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سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 18 MAY 2024 | SATURDAY | BENGALURU | 9 DHUL-QIDAH, 1445 AH | Vol 4 | Issue No 119 | Pages: 8

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Maliwal is FACE of BJP conspiracy: AAP

AAP calls NCW chief's assault claim baseless, says she came to CM's home without appointment

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

The Swati Maliwal assault case is a BJP conspiracy to frame Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and she is the "face" of this, AAP alleged on Friday, terming allegations levelled by her against Kejriwal's aide "baseless".

The remarks of AAP come a day after the Delhi Police registered an FIR against Bibhav Kumar, the personal assistant of Kejriwal, for allegedly assaulting Maliwal, the party's member in Rajya Sabha, at the Chief Minister's official residence.

She had reached the Chief Minister's residence without an appointment and her intention was to level allegations against Kejriwal, senior AAP leader Atishi alleged at a press conference.

"Today a video has surfaced that has exposed the lie of Maliwal. In her FIR, she has said she was brutally assaulted and she was in pain, and buttons of her shirt were torn. A video that has surfaced shows an entirely different reality," Atishi said.

Maliwal has also claimed that Kumar hit her with "full force again and again" but no one came to her rescue. She also alleged that despite telling Kumar that she was menstruating and in pain, he did not budge.



AAP minister Atishi addresses a press conference regarding Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal's alleged assault case **PHOTO: PTI**

Atishi said the video shows Maliwal "comfortably sitting in the drawing room" and "threatening the security staff", and that "her clothes were not torn".

"The video shows her threatening Kumar. The charges levelled by Maliwal are baseless. Maliwal insisted on meeting Kejriwal. She is Rajya Sabha MP and she should know that the Chief Minister has a busy schedule.

Kumar told her that the chief minister is busy and unable to meet her. She shouted at him, pushed him and tried to enter the residential portion of the Chief Minister House," she claimed.

On Tuesday, senior AAP leader Sanjay Singh had said that the incident with Maliwal was "highly condemnable".

The Delhi Police Friday took Maliwal to Kejriwal's residence here to recreate the crime scene as it investigates the alleged assault on her. However, Kumar did not appear before the National Commission for Women on Friday in connection with alleged assault on Maliwal.

—PTI

Slapped, dragged, kicked in chest: Maliwal

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

Details of the FIR filed by Delhi Police following the complaint filed by AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal against the aide of Delhi Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal has revealed shocking details.

Maliwal has alleged that Kejriwal's Personal Secretary Bibhav Kumar "slapped" her "at least seven to eight times" while she "continued screaming" and "brutally dragged" her while "kicking" her in her "chest, stomach and pelvis area." Maliwal also recorded her statement before the magistrate in Tis Hazari court under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.



Swati Maliwal at Tis Hazari Court after recording her statement on the alleged assault by Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar **PHOTO: PTI**

"I went inside the camp office and called Kejriwal's personal secretary Bibhav Kumar but I could not go in. I then sent a message on his mobile number (through WhatsApp). I was waiting for him to meet me. One of the members told me that Kejriwal is coming and suddenly, Kumar barged into the room. He started screaming and started abusing me. I was stunned by this," she said.

"Without any provocation whatsoever on my side, he started slapping me with full force. He slapped me seven to eight times at least while I continued screaming. I felt absolutely shocked and was screaming for help over and over again. In order to protect myself I pushed him away with my legs," she said.

"At that time, he pounced on me, dragged me and deliberately pulled my shirt up. My shirt buttons opened and my shirt flew up. I landed on the floor while hitting my head on the table. I was in extreme pain and kept telling him to stop. I repeatedly told him that I was on my period and that he should please let go of me as I was in unbearable pain. I was deeply traumatised and called the 112 number and reported the crime against me," the AAP MP said.

"We will break all your bones and bury you in a place that noone will get to know." Then when he realised that I had called the 112 number he went out of the room. The PCR police came but I was completely dazed," Maliwal said.

After recording her statement Maliwal came up with a post slamming an anonymous person and referring them as "political hitman" said he has started efforts to save himself.

—ANI

New dates for SSLC remedial classes issued

BENGALURU, 17 MAY

Education Department has issued a notice to hold remedial classes for SSLC students preparing for their supplementary exams scheduled on 14 June. Initially, the department had planned for these classes to run from 15 May to 5 June, but the dates have now been postponed to 29 May to 13 June. This decision followed when the State saw its passing rate stood at 73 per cent in 2024 SSLC examination. Karnataka High School Assistant Masters' Association suggested to conduct remedial classes cluster-wise, wherein one school in each cluster will be identified to host students from 5-6 surrounding schools. ***—Salar News***

SC seeks EC's response on plea over voter turnout

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

Supreme Court on Friday sought a response within a week from the Election Commission on a plea by an NGO seeking a direction to upload polling station-wise voter turnout data on its website within 48 hours of conclusion of polling for each phase of the Lok Sabha elections. A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra assembled at 6.30pm to hear the plea of NGO Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) on the issue. CJI listed it for hearing before an appropriate bench during the summer vacation on 24 May, a day before the sixth phase of Lok Sabha polls. ***—PTI***

Interim stay on order suspending 14 Patanjali drugs

DEHRADUN, 17 MAY

An interim stay was put on Friday on the implementation of an order suspending manufacturing licences of more than a dozen medicines of Patanjali Ayurved Ltd and Divya Pharmacy. The interim stay is being imposed with immediate effect on the basis of a preliminary inquiry report of a high level committee, Pankaj Kumar Pandey, Secretary Ayush, Uttarakhand government said in an order. State Licensing Authority, Ayurvedic and Unani Services had suspended the manufacturing licence of 14 Patanjali products last month under Drugs and Cosmetics Act 1945 and Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act 1954. ***—PTI***

Excise policy: ED names Kejriwal, AAP as accused

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

Enforcement Directorate Friday filed a fresh charge sheet in the Delhi excise policy case, naming Arvind Kejriwal and his Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) as accused, the first time that a sitting Chief Minister and a political party face money laundering charges. Official sources said the prosecution complaint, spanning about 200 pages, has been filed before a special court. Special Judge Kaveri Baweja is likely to take up the chargesheet for cognisance in coming days.

The accused have been sought to be charged under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the



Arvind Kejriwal **PHOTO: PTI**

sources said.

They said Kejriwal has been made made an accused in his personal capacity as well as the national convenor of his political outfit AAP.

This is the eighth charge sheet filed by ED in this case in which it has arrested 18 people so far, made a total of 38 entities as accused and attached assets worth Rs 243 crore. Last week, a similar complaint was filed by the agency against BRS leader and former Telangana chief minister Chandrashekar Rao's daughter K Kavitha and four others.

CM was earlier called the "kingpin and key conspirator" of the Delhi excise "scam" by the ED. It was alleged that he acted in collusion with Delhi government minister, AAP leaders and others.

As Arvind Kejriwal was "in-charge of and responsible" for the said company i.e. AAP during the time of offence, he and his party "shall be deemed guilty" of offences mentioned under the anti-money laundering law and liable to be prosecuted and punished, it had said. *—PTI*

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Spain says no to arms-laden TN-Israel ship

CHENNAI, 17 MAY

Spain has refused permission for a ship carrying arms to Israel to dock at a Spanish port, its Foreign minister, José Manuel Albares, said on Thursday.

"This is the first time we have done this," the Foreign minister said. Though Albares did not provide details on the ship. Albares did not provide details on the ship but the transport minister, Óscar Puente, said it was the Marianne Danica that had requested permission to call at the south-eastern port of Cartagena on 21 May.

El País said the Danish-flagged ship was carrying 27 tonnes of explosive material from Chennai to the port of Haifa in Israel.

Spain has been one of Europe's most critical voices about Israel's Gaza offensive and is working to rally other European capitals behind the idea of recognising a Palestinian state.

Spain halted arms sales to Israel after it launched a military onslaught against Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Israel's military retaliation has killed more than 35,000 people, mostly civilians, according to the health ministry in Gaza.

— Courtesy: The Guardian

EMERGENCY AT IGI

B'luru-bound AI flight 'catches fire'

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

A Bengaluru-bound Air India aircraft returned to the national capital on Friday evening after a fire warning from its auxiliary power unit and made a safe landing at the airport. Following which a full emergency was declared at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport at around 5.52 pm.

There were around 175 people onboard the aircraft, which was operating the flight AI 807, sources said.

In a statement, an Air India Spokesperson said the aircraft returned to Delhi this evening after a fire warning from its auxiliary power unit.

"After the pilots exercised necessary protocols, the aircraft made an uneventful landing, and all passengers and crew deplaned at the aerobridge safely," it said.

The Spokesperson said alternative arrangements have been made for the passengers to proceed back to their destination at the earliest.

Earlier, sources said there was a suspected fire in the air conditioning unit of the plane and that an emergency was declared. The plane made a safe precautionary landing at around 6.40 pm, they added.



PHOTO: PTI

- Earlier, sources said there was a suspected fire in the air conditioning unit of the plane and that an emergency was declared. The plane made a safe precautionary landing at around 6.40 pm, they added. As per data available on flightradar24, the flight was operated with an A321 aircraft

It was an A321 aircraft.

In connection with the suspected fire in the aircraft, Delhi Fire Services (DFS) pressed three fire tenders into service. "We received a call from IGI Airport at 6.15 pm regarding a fire," a DFS official said. *—PTI*

AI flight to Delhi collides with tug tractor in Pune

PUNE, 17 MAY

A Delhi-bound Air India flight had to abort its take-off and was later cancelled after it hit a luggage tractor trolley while taxiing for departure at the Pune airport, airline sources said on Friday.

The incident occurred around 4 pm on Thursday, they said. There were around 200 passengers on board the flight and following the incident, they got stranded at the airport for around six hours, the sources said. Air India said passengers were refunded their full fares and offered complimentary rescheduling. Those with onward international connections were accommodated on flights operated by other carriers, it said. The airline also said that an investigation has been initiated.

Shahab Jafri, a passenger on board the aircraft, said that the flight was scheduled to depart at around 4pm. After persistent inquiry, the passengers were informed about alternative flight arrangements. Eventually, their flight departed at 10.20 pm and landed in Delhi around 12.20 am.

Air India said that there was an incident related to one of their aircraft, which was to fly from Pune to Delhi, at the time of its pushback. *—PTI*

COLLEGE BLAMED

B'luru student dies by suicide in hostel room, 3rd in a month

BENGALURU, 17 MAY

An 18-year-old engineering student allegedly died by suicide at Bengaluru College of Engineering and Technology in Anekal on Thursday night. The deceased, Harshitha, allegedly died by hanging herself from a ceiling fan in her hostel room, police said on Friday. Harishitha hailed from Karadihalli village in Arsikere.

According to the police, on Thursday evening, Harshitha was found hanging in her room, which was locked from inside. A few students who saw her body through the window alerted the college management. They broke open the door and rushed her to the hospital, where she was declared brought dead.

