was holding it while Cole Palmer — the team's regular penalty taker who had already scored a hat trick in the first half — was on the ground having been fouled.

Madueke lunged to grab the ball off Gusto, and then argued with Jackson as they both walked over to the spot before experienced Brazil defender Thiago Silva got involved and talked to them while putting his arms around their shoulders.

Conor Gallagher, Chelsea's captain, then intervened to tell Madueke that Palmer should be taking the kick, only for Jackson to try to snatch the ball off Palmer, who was about to place it on the spot. After pushing away Jackson, Palmer eventually took the penalty and scored his fourth goal of the night.

"I'm so upset about the situation," Pochettino said. "In every country, people are watching the game and we cannot send this type of image. I want to apologise to our fans."

AP/PTI

Shield is very important for me and club: Habas

ANGSHUMAN ROY

Calcutta: Antonio Lopez Habas prefers messages over voice. "My understanding of English by phone is not from Shakespeare language scholars," he told The Telegraph on Tuesday. He meant he was not that comfortable in English while speaking and as it is there is always that fear of being misquoted.

He missed three matches due to illness but was on the bench for the crucial 'final' league game. "I am better now," he assured.

Mohun Bagan Super Giant's Spanish coach is on a high after the Sanjiv Goenka-owned team lifted the League Shield defeating Mumbai City FC 2-1 at the Salt Lake Stadium on Monday. "This trophy (Shield) is very important to me and the Club," he said.

True. This is the first time Bagan have won the Shield, which means they are champions of the league stage and have earned a berth for the AFC Champions League 2.

In December-end last year though, it had seemed Bagan's season would unravel after three consecutive losses. Defeats against Mumbai City (1-2, December 20), FC Goa (1-2, December 23) and Kerala Blasters (0-1, December 27) prompted the Bagan brass to part ways with Juan Ferrando and bring in Habas, who was then the technical director.

There were stories of a fractured dressing room, low morale and lack of self-belief in the ranks under Ferrando. But once Habas took over and there were minor tweaks in the formation, the boat just sailed.

As Dimitri Petratos said at the mixed zone. "The new



Mohun Bagan Super Giant coach Antonio Lopez Habas celebrates with the ISL League Shield at the Salt Lake Stadium on Monday. Picture by Santosh Ghosh

coach came and he got us as one. We were brothers who fought from the first till the last whistle," Petratos, who had a role in both the goals (Liston Colaco and Jason Cummings) Bagan scored on Monday, said.

"The target was to enter the final playoff. I knew the team because I was the Sports Director and I knew there was potential to get something important. The players understood the demands and we achieved it," was how Habas put it.

One of the most important things Habas did was to draft in midfielder Joni Kauko. The Finn got injured in the early part of the 2022-23 season and as expected was not in Ferrando's scheme of things when the new season kicked off.

Once he came in — Hugo Boumous was shown the exit door — Bagan looked all the more dangerous.