It is alleged that she ended her life owing to harassment by the college management. The students alleged a lack of adequate protection and supervision in the hostel, as the warden was absent at the time of the incident. They alleged that anyone can enter the hostel anytime thus leading to ragging incidents.



PHOTO: PTI

- Following the incident, the students protested demanding justice for Harshitha and calling for stricter measures to ensure the safety and well-being of all students. They demanded setting up anti-ragging cells

Following the incident, the students protested demanding justice for Harshitha and calling for stricter measures to ensure the safety and well-being of all students. They demanded setting up anti-ragging cells and asked to address the concern on absence of the warden.

A senior police officer said, "She died by suicide. However, no suicide note was found from the spot. But we are probing the exact cause that might have led her to take this extreme step."

In one month, the City witnessed three student deaths in educational institutions. Earlier, another student allegedly killed himself after falling from the 5th floor of PES College near Electronics City. Last month, a student died allegedly falling from the 4th floor at AMC College on Bannerghatta Road.

If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts or require emotional support, please contact Tele Manas at 14416, State government's health helpline Arogya Sahayavani (104), SAHAI (080 25497777) Sa-Mudra Yuva Helpline (9880396331).
—Salar News

Students to protest over 4 suicides in PES

The City student union will hold protests in Freedom Park on Saturday over the four PES students' death in the institute in nine months. A 21-year-old student allegedly died by suicide by jumping from the fourth floor as he was barred from attending his end-semester exam. Similarly, on 14 March, a B-tech student allegedly died by suicide by jumping from the building on the PES campus in Electronic City. It was alleged that the student was not allowed to take an examination for arriving late to the exam hall. Another 19-year-old BBA student allegedly died by suicide on 31 January by jumping from 6th floor. In July 2023 a 19-year-old student allegedly died by suicide from jumping from the 4th floor of the campus building.

—Salar News

Manhunt on for passenger who stabbed 3, killed 1

BELAGAVI, 17 MAY

A manhunt has been launched for a person who fatally stabbed a railway coach attendant and injured three others, including a Travelling Ticket Examiner (TTE), after he was asked to show his ticket on board an express train here, police said on Friday. The incident occurred onboard Chalukya Express train near Londa railway station in this district on Thursday evening.

According to Belagavi Police Commissioner Lada Martin Marbaniang, the passenger picked up an argument with the TTE when he was asked to show his ticket. The accused then pulled out a knife and attacked the staffer. When the coach attendant intervened, the passenger stabbed him to death. Two others were also injured in the incident. However, after the attack, the accused passenger jumped off the train near Khanapur railway station and fled the scene. *—PTI*

Heavy to light rain predicted today in K'taka

BENGALURU, 17 MAY

The IMD on Friday forecast heavy rainfall and thunderstorms in a few districts of Karnataka and said Bengaluru is likely to witness light to moderate rain and thunderstorms, with temperatures ranging from 30 degree Celsius to 22 degree Celsius in the next 24 hours. Shivamogga, Chikkamagaluru, Kodagu, Hassan, Mysuru, Mandya, Chamrajanagara, Udupi and Dakshina Kannada districts are likely to experience heavy to very heavy rainfalls between 17 and 21 May, said CS Patil, Director of Meteorological Centre, India Meteorological Department, Bengaluru. According to India Meteorological Department, some places in Kodagu, Hassan, Mysuru, Mandya and Tumukuru districts will also witness, gusty winds (40-50 kmph) on 18 May. *—PTI*

City Police seizes drugs worth Rs 6L, 4 held

BENGALURU, 17 MAY

The City police have arrested four drug peddlers and seized drugs worth Rs 6 lakh of ganja and MDMA on Friday. Following a tip, the DJ Halli police and Pulikeshi Nagar police carried out the raids in the City. Meanwhile, in another incident the Central Crime Branch (CCB) Narcotics wing, arrested four individuals for selling e-cigarettes and seized 225 packs of foreign cigarettes from various companies, 7 foreign cigarette boxes, 130 e-cigarettes and Rs 1,400. The Indiranagar police station has also registered a case against the 2 individuals for illegally stocking and selling e-cigarettes of ELFBAR company worth Rs 2.5 lakh. *—Salar News*

Hubballi murder accused arrested in Davangere

Girish Sawanth allegedly stabbed Anjali Ambiger to death

HUBBALLI, 17 MAY



(Inset) Girish Sawanth, accused held by police on Friday *PHOTO: FREEPIK*

Girish Sawanth, the 22 year-old man on the run after he allegedly stabbed a young Anjali Ambiger to death for rejecting his marriage proposal has been arrested, police said on Friday.

Sawanth allegedly stabbed Anjali, 20, multiple times in her home at Veerapur Oni on Wednesday and had absconded. Incidentally, he landed in the police net following an enquiry after he fell off a moving train, in what is suspected to be a fallout of him allegedly trying to attack a woman.

"The accused was nabbed on Thursday night from Davangere with the help of the Railway Police. He has been arrested in connection with the case. He sustained injuries on his head and face after he allegedly fell off from a train. We are probing what exactly happened in the train. He was admitted to KIMS Hospital at around 4.30 am," Hubballi Dharwad Police Commissioner Renuka Sukumar said.

A preliminary inquiry revealed that after killing Anjali, Girish travelled by train and buses to various places in Maharashtra and Goa to evade arrest, she added. Another police officer said Girish allegedly got into a fight with a woman in the train on Thursday.

He allegedly tried to attack her with a knife. When she started shouting for help, her family members and other passengers confronted him.

To escape getting beaten up, he allegedly jumped off the train and got injured. Later, he was taken to Davanagere district hospital for treatment. When questioned, his statements were found to be suspicious. He claimed to police that he left for Hubballi from Mysuru by train and that he did not have any knife and had fallen off the train, the police officer said.

Later, he was taken into custody and interrogated during which it came to light that he was an accused in a murder case involving a young woman (Anjali Ambiger) who was stabbed to death. Subsequently, he was handed over to the Hubballi police, which is investigating the murder case, he added.

Sawanth was found to be previously involved in four bike theft cases, police said, adding that further investigation is underway.

Earlier, a police inspector and a woman head constable were suspended on charges of dereliction of duty over Anjali's killing, as they allegedly did not take seriously, her family's complaint about death threats from the perpetrator. *—PTI*

Govt to probe factors for attacks on women: HM

BENGALURU, 17 MAY

With Opposition BJP targeting Congress government in State alleging deterioration of law and order situation, following the murder of a young woman in Hubballi, Home Minister G Parameshwara on Friday said he was reviewing lapses on part of the police and other factors that may have led to such repeated incidents.

20-year-old Anjali Ambiger was allegedly murdered by a 22-year-old Girish Sawanth in Hubballi on Wednesday after she allegedly rejected his marriage proposal, close on the heels of the student Neha Hiremath killing at her college campus in the same city on 18 April.

"I'm reviewing to find if there are any lapses on part of the officials. As repeatedly such incidents are taking place, we need to find what is the factor," Parameshwara said.

He said he is sending an Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) to Hubballi to look into the incident and submit a report and, if possible, he will also be visiting there.

BJP accused the government of failing in maintaining law and order situation.

BJP even demanded that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah drop Parameshwara from the Cabinet, alleging that he has miserably failed to handle the situation in State.

Meanwhile, police have arrested the accused Sawanth, and Parameshwara said strict punishment will be ensured in accordance with law.

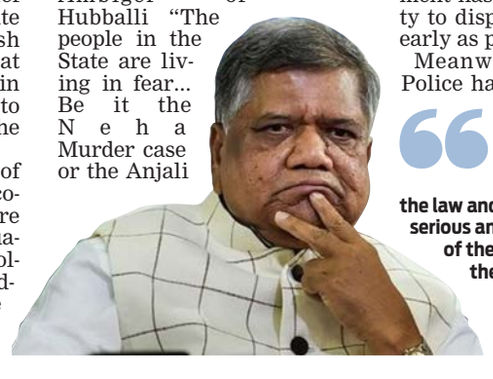
"There is no mercy in such murder cases. An inspector has been suspended following reports about lapse on part of the police. Immediately police had to take action, but as there were lapses, suspension was done. Legal actions will follow," he said. *—PTI*

Law & order has collapsed under Cong: Shettar

BENGALURU, 17 MAY

Former Karnataka Chief Minister and BJP candidate from Belagavi, Jagadish Shettar, alleged on Friday that the law and order situation in the State has collapsed due to the mal-administration of the Congress government.

"In so many parts of Karnataka, murder and dacoity are going on. In the entire State, the law and order situation is serious and has collapsed because of the maladministration of the State government," Shettar told ANI.



> **In so many parts of Karnataka, murder and dacoity are going on. In the entire State, the law and order situation is serious and has collapsed because of the maladministration of the State government**
>
> -Jagadish Shettar, BJP candidate from Belagavi

Shettar's comments came days after the murder of Anjali Ambiger of Hubballi "The people in the State are living in fear... Be it the Neha Murder case or the Anjali murder case, that should be fast-tracked and the government has to take responsibility to dispose of such cases as early as possible," he added.

Meanwhile, Karnataka Police have arrested one person identified as Girish alias Vishwa, who was wanted for the murder of Anjali. Hubbali Commissioner of Police Renuka Sukumar confirmed on Friday that Girish, who was on the run after stabbing the woman to death on Wednesday, was arrested on Thursday.

The police official said that Bendigeri Police Station Inspector Chandrappa Chickkodi and woman police constable Rekha Havreddi have been suspended on charges of dereliction of duty. Earlier, Anjali, had been to Bendigeri Police Station to complain against the accused, but instead of taking action, the police sent her back.

Girish had allegedly threatened to kill the victim in the same manner as a 21-year-old Hubballi college student who was stabbed to death by her former classmate.

Reportedly, Girish barged into Anjali's house early on Wednesday, stabbed her multiple times, and then fled from the spot. Soon after the incident came to light, it sparked anger among locals, prompting them to launch a protest and demand action against the accused. *—ANI*



Prajwal Revanna *PHOTO: PTI*

EFFORTS ON TO BRING PRAJWAL BACK TO INDIA: HM

BENGALURU, 17 MAY

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Friday said efforts are on to bring Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna, who is facing charges of sexual abuse against women, back to India.

He also asserted that the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the case was functioning efficiently.

Prajwal reportedly left for Germany on April 27 and is still at large.

He was BJP-JD(S) alliance's candidate from Hassan, which went to polls in the first phase on 26 April.

"Procedures are on, until we secure him, bring him back here and take action in accordance with law, they will continue. We will neither slow it nor stop it," Parameshwara said. On BJP alleging that the government was "responsible" for Prajwal's "escape" from the country, the Minister said, "They will say it, they have to say such things. They cannot say the government is doing a good job."

Accusing Congress of trying to tarnish the reputation of Deve Gowda's family leader HD Kumaraswamy had recently alleged that every bit of information on the investigation is being sent to a Congress MLA of Mandya district, but not the Home Minister. *—PTI*

Police book 12,192 motorists for violation on Mysuru-B'luru Highway

BENGALURU, 17 MAY

As part of ongoing city-wide drive against traffic violations Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP) registered 12,192 cases against motorists who violated traffic rules on the Mysuru-Bengaluru Express Highway over the past 15 days. The crackdown was facilitated by the deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras, which captured images.

The primary infractions recorded include over speeding, driving without seat belts, using mobile phones while driving, and passengers not wearing seat belts. Each identified violator has been issued a notice, mandating the payment of fines within seven days of receiving the notice.

The notice, accompanied by photographic evidence of the violation, instructs motorists to pay the fine either by visiting the concerned traffic station or through a mobile payment option linked to the vehicle's registration number, facilitated by the Regional Transport Office (RTO). This move underscores the Bengaluru traffic police's commitment to ensuring road safety and compliance with traffic regulations. The introduction of AI ANPR cameras aims to enhance the efficiency and accuracy of traffic law enforcement, ultimately reducing the incidence of traffic violations and promoting safer driving practices.

Motorists are urged to adhere to traffic rules to avoid penalties and contribute to a safer driving on the Mysuru-Bengaluru Express Highway. *—Salar News*

MAINTENANCE WORK



BBMP personnel clean a stormwater drain at Ramachandrapura as the rainy season starts in Bengaluru, on Friday *PHOTO: SALAR*

CATTLE SCARCITY

In Chamarajanagar, rain is boon & bane for farmers

COOVERCOLLY INDRESH
CHAMARAJANAGAR, 17 MAY



Farming community has eagerly taken to fields, with 20% of sowing work already completed *PHOTO: SALAR*

As rains lashed Chamarajanagar district over the last 10 days, farmers who had halted their agricultural activities due to drought, finally have some relief. They have now begun their agricultural activities. However, many of them who sold their cattle due to drought are facing new challenges. These farmers are nor forced to shell out up to Rs 2,000 per day to rent bulls to plough their fields.

Due to the scarcity of cattle, many farmers have turned to tractors for ploughing and sowing. This shift indicates a blend of traditional and modern farming practices in response to the changing agricultural landscape.

Meanwhile, farmers who own cattle say they are only in business now, but had a hard time during drought. "The demand for us is high only during the sowing season. No one calls us on normal days," said Prasad, a local bull owner.

With the onset of monsoon, regions such as Hangala, Kasaba, Terkanambi Hobli, Chamarajanagar taluk, and Kollegal of Gundlupet taluk have experienced significant rainfall, prompting farmers to begin sowing.

The farming community has eagerly taken to the fields, with 20 per cent of the sowing work already completed. Farmers are primarily engaged in planting pulses, sunflower, corn and almonds. This uptick in agricultural activity marks a hopeful turn for the region.

In preparation for the rains, the Agriculture Department had proactively gathered sowing seeds, ensuring their availability at Farmer Contact Centres across Hubballi. These centres are now distributing seeds according to demand. *—Salar News*

- Due to the scarcity of cattle, many farmers have turned to tractors for ploughing and sowing. This shift indicates a blend of traditional and modern farming practices in changing agriculture landscape

Rains replenish over 400 lakes in Bandipur Tiger Reserve

CHAMARAJANAGAR, 17 MAY



Bandipur Tiger Reserve Forest in Gundlupet taluk of Chamarajanagar district, known for its rich biodiversity and lush greenery, began to reclaim its verdant charm as the pre-monsoon showers graced the region, bringing much-need relief to the terrain. The rainfall began to replenish the once dried up water bodies. At least 400 lakes, integral to the forest's ecosystem, witnessed a remarkable resurgence, with their banks brimming with water once again. With no rainfall for the past 12 months, the area had withered, leaving behind dried-up lakes, ponds, and dwindling water sources, posing severe challenges for the residents and wildlife. The dire situation forced the wild inhabitants to seek refuge elsewhere, migrating in search of water towards the Kabini backwaters and other areas.

—Salar News

CHIKKABALLAPUR: TWO DROWN IN FARM POND

KOLAR, 17 MAY



Two people including a fourteen-year-old boy from Bengaluru drowned in a farm pond at Gundlapalli village in Chelur taluk of Chikkaballapur district. The incident took place on Thursday. The deceased have been identified as Mahendra, 14, and Bhaskar, 40, a resident of Beerangivandlapalli of Chelur taluk.

Mahendra had come to his grandparent's house at Beerangivandalapalli. He along with some of the boys had gone near a Krushi Honda at neighbouring Gundlapalli for a swim. According to sources, Mahendra did not know how to swim. The other boys who were able to come out of the pond raised an alarm. Bhaskar who was working in the nearby farm rushed to the rescue of Mahendra. Unfortunately, he along with Mahendra were drowned. The bodies of the boy and Bhaskar were taken out of the pond with the help of fire service personnel by evening. A case has been taken up at the Chelur police station in this regard. *—Salar News*



PHOTO: PIXABAY

TMC leader shot at in West Bengal's Cooch Behar

COOCH BEHAR, 17 MAY

A local TMC leader was shot at in West Bengal's Cooch Behar district, police said on Friday. Animesh Roy, the panchayat pradhan of Lalbazar in Sitalkuchi, was returning home along with an aide on Thursday night when he was attacked, they said. Armed men, who are yet to be identified, fired targetting him. Roy received a gunshot wound on his right thigh, they added. Roy's aide was also injured in the firing, a police officer said. An investigation was underway and efforts were on to nab those behind the attack, he said. "We are also talking to his family... they are not saying much," he added. Roy is undergoing treatment at a private hospital in the district and his condition is very critical, the officer said. *—PTI*

Cal HC grants bail to Sandeshkhali BJP worker Piyali

KOLKATA, 17 MAY

Calcutta High Court on Friday granted bail to Sandeshkhali BJP worker Piyali Das who surrendered before a lower court three days ago over a criminal case lodged against her. A case was filed against Das alleging that she got the signature of a woman of Sandeshkhali on a blank paper which was later filled up as complaints of sexual assault against TMC leaders. After she surrendered on 14 May, the additional chief judicial magistrate of Basirhat sub-divisional court rejected the bail prayer of Das and remanded her to eight days' judicial custody. BJP worker moved Calcutta High Court seeking bail. Justice Jay Sengupta directed that Das be released on personal bond. West Bengal government opposed the bail prayer. *—PTI*

Odisha BJP leader expelled for 'anti party activities'

BHUBANESWAR, 17 MAY

The BJP on Friday expelled senior leader Bijoy Mohapatra and two others from the party on the charge of "anti-party activities". The action against Mohapatra came after his son Arvind was made the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) candidate from the Patkura assembly segment. Mohapatra, a former state executive member of the party, is accused of canvassing for his son. In a statement, the party said the two other leaders who were expelled are state executive member Sarada Pradhan and vice-president of state BJP SC Morcha Rakesh Mallick. Pradhan and Mallick are considered close to Mahapatra. *—PTI*

Khera says BJP engineers split in parties

MUMBAI, 18 MAY

Congress leader Pawan Khera on Friday dubbed the BJP as the "tukde tukde gang", saying that it engineered a split in two political parties in Maharashtra, and added that people have not liked the saffron party's act. He also alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was creating religious polarisation through his poll speeches since the BJP does not have any issue to highlight among people in terms of the work that the party-led government at the Centre carried out in the last 10 years. Khera expressed confidence that INDIA bloc would win 35 out of the total 48 seats in Maharashtra. Targeting Modi, Khera said, "Every time he spoke during the election campaign, he created a controversy. There is no report card of his government's work carried out in the last 10 years, so he has nothing to tell people. "*—PTI*

SC seeks ED's reply on Soren's bail plea

Polls will be over if not given interim bail: Soren

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY



The Supreme Court told former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren that it needs to prima facie satisfy itself before granting bail **PHOTO: PTI**

The Supreme Court told former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren on Friday that it needs to prima facie satisfy itself before granting interim bail to him in a money-laundering case linked to an alleged land scam for campaigning in the Lok Sabha polls.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta asked the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to file its reply by 20 May on the question of granting interim bail to Soren and a short response to his plea challenging his arrest in the case.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing in the court on behalf of Soren, said if granted interim bail, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader will surrender on 2 June. "There is no material against me in the case. Elections will be over, if not granted interim bail," Sibal said.

Sibal and senior advocate Arunabh Chowdhury, also appearing for Soren in the matter, said the JMM leader is not in possession of the land in question in the case and has nothing to do with it.

Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing in the court on behalf of the ED, said Soren was arrested long ago and he has not even challenged the dismissal of his regular bail application.

Raju sought time for filing a reply on behalf of the probe agency and claimed that the former chief minister is directly involved in the case.

Justice Khanna told Sibal that there are some materials that are being relied upon by the probe agency -- that a person is staying in the land in question, a boundary wall has been constructed on the land and the ED has annexed photographs of it, there are pictures of file noting and statements of the said person residing in the land.

"There is one more circumstantial evidence which is being relied upon by the probe agency that after the investigation started in the case, another person went and claimed to be the original owner of the land. What do you have to say on these materials?" the bench asked Sibal.

The senior lawyer said just because some person has said that the land belongs to mantriji (minister) does not mean that Soren is the owner of the land. *—PTI*

HIMACHAL BJP EXPELS 2 LEADERS FOR 6 YEARS

SHIMLA, 17 MAY

BJP in Himachal Pradesh on Friday expelled Rakesh Choudhary and former minister Ram Lal Markanda for six years after it failed to persuade them to withdraw their assembly poll nominations as Independents.

Markanda and Choudhary have been expelled from the primary membership of the BJP for six years with immediate effect, state BJP Chief Rajiv Bindal said in a statement issued here.

The efforts of BJP went futile and both the leader have not withdrawn their nominations. 17 May was the last day to withdraw the nominations.

After revolt in Congress, six Congress MLAs -- Rajinder Rana (Sujanpur), Sudhir Sharma (Dharamshala), Ravi Thakur (Lahaul and Spiti), Inder Dutt Lakhanpal (Barsar), Chetanya Sharma (Gagret) and Devinder Kumar Bhutto (Kutlehar) -- had voted in favour of the BJP Rajya Sabha Nominee Harsh Mahajan on 27 February.

Two days later, they were disqualified for defying a party whip to be present in Vidhan Sabha and vote in favour of the government during the cut motions and budget.

These Congress rebels later joined BJP and were given the ticket from their respective assembly seats. *—PTI*

AAP SLAMS BJP

Kejriwal likens situation in India to that in Russia

AMRITSAR, 17 MAY



PHOTO: PTI

- Kejriwal was granted bail by Supreme Court in the Delhi excise policy case on 10 May to allow him to campaign in the Lok Sabha elections

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday likened the situation in the country to that in Russia, claiming there is a "dictatorship", and opposition leaders are being put in jail.