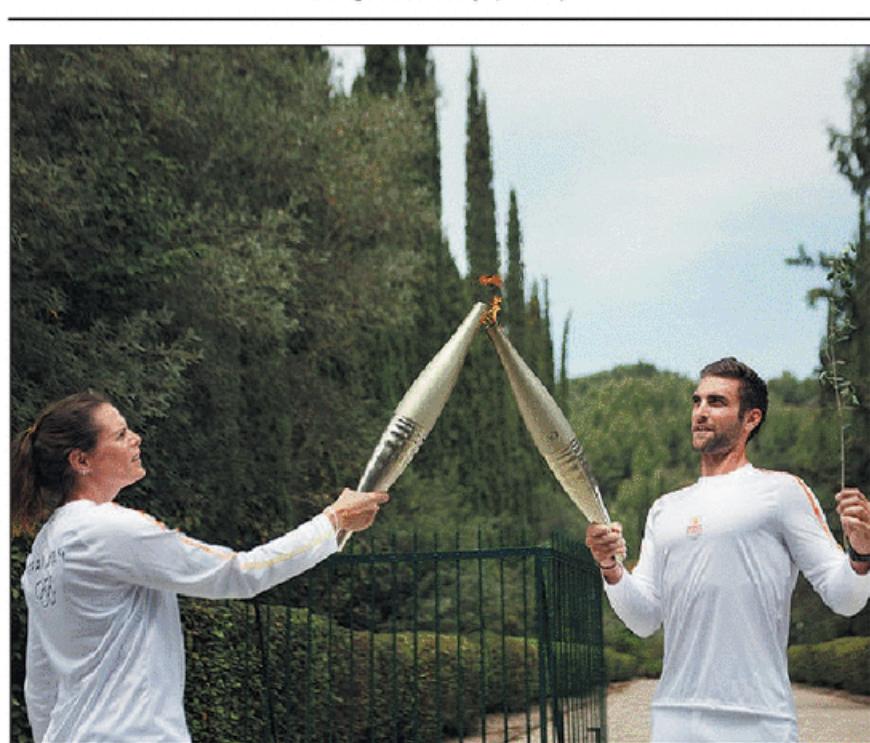
"True. But on Monday he had a light discomfort in the back of the thigh. Heat, humidity. You have to understand summer temperature in Finland may not exceed 15 degrees Celsius and here it is different," he said.

Bagan now have won the Durand Cup (under Ferrando) and the Shield. Two more wins in this ISL (two-legged semi-final and the final) and they will complete the treble.

Cummings already blew the bugle on Monday when he said: "We want to complete the treble."

Habas though is much more cautious. "Step by step," he signed off.

Keeping tradition of Olympic torch alive



CITIUS, ALTIUS, FORTIUS: The first torchbearer Greek rower Stefanos Ntouskos (right) lights the torch of the second torchbearer French swimmer Laure Manaudou during the torch relay after the flame-lighting ceremony for the Paris 2024 Olympics in Ancient Olympia on Tuesday. (Reuters)

Ancient Olympia (Greece): A priestess prays to a dead sun god in front of a fallen Greek temple. If the sky is clear, a flame spurts that will burn in Paris throughout the world's top sporting event. Speeches ensue.

On Tuesday, the flame for this summer's Paris Olympics was lit at the birthplace of the ancient Olympic Games in southern Greece in a meticulously choreographed ceremony.

It will then be carried through Greece for more than 5,000 km before being handed over to French organizers at the Athens venue used for the first modern Olympics in 1896.

Here's a look at the workings and meaning of the elaborate ceremony held among the ruins of Ancient Olympia ahead of each modern Olympiad.

The tradition

The pageantry at Olympia



Greek actress Mary Mina, playing the role of a high priestess, carries the torch during the Olympic Flame lighting ceremony for the Paris Olympics in Ancient Olympia on Tuesday. (Reuters)

Hera — wife of Zeus, king of the Greek gods, whose own ruined temple lies close by.

The flame is eventually used to light the first runner's torch — champagne-colored this year for France — and a long relay through Greece leads to the April 26 handover

at the Panathenaic stadium in Athens.

Flames and sandals make for an impressive spectacle, and while the priestess' largely tongue-in-cheek prayer to Apollo might not be answered, the parabolic mirror works well. The idea was the result of Greek-German cooperation ahead of the 1936 Olympics in Nazi Germany, which were heavy on fanfare and swastikas.

Backup plan

Rain or heavy cloud cover may spoil the show. Then the mirror wouldn't work. But ceremony organizers in Olympia hold several rehearsals in the days leading up to the official lighting, which provide a backup flame should the big day prove sunless.

Potential protests are a worse headache. Twice this century — during the lighting ceremonies for the Beijing Summer and Winter Games — human-rights activists disrupted the ceremony inside the heavily guarded archaeological site. Even after the embarrassment of the first incident in 2008, Greek police were unable to anticipate and prevent the second, 14 years later.

AP/PTI