Kejriwal was addressing Punjab Aam Aadmi Party workers and leaders, including MLAs and MPs, asking them to put in their best to ensure the party's victory in all 13 Lok Sabha seats in the state.

He slammed BJP, accusing it of putting all rival party leaders in jail.

"The dictatorship that is going on in our country is not acceptable. India has never seen such a period in the past 75 years -- putting opposition leaders in jail," the AAP chief said.

"Like in Russia, (Vladimir) Putin had either sent all rival leaders in jail or got them killed and then conducted the elections and got 87 per cent votes. When there is no opposition, you will be the only one to get the votes," he said.

Kejriwal was granted bail by Supreme Court in the Delhi excise policy case on 10 May to allow him to campaign in the Lok Sabha elections. He will be back in jail on 2 June.

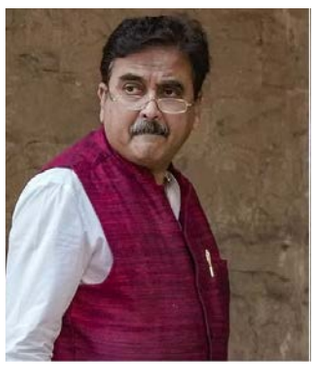
Hitting out at BJP, Kejriwal alleged that the motive of the party was to arrest him and thereafter, the party would break and the government would topple.

Nothing will happen with the arrest of one Kejriwal and nothing will affect AAP, he said, adding that each worker is Kejriwal.

Kejriwal asked party leaders and officer bearers to work hard to ensure victory in all 13 seats in Punjab. *—PTI*

Abhijit gets EC notice for remark against Didi

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY





BJP candiadate Abhijit Gangopadhyay and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Bannerjee **PHOTO: PTI**

Election Commission on Friday issued a show-cause notice to former high court judge and BJP Lok Sabha candidate Abhijit Gangopadhyay for his "improper, injudicious and undignified" remarks against Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Gangopadhyay is the fourth politician in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections to have been served a notice for undignified remarks against women.

BJP's Dilip Ghosh and Congress's Supriya Shrinate were censured by the EC after being served notices for their remarks against Mamata Banerjee and Kangana Ranaut respectively.

Randeep Surjewala of the Congress was barred from campaigning for 48 hours for his remarks against BJP's Hema Malini.

The poll panel acted on a complaint by the Trinamool Congress against Gangopadhyay for his remarks against Banerjee while addressing a public meeting held on 15 May in Haldia.BJP has fielded Gangopadhyay from Tamluk seat in West Bengal where voting will be held on 25 May.

EC in its notice noted that Gangopadhyay's comment has been found to be "improper, injudicious, beyond dignity in every sense of term, in bad taste" and prima facie violative of the provisions of the Model Code of Conduct and its advisory to political parties.

The EC has sought a response by 5pm of 20 May.The notice reminded the former Calcutta High Court judge about its recent advisory which said that political parties and candidates should refrain from any deeds or action or utterances that may be construed as being repugnant to the honour and dignity of women. *—PTI*

Post-poll violence: CBI looks for 6

Kolkata, 17 May

CBI conducted raids at various locations in West Bengal on Friday, looking for six absconders in a post-poll violence case, including someTMC leaders, officials said. Central Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) search operation was aimed at tracing the whereabouts them. *—PTI*

Poster with death threats to Mamata come up in Kolkata

Kolkata, 17 May

A poster with death threats to West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee and her nephew, party's general secretary Abhishek Banerjee, appeared in Uluberia in West Bengal's Howrah district on Friday, police said. *—PTI*

ED issues order to seize Shahjahan's ₹14 crore assets

New Delhi,17 May

The Enforcement Directorate on Friday said it has issued a fresh attachment order for seizing assets worth more than Rs 14 crore of suspended West Bengal TMC leader Shajahan Sheikh and those allegedly linked to him as part of a money laundering case investigation. *—PTI*

ON 20 MAY

25K Kashmiri Pandits to vote this phase

JAMMU, 17 MAY

- The constituency is gearing up for an intense electoral showdown for the fifth phase of election

More than 25,000 displaced Kashmiri Pandits from across the country are eligible to exercise their franchise in the fifth phase of the Lok Sabha elections in Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla constituency on 20 May..

The constituency is gearing up for an intense electoral showdown for the fifth phase of elections with nearly 17.32 lakh voters, of which 8.59 lakh are women, to decide the fate of 23 candidates in the fray.

The main contest is between Sajad Lone of the People's Conference and Omar Abdullah of the National Conference.

"A total of 25,821 Kashmiri migrants are registered as voters from Baramulla Lok Sabha constituency on 20 May. Of these, 12,747 are male voters and 13,074 are female voters," Assistant Returning Officer (ARO), Migrants, Riaz Ahmed told PTI.

Twenty-six polling stations have been set up for the migrants, of which 21 are in Jammu, four in Delhi, and one in Udhampur, he said.

Election Commission has arranged a pick-and-drop facility for the Kashmiri migrant voters. It will be available from 6am to 6pm, he said.

There are two ways for the migrant voters to cast their votes. "First, they can do so by filling up an M-form, which is prior information and can vote in the special polling set up for them," Ahmed said.

The second option is voting through postal ballots for which they have to fill up Form-12C. *—PTI*

EAM STATES

'Terrorism consuming those who practice it'

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar **PHOTO: PTI**

- The current times call for something more than business as usual because trust and reliability have become so important, he said

Asia is witnessing new tensions in land and sea as agreements were dishonoured and rule of law disregarded while terrorism has started to consume those who have long practised it, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Friday, amid China's military continuing posturing along the frontier in eastern Ladakh and Pakistan's support to cross-border terrorist activities.

In an address at an event hosted by CII, Jaishankar also talked about the power of currency and how "threat of sanctions" are deployed in the "toolbox" of global diplomacy, in remarks that came days after the US warned of punitive measures after India and Iran sealed a deal on the Chabahar port.

Jaishankar extensively delved into the consequences of the Ukraine conflict, escalation of violence in West Asia and disruption of logistics in view of the geopolitical tensions, sanctions, incidents of drone attacks in the Red Sea and climate events.

"Terrorism and extremism have started to consume those who have long practised it. In many ways, we are actually going through the perfect storm," he said.

The external affairs minister highlighted challenges of uncertain logistics and supply chains.

Jaishankar said there is the larger branding endeavour of the attractions of today's India that will make a case to the world of the benefits of partnership.

The current times call for something more than business as usual because trust and reliability have become so important, he said.

Jaishankar said the world is today "paradoxically rebuilding" itself even as it is being disrupted.

"As new production and consumption centres emerged in the last few decades, there is an accompanying compulsion to create commensurate logistical corridors," he said. *—PTI*

Cong, SP will run bulldozer over Ram temple: PM

BARABANKI, 17 MAY



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses a public meeting for the Lok Sabha elections, in Pratapgarh on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday claimed that Congress and Samajwadi Party will run a bulldozer over the Ram temple if elected to power, and asked them to take "tuition" from Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath "where to run bulldozers".

Addressing a rally, he also said INDIA bloc is in the fray to create "instability" and is collapsing like a pack of cards as the polls progress.

Asserting that his government is going to score a hat-trick, Modi said in the new government, he has to take many big decisions for the poor, youth, women and farmers, and for that he has come here to seek the blessings of the people of Barabanki and Mohanlalganj.

"4 June is not far. Today, the whole country and the world knows that Modi government is going to score a hat-trick," he asserted.

Modi also raised the Ram temple issue to hit out at SP and Congress.

Adityanath government has been accused of using bulldozers to raze property of alleged criminals in the state.

Invoking Lord Ram, Modi said, "Beyond Ram's work ('Ram kaaj'), now it is time for national work ('rashtra kaaj'). The inspiration for Ram's work is for national work. I am asking you for 400 'paar' to protect your rights." *—PTI*

'Why is BJP sponsoring Adani's Dharavi redevelopment project?'

Shimla, 17 May

Congress on Friday demanded answers from Prime Minister Narendra Modi on why BJP is "sponsoring" industrialist Gautam Adani's Dharavi land redevelopment plan and asked why Mumbai has lost several big-ticket projects to Gujarat in the last few years. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh alleged that Dharavi Redevelopment Project has turned into a "BJP-sponsored land grab for the outgoing Prime Minister's best friend, Adani Group". *—PTI*

RAHUL WON'T DISAPPOINT YOU: SONIA IN RAE BARELI

RAE BARELI, 17 MAY

Congress leader Sonia Gandhi said on Friday that she is giving her son to the people of Rae Bareli and "Rahul will not disappoint you".

She also thanked the people for giving her an opportunity to serve them as an MP for 20 years.

Trying to strike an emotional chord with the voters, Sonia asked the people to consider Rahul Gandhi too as their own. Rahul will not disappoint you, said Sonia, as Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi stood by her side on the stage at a joint election rally here.

"I taught the same lessons to Rahul and Priyanka which Indira Gandhi and the people of Rae Bareli had taught me. To respect all, protect the weak, fight against injustice for the rights of people. Don't be afraid, because your roots of struggle and traditions are very deep," she said. Sonia Gandhi was first elected as an MP from Rae Bareli in 2004 and represented the seat till earlier this year when she vacated it on getting elected as a member of the Rajya Sabha. *—PTI*

Prime Minister Modi is not an Italian like Sonia Gandhi who does not know Hindi. He is a son of the soil, was born in a poor family and is working for the welfare and development of the country

-Kangana Ranaut, BJP candidate from Mandi



PHOTO: PIXABAY

Guj terror module planning attack on leaders busted

SURAT, 17 MAY

In a major terror bust, the Gujarat Police claimed to have busted a module that was planning to kill prominent political leaders across the country. Briefing media persons on the breakthrough, on Friday, Commissioner, Gujarat Police, Anupam Singh Gehlot said a maulvi (cleric), identified only by his first name Sohail, was arrested in connection with the matter and disgorged more leads on the terror module on being interrogated. Speaking on another accused person, Mohammad Ali alias Shehnaz, who was also arrested, the commissioner said, " He used a single mobile handset but operated 17 numbers." On the third accused, identified as Raza, the commissioner said, "He destroyed his mobile handset but we managed to retrieve some information with the help of FSL. *—ANI*

Rains continue to lash Kerala; orange alert in 2 dists

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 17 MAY

As rains continued to lash parts of Kerala, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Friday issued an orange alert in two districts of the state for the day. IMD issued the orange alert in Malappuram and Wayanad districts of the state. The IMD on Thursday had predicted very heavy rainfall in the state between 18 and 20 May due to the likely prevalence of strong westerly and south westerly winds in the region. It had issued an orange alert for Palakkad and Malappuram for 18 May, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha and Idukki for 19 May and in seven districts of the state for 20 May. It also issued an orange alert in seven districts of the state for 21 May also. A red alert indicates heavy to extremely heavy rain of over 20 cm in 24 hours, while an orange alert means very heavy rain (6 cm to 20 cm). *—PTI*

15 ill after inhaling gas in prawn processing unit

BALASORE, 17 MAY

At least 15 people fell ill after inhaling toxic gas emitted from a prawn processing plant near Nilagiri in Odisha's Balasore district, police said on Friday. On Thursday night, some workers mostly women engaged in the processing work in the plant complained of vomiting, nausea and difficulty in breathing. They were immediately taken to Nilagiri hospital by co-workers where after treatment they were discharged, hospital sources said. However, Khantapada police station under whose jurisdiction the plant is situated said no complaint has been lodged in the police station in this regard. *—PTI*

RMP leader Hariharan held for sexist remarks

KOZHIKODE, 17 MAY

Revolutionary Marxist Party (RMP) leader KS Hariharan was on Friday arrested over his alleged sexist remarks against senior CPI (M) leader KK Shailaja and Malayalam film actress Manju Warrier. Vadakara police recorded his arrest and then released him on station bail, an officer said. Hariharan made the objectionable comment during a meeting in Vadakara on 11 May. The action was taken based on a complaint recently lodged by the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), a Left outfit. Hariharan also said that what he said was wrong and that is why expressed regret regarding it. As the remark sparked a huge political storm, his own party high command and the UDF openly criticised him and said Hariharan should not have made such comments against any woman. *—PTI*

BJP went back on 6th Schedule: Sonam

The climate activist says locals will protest as they fear corporates will take over land

LEH, 17 MAY

In March this year, Leh, known for its breathtaking landscapes and monasteries, made headlines as climate activist Sonam Wangchuk led a 21-day fast in sub-zero temperatures seeking autonomy for Ladakh.

Thousands joined the Ramon Magsaysay Award winner whose life inspired actor Aamir Khan's character Rancho in Bollywood blockbuster "3 Idiots".

After ending his fast on 26 March, Wangchuk began a sit-in which was called off on 10 May in view of the Lok Sabha elections.

Though the government did not accede to the protesters' demands for statehood for Ladakh and its inclusion in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, Wangchuk says the movement is anything but over.



After the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, Wangchuk was among those who had welcomed Ladakh getting status of a Union territory *PHOTO: PTI*

Wangchuk said that locals are concerned that in the absence of safeguards, their lands will be taken over by corporates and outsiders who may not respect the environment in the ecologically sensitive Himalayan region.

Sixth Schedule contains provisions related to the administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram through autonomous district councils (ADCs).

ADCs are granted autonomy on legislative, judicial and administrative matters and can make laws regarding land, forest, water and agriculture, etc.

Asked how he feels after his fast, Wangchuk said, "Better than before. Fasting never hurts."

> **People of Ladakh go with the nation. The dream that people of Ladakh had to get a union territory was fulfilled by Narendra Modi ji in 2019. Definitely we are going to the people with this**
>
> **-Vikram Randhawa,**
> BJP's Ladakh election in-charge

After the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, Wangchuk was among those who had welcomed Ladakh getting the status of a Union territory.

BJP had also promised safeguards under the Sixth Schedule in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls and the 2020 Hill Development Council polls, he said.

A 'Pashmina March' that was announced during the recent protests was later called off.

Wangchuk said the march was called off as their point was proved by the restrictions imposed by the administration against the march and they did not want any clashes with police. Wangchuk hopes that a new government would fulfil Ladakhis' demands.

Ladakh goes to polls in the fifth round of seven-phase Lok Sabha elections on 20 May. *—PTI*

SC: Verdict of Constitution bench binding on benches of lesser strength

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

A judgement of a Constitution bench would be "binding" on benches of lesser strength, the Supreme Court has said while recalling an April 2022 verdict delivered by it.

In its order dated 7 April, 2022, the apex court had held that a panchayat cannot claim ownership of the land which has been taken from the real owners from their permissible ceiling limits under the land law in Haryana.

The top court had delivered the verdict on a batch of appeals against a full bench verdict of the Punjab and Haryana High Court which had examined the legality of sub-section 6 of Section 2(g) of the Haryana Village Common Lands (Regulation) Act, 1961.

In a judgement delivered on Thursday, a bench of Justices BR Gavai and Sandeep Mehta said that when the high court verdict rested on the law laid down by the apex court's Constitution bench in 1966, "least that was expected" of the court in the judgement under review was to explain as to why the high court was wrong in relying. The top court observed it was settled that the review would be permissible only if there was a mistake on the face of the record or any other sufficient reason was made out. *—PTI*



A panchayat cannot claim ownership of the land which has been taken from the real owners *Photo: PTI*

SC dismisses PIL on voter secrecy

New Delhi, 17 May

Supreme Court on Friday dismissed a PIL alleging violation of voter secrecy in the existing electoral system, saying there is no merit in the petition. A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta dismissed the petition and told the petitioner's counsel that he had not read the 26 April verdict of the apex court. It directed that from 1 May, the symbol loading units (SLU) should be sealed and secured in a container and stored in a strong room along with the EVMs for a minimum period of 45 days after the declaration of results. *—PTI*

Acid attack survivors given inclusive KYC norms

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

Supreme Court on Friday issued notice to the Centre and others on a plea seeking direction to authorities to frame appropriate guidelines providing for alternative methods to conduct the Digital KYC process for acid attack survivors suffering with permanent eye-disfigurement or eye-burns. A bench led by Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud and also comprising justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said that it will take up the matter in July.



The plea has been filed by nine acid attack survivors including one Pragya Prasun. The petition urged the top court to direct the respondent authorities to frame appropriate guidelines providing for alternative methods to conduct the Digital KYC/e-KYC (Electronic Know Your Customer) process for acid attack survivors suffering from permanent eye-disfigurement or eye burns, with the view to make the process more accessible and inclusive towards all disabled persons, particularly acid attack survivors.

The petitioners said that they have faced multiple obstacles with different regulatory authorities to access basic financial and telecommunication services.

The petition also sought to issue an appropriate direction to the Central Government to frame appropriate provisions to expand or clarify the meaning and interpretation of "live photograph" of RBI - KYC Master Directions, to expand its purview beyond the blinking of eyes with other alternative criteria such as movements of facial features and/or voice recognition. *—ANI*

Delhi HC judge recuses from hearing against BBC documentary

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

A judge of Delhi High Court on Friday recused himself from hearing a plea by an NGO seeking damages from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), claiming its documentary "India: The Modi Question" casts a slur on the country's reputation and makes false and defamatory imputations against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Indian judiciary.

Justice Anup Jairam Bhambhani said he was recusing himself but did not assign any reason for it.

High Court had earlier issued notice to BBC (UK) and BBC (India) on the plea filed by Gujarat-based NGO Justice On Trial.

- The plea has said BBC (UK) is the national broadcaster of the United Kingdom and has released the news documentary -- "India: The Modi Question"

The plea has said BBC (UK) is the national broadcaster of the United Kingdom and has released the news documentary -- "India: The Modi Question" -- which has two episodes and BBC (India) is its local operations office. It said the two episodes were broadcast in January 2023.

The petitioner has sought damages of Rs 10,000 crore in favour of the NGO and against the defendants on account of the "loss of reputation and goodwill caused to the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, the Government of India, the Government of the State of Gujarat as it was during the period of the Gujarat Riots, and also the people of India". *—PTI*

Tripura forms panel for citizenship under CAA

AGARTALA, 17 MAY

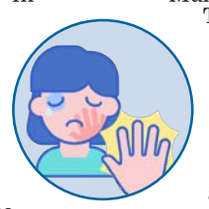
Tripura government has constituted a six-member state-level empowered committee with Director Census Operations, as chairman to grant citizenship under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019, an official said on Friday.

All District Magistrates of the state have been asked to constitute district-level empowered committees to receive applications under the CAA and undertake scrutiny before forwarding it to the state-level empowered panel. *—ANI*

Woman raped onboard express train in Thane, case registered

THANE, 17 MAY

A case has been registered against an unidentified person for allegedly raping a woman after rendering her unconscious onboard an express train in Maharashtra's Thane district, an official from the Government Railway Police (GRP) said on Friday.



Thane GRP on Thursday registered a case under sections 328 (causing hurt by means of poison, etc., with intent to commit an offence) and 376 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code for the incident that took place in March, senior inspector Archana Dhusane said.

The victim has alleged that she was travelling by Uttar Pradesh-bound Tulsi Express on March 10 when an unidentified person administered a harmful substance to render her unconscious and raped her, the official said.

The woman has claimed that the assault took place 40 minutes after the train left the Lokmanya Tilak Terminus in Kurla in neighbouring Mumbai and arrived at Thane railway station, she said.

The complainant approached GRP in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, in April, 39 days after the alleged incident, and from there, the complaint was forwarded to Thane after 21 days, she said.

As no CCTV footage was available from LTT, the police checked the reservation charts of Tulsi Express and two other trains that left the station at the same time, the official said.

The police were examining the mobile phone call records and gathering technical evidence, she said. *—PTI*



Police outside a private school after the body of a student was allegedly found on school premises in Patna *Photo: PTI*

Patna school set on fire after boy's death

PATNA, 17 MAY

An angry crowd set a school on fire on Friday morning after the body of a student was found inside a tank inside the school premises in Bihar's capital city Patna, police said.

According to the sources, the incident took place in the Ramjichak area under Digha police. Angry locals blocked roads and set the school on fire.

The deceased child aged around three had gone to school where he used to take tuition after school hours and when he failed to return home by evening, family members started looking for him. His body was retrieved from inside a tank in the school premises at 3am today, police added.

Following this, locals blocked the road and set fire to the school. Fire tenders that rushed to the site managed to douse the blaze.

Patna Superintendent of Police Chandra Prakash detailing the incident said, "We were informed late at night by the parents after which our team reached the spot and started collecting evidence. In the CCTV we saw that the child was entering the school but at no point, he can be seen leaving the school premises... We will investigate it as a murder case as they were hiding the body and it shows criminal intent. We have detained three persons; inquiry is on." *—ANI*

Kalanithi Maran vs Spice Jet: HC sets aside order

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

Delhi High Court on Friday set aside a single judge bench order which had upheld an arbitral award asking SpiceJet and its promoter Ajay Singh to refund Rs 579 crore plus interest to media baron Kalanithi Maran.

A bench of Justices Yashwant Varma and Ravinder Dudeja allowed the appeals filed by Singh and SpiceJet challenging the single judge's 31 July, 2023 order.

SpiceJet and Singh's counsel had earlier argued that his challenge was on the issue of 18 per cent interest which the tribunal had directed SpiceJet to pay.

The case dates to January 2015, when Singh, who owned the airline earlier, bought it back from Maran after it was grounded for months due to resource crunch.

While the tribunal had asked Maran to pay Singh and the airline Rs 29 crore in penal interest, Singh was asked to refund Rs 579 crore plus interest to Maran.



Kalanithi Maran *PHOTO: PTI*

As part of the agreement, Maran and Kal Airways had claimed to have paid Spicejet Rs 679 crore for issuing warrants and preference shares.

However, Maran approached the Delhi High Court in 2017, alleging SpiceJet had neither issued convertible warrants and preference shares nor returned the money. *—PTI*

'ACTION WILL BE TAKEN'

Char Dham pilgrims warned against fraud

UTTARKASHI, 17 MAY

Warning pilgrims not to register for Char Dham Yatra through fraudulent means, Uttarkashi Police on Friday said necessary action will follow against those who do so.

The police informed further that the ongoing pilgrimage to the Yamunotri and Gangotri Dham was going on smoothly without any disruption.

"The pilgrimage to Shri Yamunotri and Gangotri Dham is going on smoothly. All the pilgrimage routes are open. However, it has come to our notice that some people have embarked on the pilgrimage after registering for Char Dham through fraudulent means. Action will be taken against such people as per the law.

Please plan on travel in accordance with the date of registration," read a post on the official X handle of Uttarkashi Police.



Devotees enroute to Yamunotri Dham during 'Char Dham Yatra', in Uttarkashi district *PHOTO: PTI*

Earlier, Rudraprayag Police launched 'Operation Maryada' to ensure that the civilised conduct of the pilgrims and the purity of the pilgrimage are maintained. As part of this drive, police are taking strict action against those found misbehaving with others and consuming alcohol or intoxicants in the Dham area and Yatra halts.

The police have urged the crowd to behave in a civilised manner to maintain the sanctity of the pilgrimage. On 15 May, Uttarakhand DGP Abhinav Kumar wrote to the director generals of police of all the states due to the unexpected crowd at the 'Char Dham Yatra'.

Char Dham Yatra, which commenced on 10 May, holds profound spiritual significance for millions in the country. This pilgrimage typically takes place between April-May and October-November every year.

Char Dham Yatra is a deeply spiritual tour of four of the country's holiest sites--Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath.

In Hindi, 'char' means four and 'dham' refers to religious destinations, according to the official portal of Uttarakhand Tourism. *—ANI*



WORK MODE ON

Workers prepare chariots ahead of the Rath Yatra (Chariot) festival, in Puri, on Friday *PHOTO: PTI*

Does education matter?: Suffering youths question

Sometimes, Shivanand Sawale rues his choices and dreams.

Growing up in Dabhadi village in the Yavatmal district o Maharashtra, the 42-year-old was so inspired by teachers around him that he wanted to become one himself.

He battled poverty, his father's untimely death and his growing farm losses and turned that aspiration into a reality.

He is now among the most well-educated in his village: Sawale obtained a Master of Science and a Diploma in Education, a certificate degree meant for elementary-level school teachers.

Yet, he is often the butt of jokes among his friends. The reason? He makes less money than a landless labourer in the village.

After working for 13 years in a private school, Sawale makes Rs 7,500 a month, or Rs 250 a day.

In the village, a day's wage for farm labourers is anywhere between Rs 300 and 400. As a new government gets elected, jobs have emerged as a key issue. A pre-poll survey by the New Delhi-based Lokniti-Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) found that rising unemployment was foremost on the minds of voters.

There are also many millions of Indians like Sawale who are underemployed in low-paying jobs they are overqualified for.

According to the New Delhi-based Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, India's unemployment rate stood at 7.6 per cent in March.

A report, released in March this year, by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Institute of Human Development (IHD) revealed that an overwhelming majority of

unemployed youth were educated, with at least a secondary education. In 2000, only 35.2 per cent of unemployed youth were educated; by 2022, that figure had doubled to 66 per cent, the report said.



Sidhant Mende has an engineering degree. But he works at supervising the construction of a house that requires none of his training and offers a pittance in pay, in Ralegaon *PHOTO: AL JAZEERA*

A degree in vain

Nearly 100km away, in Ralegaon town, this reality defines 27-year-old Sidhant Mende's life.

Mende is an engineer by education but this is not his job.

He works at a construction site, supervising the building of a new house, a job that requires no engineering-specific expertise, he says. For this, he gets Rs 12,000 a month, which is 400 rupees a day, just about what landless farm labourers make in the villages outside town.

He took the work after hunting for a job in Ralegaon that matched his qualifications.

He even looked for jobs hundreds of kilometres away in big cities like Pune and Nagpur. But nothing offered him more than about 13,000 a month.

The privilege to dream

Not too far from Mende, also in Ralegaon, 21-year-old Aarti Kunkunwar is also underemployed.

Kunkunwar is desperate for work. Her father, a goldsmith who was the family's sole earning member, died last year, forcing her brother to abandon his education and start working. He was midway through his Bachelor of Science degree and had to join an automobile showroom as an administrative hand for Rs 10,000.

- In 2000, only 35.2 per cent of unemployed youth were educated; by 2022, that figure had doubled to 66 per cent, the report said

Kunkunwar, an undergraduate in science, has had no luck in finding stable employment.

Local lawyer and social activist Vaibhav Pandit, who often works as a counsellor to young farmers, says, the town has barely any jobs.

Kunkunwar is now reduced to teaching students in her neighbourhood. She earns Rs 200 per student.

Bribes for jobs

Dabhadi resident Chandrakant Khobragade has a postgraduate degree in science, with a specialisation in botany. In every private school he went to, the management and leadership asked him to cough up "donations" to get a job.

These "donations" were in the range of Rs 30 to 40 lakh .

"I didn't have that kind of money to give," he says. For years, he kept going from one school to another. "They were all the same."Demands for bribes by private schools and colleges are not uncommon, locals say.

The lack of jobs means that private institutions sense an opportunity to auction any jobs they create.Khobragade is now 40 and has resigned himself to the fact that his education will not get him anywhere. He now cultivates cotton and soybean crops on his family farm."I keep saying to myself, at the very least, I am the most educated farmer of the village," he laughs.

—Courtesy, The Conversation

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

Sherpas toiling in dark, Mountaineer asks representation

Humble, shy and almost always smiling, Sherpas have toiled in the background while aiding myriad climbers to fulfil their dreams of scaling the world's tallest peaks for decades.

But 18-year-old Nepali climber Nima Rinji Sherpa is out to change that as he believes his community deserves a story of its own.

At a tender age when most are still charting out career paths, Nima is in pursuit of a record to become the youngest ever to scale each of the world's 14 tallest mountains (over 8,000 metres).

"Most of them (Sherpas) that I know, they are very humble, in a way that, I've never seen a Sherpa say 'I've climbed these many mountains or I'm this strong'," Nima, who scaled both the Mt Everest and Lhotse in a mere 10 hours, told PTI in an exclusive interview.

"Most of the climbers that I see, there's always a lot (they have) to say. But when I see my Sherpa, I know how strong he is," said Nima, who has already scaled 12 of those 14 peaks, a certification acknowledged by the Government of Nepal.

Born in a family of accomplished trekkers, Nima wanted to capture and share mesmerising views while trekking, but little did he know that his passion for photography would soon turn into climbing for a purpose.

"Slowly, I realised, the Sherpas, my community, we have always been in the shadows and all the international athletes that you see, no one is from Sherpa community (in the front), but we are always the ones backing them up," he said.

"We're always carrying their equipment, carrying their food, the load, fixing the ropes, looking after the weather condition, looking after their safety, looking for the rescue things."

"All those things are being looked after by us, but our names are always somewhere down the line. That's when I decided (that) I want to climb more for this, for my community more, rather than for myself," said Nima, who prefers to go without oxygen support for the first 7,000 metres.

Nima said committing himself to climbing also brought him face to face with the many challenges that the mighty mountains and the Sherpas face.

"(Now) once I started climbing, I realised there are so many problems. The gap between payment of a Western guide or a Sherpa guide, the problems with porters not having proper sleepers and still carrying 30-50kg in altitude like 3,000-5,000 metres...," he pointed out.

"The whole Khumbu Valley (on the Nepalese side of Mt Everest) — the mountain valley suffering from all the debris left behind and nothing being regulated — that's where I got my mindset shifted from capturing all that and being conscious about my surroundings, while thinking about what's happening in the industry," he said.

Nima said Sherpas have showed unwavering commitment to the cause but they deserve more. He believes the Sherpas' trait of pushing through pain barriers without complaining sets them apart.

"...they complain (about) nothing. I've seen many Sherpas who have clients and they (still) climb with a broken hand, with a headache or sometimes with broken feet," he said.

"Still, the fact that they know (that) they have to climb because they (also) have a family to look after and earn the money — (perhaps) that's why they don't complain."

Nima, who began scaling gargantuan peaks shortly after turning 16, aims to scale Kanchenjunga as well as Shishapangma this year.

He witnessed the cruel side of climbing when at Shishapangma, he lost his fellow climber Tenjen Sherpa in an avalanche.

Tenjen was the guide to Norway's Kristin Harila and the pair had created the world record for scaling each of the 14 peaks in just 92 days in the summer of 2023.

By October, he was back guiding another climber, which is when Tenjen lost his life.

"After climbing my 11th peak in China, Cho Oyu, I was supposed to come to Shishapangma, but we had a big incident and four people passed away in that avalanche," he said.

"One of them was very close to me, we had climbed five mountains together in Pakistan. He was like a hero to me," he shared. *—PTI*



Nima, began scaling gargantuan peaks shortly after turning 16, aims to scale Kanchenjunga *PHOTO: UNSPLASH*

Climate change is linked to worsening brain disease: Study

Climate change is making the symptoms of certain brain conditions worse, our new review has found. Conditions that can worsen as temperature and humidity rise include stroke, migraines, meningitis, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, schizophrenia, Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's.

Our brains are responsible for managing the environmental challenges we face, especially higher temperatures and humidity, for example by triggering sweating and telling us to move out of the sun and into the shade.

Each of the billions of neurons in our brain is like a learning, adapting computer, with many electrically active components. Many of these components work at a different rate depending on the ambient temperature, and are designed to work together within a narrow range of temperatures. Our bodies, and all their components, work well within these limits to which we have adapted over millennia.

Humans evolved in Africa and are generally comfortable between 20°C to 26°C and 20 to 80 per cent humidity. Many of the components of the brain are, in fact, working close to the top of their temperature ranges, meaning that small increases in temperature or humidity may mean they stop working so well together.

When those environmental conditions move rapidly into unaccustomed ranges, as is happening with extreme temperatures and humidity related to climate change, our brain struggles to regulate our temperature and begins to malfunction.

Some diseases can already disrupt perspiration, essential to keeping cool, or our awareness of being too hot. Some drugs used to treat neurological and psychiatric conditions further complicate the problem by compromising the body's ability to react – reducing sweating or disturbing the temperature-regulating machinery in our brain.

These effects are made worse by heatwaves. For example, heatwaves disturb sleep, and disturbed sleep makes conditions such as epilepsy worse. Heatwaves can make faulty wiring in the brain work even less well, which is why symptoms in people with multiple sclerosis can get worse in the heat. Higher temperatures can make the blood thicker and more prone to clot due to dehydration during heatwaves, leading to strokes.

So it is clear that climate change will affect many people with neurological diseases, often in many different ways.



Heatwaves can make faulty wiring in the brain work even less well *PHOTO: PIXABAY*

With rising temperatures, admissions to hospital for dementia are more common.

In the 2003 European heatwave, around 20 per cent of the excess deaths were of people with neurological conditions.

Unseasonal local temperature extremes, larger than usual temperature fluctuations across the day, and adverse weather events, like heatwaves, storms and floods, can all worsen neurological conditions. These consequences are further complicated by particular circumstances. The heating effect of city environments and lack of green spaces, for example, can amplify the harms of a heatwave on neurological and psychiatric diseases.

- When those environmental conditions move rapidly into unaccustomed ranges, as is happening with extreme temperatures and humidity related to climate change, our brain struggles to regulate our temperature and begins to malfunction

The global scale of those with neurological and psychiatric conditions that could be adversely affected by climate change is huge. About 60 million people have epilepsy worldwide. Globally, about 55 million people have dementia, with over 60 per cent living in low- and middle-income countries. As the world's population ages, these numbers are projected to increase to over 150 million by 2050. Stroke is the second-leading cause of death and a leading cause of disability worldwide.

Offering help

The broader need to tackle climate change itself is clear. Mitigation measures led by governments with international coordination are needed now. But it will be years before serious efforts start to make a real difference. In the meantime, we can help people with neurological diseases by providing tailored information about the risks of adverse weather events and temperature extremes.

Doctors and public health experts can explain how to reduce those risks. We can adapt local weather-health alert systems to neurological diseases.

We can also work with those affected, their families and carers, to ensure weather-health alerts and responses make sense for affected communities and can be implemented.

Unless we start addressing climate change as part of neurological care, the benefits of scientific advances being made are at risk of being lost. Perhaps most importantly, neurological diseases offer insights into what could happen to the healthy brain pushed beyond evolutionarily derived boundaries and the behavioural capacity to adapt.

This possibility grows increasingly likely as we continue to fail to tackle climate change. To continue to live the lives we want, we should pay more attention to the sensation that it is getting too hot and act against climate change. We depend on our brains: climate change is bad for them.

— Courtesy, The Conversation



PHOTO: AP

Severe storms kill 4 in Houston, knock out power

TEXAS, 17 MAY

Thunderstorms have killed four people and knocked out power to nearly a million homes and businesses in south-east Texas. "We have a storm with 100 mph winds, the equivalent of Hurricane Ike, considerable damage downtown," said the mayor of Houston, John Whitmire. Two deaths came from fallen trees and one from a crane blown over. The storm has now moved on to neighbouring Louisiana with flood warnings in place for the Gulf Coast. In Houston, traffic lights were out, office windows blown through and glass strewn across the city's streets. Residents were warned to stay inside by the mayor, speaking on Thursday evening. The city was working through a backlog of emergency calls, most of them about gas leaks and downed wires. *—BBC NEWS*

Nepal PM seeks vote of confidence on Monday

KATHMANDU, 17 MAY

Nepal Prime Minister Pushpakamal Dahal 'Prachanda' will seek a vote of confidence in Parliament on 20 May, the fourth within 18 months of taking office, days after a coalition partner withdrew its support for his government. Prachanda, a former guerilla leader, belongs to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), the third largest party in the House of Representatives (HoR). The decision to seek a vote of confidence came after the Upendra Yadav-led Janata Samajbadi Party Nepal on 13 May withdrew its support for the government following a split in the party.Yadav resigned as deputy prime minister and his party pulled out of the government. *—PTI*

Man kills 2 cops in suspected terror attack in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, 17 MAY

A man stormed a police station in Malaysia and killed two police officers early Friday in what's being investigated as a Jemaah Islamiyah terror attack. The man also injured another officer before being shot dead. Material linked to Jemaah Islamiyah, a shadowy Southeast Asian terror network linked to al-Qaida, was found in the attacker's home and five members of his family believed to be JI members were arrested national police chief Razarudin Husain said. The attack in southern Johor state appeared to have been planned and though the motive was unclear, it could have been an attempt to take firearms from the station, the police chief said. *—PTI*

Serbia Oppn to protest project by Trump's kin

BELGRADE, 17 MAY

Opposition groups in Serbia are planning protests against a real estate development project that will be financed by the firm of Donald Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, at the site of the former Serbian army headquarters destroyed in a US led NATO bombing campaign in 1999. The Serbian government earlier this week signed a deal with a Kushner-related company for the 99-year lease of land in central Belgrade for the "revitalization" of the bombed-out buildings. Kushner has confirmed reports that his company plans to finance the USD 500-million project. It would feature a high-rise hotel, a luxury apartment complex, office spaces and shops. "The economic progress in Serbia over the past decade has been impressive," Kushner said in a statement confirming the approval of the deal. *—PTI*

Putin focuses on trade exchanges in Harbin

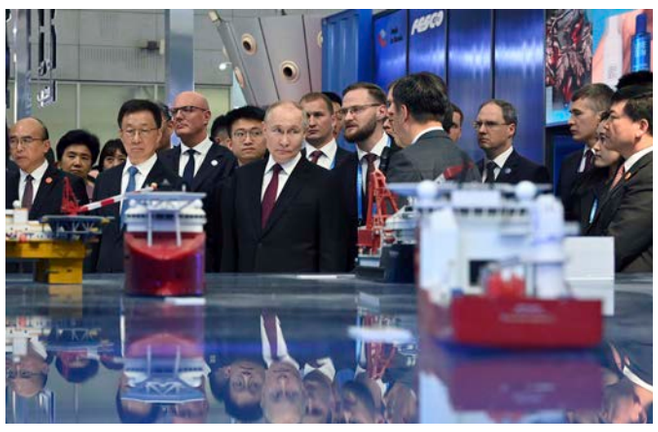
Russia has depended on China after Western sanctions

BEIJING, 17 MAY

Russian President Vladimir Putin focused on trade and cultural exchanges Friday during his state visit to China that started with bonhomie in Beijing and a meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping that deepened their " no limits " partnership as both countries face rising tensions with the West.

Putin praised China at a China-Russia Expo in the northeastern city of Harbin, hailing the growth in bilateral trade. He will also meet with students at Harbin Institute of Technology later Friday. Harbin, capital of China's Heilongjiang province, was once home to many Russian expatriates and retains some of those historical ties in its architecture, such as the central Saint Sophia Cathedral, a former Russian Orthodox church.

Though Putin's visit is more symbolic and is short on concrete proposals, the two countries nonetheless are sending a clear message.



Russian President Vladimir Putin (centre) visits the Russian-Chinese EXPO in Harbin on Friday *PHOTO: PTI*

"At this moment, they're reminding the West that they can be defiant when they want to," said Joseph Torigian, a research fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institute.

At the exhibition in Harbin, Putin emphasized the importance of Russia-China cooperation in jointly developing new technologies.

Putin started the second day of his visit to China on Friday by laying flowers at a monument to fallen Soviet soldiers in Harbin who had fought for China against the Japanese during the second Sino-Japanese war, when Japan occupied parts of China.

At their summit on Thursday, Putin thanked Xi for China's proposals for ending the war in Ukraine, while Xi said China hopes for the early return of Europe to peace and stability and will continue to play a constructive role toward this. Their joint statement described their world view and expounded on criticism of US military alliances in Asia and the Pacific.

Putin has become isolated globally for his invasion of Ukraine. China has a tense relationship with the US which has labeled it a competitor, and faces pressure for continuing to supply key components to Russia needed for weapons production.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine, Russia has increasingly depended on China as Western sanctions have taken a bite. Trade between the two countries increased to USD 240 billion last year, as China helped its neighbor defray the worst of Western sanctions.

Experts say China and Russia's relationship with each other offer strategic benefits, particularly at a time when both have tensions with Europe and the US. *—PTI*

UKRAINE WAR IN FOCUS

US sanctions Russian entities over North Korea-linked weapons transfer

WASHINGTON, 17 MAY

The US imposes sanctions on Russian entities for their involvement in the transfer of military equipment and components between North Korea and Russia amid the ongoing war against Ukraine, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a statement on Thursday.

America also claimed that Russia has relied upon North Korea to wage its war on Ukraine and said that the relationship between the two countries poses a wide-ranging threat to global security and the international non-proliferation regime.

The US also condemned Russia's exercise of veto at the UN Security Council resolution that would have extended the mandate of the UN 1718 Committee Panel of Experts, a body that documented the DPRK's UN sanction violations. Meanwile, North Korea fired a ballistic missile off its east coast on Friday, South Korea's military said, a day after South Korea and the US flew powerful fighter jets for a joint drill that the North views as a major security threat.



America also claimed that Russia has relied upon North Korea to wage its war on Ukraine *PHOTO: X/@ANI_DIGITAL*

A statement from South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff gave no further details about the North Korean launch, such as how far the weapon flew.

North Korea in recent months has maintained an accelerated pace in weapons testing as it continues to expand its military capabilities while diplomacy with the United States and South Korea remained stalled. Observers say North Korea likely believes an upgraded weapons arsenal would give it leverage to win greater concessions from the US if negotiations resume. Last week, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervised another test firing of a new multiple rocket launch system, according to the North's state media.

North Korea has maintained it was forced to boost its nuclear and missile programmes to deal with US-led hostility. North Korea cites the expanded US-South Korean military training that it calls invasion rehearsals. *ANI/PTI*

SUNAK, WIFE'S FORTUNES RISE IN 2024 RICH LIST

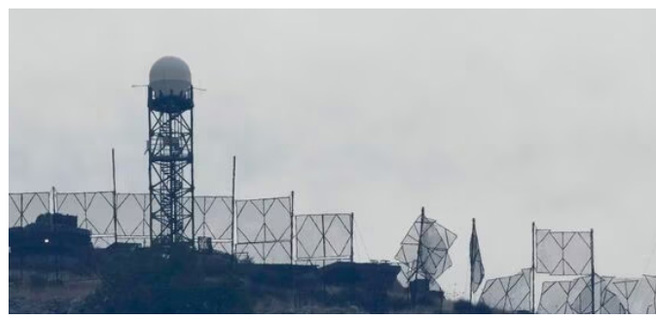
LONDON, 17 MAY

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and wife Akshata Murty, who made their debut in the annual 'Sunday Times Rich List' two years ago, have moved up the ranks in the 2024 edition released on Friday thanks to the Murty's lucrative Infosys shareholding.

The couple, both 44, have risen from 275th last year to 245th with an estimated wealth of GBP 651 million, making them the "wealthiest people to call 10 Downing Street home".

Murty's earnings are said to far exceed that of her husband as financial statements published in February are quoted to say Sunak made GBP 2.2 million in 2022-23 compared to Murty's estimated GBP 13 million in dividends over the past year. "The couple's most valued asset is Murty's shareholding in Infosys, a Bangalore-based IT company co-founded by Murty's father [Narayan Murthy]," reads the newspaper's analysis.

The annual compilation of Britain's wealthiest families is once again topped by the Indian-origin Hinduja family. *—PTI*



The attack wounded three soldiers, one of them seriously, according to the Israeli military *PHOTO: AP*

Hezbollah to use new weapons against Israel

BEIRUT, 17 MAY

The Lebanese militant group Hezbollah this week struck a military post in northern Israel using a drone that fired two missiles. The attack wounded three soldiers, one of them seriously, according to the Israeli military.

Hezbollah has regularly fired missiles across the border with Israel over the past seven months, but the one on Thursday appears to have been the first successful missile airstrike it has launched from within Israeli airspace.

The group has stepped up its attacks on Israel in recent weeks, particularly since the Israeli incursion into the southern city of Rafah in the Gaza Strip. It has struck deeper inside Israel and introduced new and more advanced weaponry.

While the cross-border exchanges of fire have been ongoing since early October, "complex attacks" by Hezbollah began a few days after Iran's unprecedented drone and missile barrage attack on Israel in mid-April.

The Thursday afternoon attack by a drone carrying missiles came just days after Hezbollah launched three anti-tank guided missiles at an Israeli military post that controlled a surveillance balloon flying over the border.

They released camera footage afterward to show they had hit their mark. Hours later, the Israeli military confirmed that the spy balloon had been shot down over Lebanon.

The night before, Hezbollah had carried out its deepest attack in Israel to date using explosive drones to strike at a base in Ilaniya near the city of Tiberias about 35 kilometers (22 miles) from the Lebanon border. The Israeli military said the attack did not hurt anyone. *—PTI*

First US aid rolls into Gaza Strip

Washington, 17 May

Trucks carrying badly needed aid for the Gaza Strip rolled across a newly built US floating pier into the besieged enclave for the first time on Friday as Israeli restrictions on border crossings and heavy fighting hinder food and other supplies reaching people there. The shipment is the first in an operation that American military anticipate could scale up to 150 truckloads a day entering the Gaza Strip. But the US and aid groups also warn that the pier project is not considered a substitute for land deliveries that could bring in all the food, water and fuel needed in Gaza. *—PTI*

French police kill man trying to burn synagogue

PARIS, 17 MAY

French police have killed a man after a synagogue was set on fire in the north-western city of Rouen.

The man was reportedly armed with a knife and an iron bar and when he went towards the police, an officer shot him.

Rouen Mayor Nicolas Mayer-Rossignol said the attack on the synagogue did not just affect the Jewish community, but the entire city was "battered and in shock".

Police were called at around 06.45 after smoke was seen rising from the synagogue, according to local reports.

Firefighters at the scene eventually brought the fire under control inside the synagogue. There appeared to be no victims other than the armed man, the mayor said.

The local public prosecutor said two investigations were under way - into the arson attack on a place of worship and into the death of the man outside the building.

France, in common with the rest of Western Europe, has seen a surge in antisemitism since Hamas attacked southern Israel last October leading to the current war in Gaza.

Earlier this week a memorial in Paris that honours 3,900 men and women who helped rescue Jews during the Nazi occupation of France in World War Two was daubed with red-painted hands.

President Emmanuel Macron said defacing the wall undermined the memory of France's heroes and its victims of the Holocaust

—BBC News



The man was armed with knife and an iron bar *PHOTO: X/@NotFarLeftAtAll*

Texas pardons US soldier who shot BLM protester

TEXAS, 17 MAY

Texas Governor Greg Abbott has pardoned a man convicted of killing a Black Lives Matter protester in 2020.

Daniel Perry, an ex-US Army sergeant, was moonlighting as an Uber driver in Austin when he turned on to a street where demonstrators were marching.

Garrett Foster, one of the protesters, approached the vehicle carrying a rifle. Perry shot him dead.

Perry said he acted in self-defence, but he was convicted by a jury and sentenced to 25 years in prison.

Foster, 28, a former US Air Force mechanic, was openly carrying an AK-47 semi-automatic assault rifle - something that is legal under Texas law - at the time of the confrontation on 25 July 2020. He was white, as is Perry.

Perry, now 37, had no passenger in his taxi and said some of the demonstrators, who had gathered in the wake of the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, began banging on his car. The protesters said they feared the vehicle might ram them.

During the trial, Perry's lawyers argued that Foster raised his rifle, a claim that some witnesses disputed. Perry lowered his window and shot Foster five times with a .357 revolver before driving off. He called 911 shortly afterwards.

The case became a rallying point for conservatives.

—BBC News

Drone attack causes power cutoffs in Sevastopol

KYIV, 17 MAY

A massive Ukrainian drone attack on Crimea early Friday caused power cutoffs in the city of Sevastopol and set a refinery ablaze in southern Russia, Russian authorities said.

The drone raids marked Kyiv's attempt to strike back during Moscow's offensive in northeastern Ukraine, which has added to the pressure on outnumbered and outgunned Ukrainian forces who are waiting for delayed deliveries of crucial weapons and ammunition from Western partners.

The Russian Defence Ministry said air defences downed 51 Ukrainian drones over Crimea, another 44 over the Krasnodar region and six over the Belgorod region. It said Russian warplanes and patrol boats also destroyed six sea drones in the Black Sea.

The governor of Sevastopol, Mikhail Razvozhayev, which is the main base for Russia's Black Sea Fleet, said the drone attack damaged the city's power plant. He said it could take a day to fully restore energy supplies and warned residents that power would be cut to parts of the city.

"Communal services are doing their best to restore the power system as quickly as possible," he said in a statement.

Razvozhayev also announced that schools in the city would be closed temporarily. *—PTI*

US woman accused of NKorean Id theft scheme

WASHINGTON, 17 MAY

US prosecutors have accused an American woman Christina Chapman of helping North Koreans find remote jobs in the US and then send their wages back to North Korea.

She is charged alongside three North Korean nationals with participating in the elaborate plot.

The Arizona resident allegedly stole the identities of American citizens, then helped foreign IT workers use those identities to pose as Americans and gain employment at US companies, according to prosecutors.

Chapman has been charged with nine counts of conspiracy to defraud the US.

Investigators said the "staggering" scheme used the stolen identities of 60 people, and generated nearly USD 7 million in funds that were sent back to North Korea. The scheme - involving some 300 US companies - allegedly started in October 2020. The companies, which were unaware of the scheme, were not identified, but officials said they included several Fortune 500 companies, as well as a major TV network, indicta defence company, a "premier" Silicon Valley tech company and an "iconic" American auto manufacturer.



PHOTO: @BBCWORLD

—BBC NEWS

RAINS' FURY

Afghans recall ordeals of flashfloods

KABUL, 17 MAY

The dramatic floods in north-east Afghanistan last week saw homes swept away, roads destroyed and hundreds killed.

Many of those affected live in remote areas many hours' drive from the nearest city.

Noor Ahmad was at home with his family when the water hit last Friday.

With little option to escape and hoping the walls of his home would hold, he decided to take all eight members of his family to the rooftop.

"When the wall fell, I remember thinking I had lost everything," Noor tells me. We are sitting in a canvas tent pitched on the empty spot where his home used to stand.

Across the street from Noor's house is a mosque which was the scene of another rescue.

In a video taken earlier, children sat huddled together and shaking on the roof, caked in thick, sticky mud. All had been dragged from the flood waters. Meanwhile downstream, 18-year-old Elhamuddin recounts how he spotted something during the floods; some movement bobbing against a large tree, lodged against the wall of his family's field. It was 10-year-old Zulaikha - Noor Ahmad's daughter. Unable to grab onto roots or rocks to stop her, she was floating on her back close to a tree, scared to try to stand in case the current carried her away, Elhamuddin says.

In a video taken after she is rescued, Zulaikha appears covered in mud, shaken but alive. Her family tell us she is now recovering at a relative's house. Zulaikha was covered in thick mud after being rescued from the waterElhamuddin, his sister and mother say they helped to clean Zulaikha's wounds before sending her on to hospital. "I am proud of them," Elhamuddin's father says. "They are the pride of all Afghanistan. They are the pride of all the world."



The children were pulled from the muddy waters onto the roof of this building *PHOTO: BBC NEWS*

—BBC News

Rupee closes at 83.33 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 17 MAY

Rupee appreciated 17 paise to close at 83.33 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, on positive domestic markets and expectations of some fresh foreign inflows. Reports of selling of US dollars by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) also supported the rupee, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.50 and touched an intraday high of 83.32 and a low of 83.50. The domestic unit finally settled at 83.33 (provisional), a rise of 17 paise from its previous close. On Thursday, the rupee had settled at 83.50 against the US dollar. "We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on strengthening of the US dollar amid hawkish Fed speak and weak Asian and European markets. However, a positive tone in domestic markets may support the rupee at lower levels. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 104.73, higher by 0.26 per cent. —*PTI*

Silver rates high for second day; gold falls ₹150

NEW DELHI, 16 MAY

Extending the record-breaking run to the second day in a row, silver prices hit lifetime high level of Rs 89,000 in the local market on Friday, even as gold prices fell Rs 150 to Rs 73,900 per 10 grams in line with firm trends in the overseas markets. According to HDFC Securities, silver prices jumped Rs 300 to Rs 89,000 per kg in the national capital. It had closed at Rs 88,700 per kg in the previous session. Meanwhile, gold prices declined Rs 150 to Rs 73,900 per 10 grams. "Gold prices retreated on Friday as the US dollar and US Treasury yields recovered from multi-week lows. The dollar index is currently quoting higher by 0.22 per cent against the previous close.—*PTI*

Vikram Solar bags order to supply 397.7 MWp module

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

Vikram Solar on Friday said it has bagged a 397.7 MWp solar module supply order for NTPC's Khavda project in Gujarat. Vikram Solar has secured a 397.7 MWp module supply order from NTPC Renewable Energy Ltd, a company statement said, adding that the modules will power a significant portion of the 1,255 MW Khavda Solar Project in Gujarat. The project aligns perfectly with the Domestic Content Requirement (DCR), further solidifying the company's dedication to bolstering India's domestic solar manufacturing capabilities, the statement added. "Our successful execution of numerous solar projects for NTPC has fostered a deep trust, built on a shared commitment to excellence," Gyanesh Chaudhary, Chairman & Managing Director of Vikram Solar said. —*PTI*

Larsen & Toubro bags multiple orders

MUMBAI, 17 MAY

Engineering and construction conglomerate Larsen & Toubro (L&T) on Friday said its buildings and factories business vertical has bagged multiple orders. The company has bagged a project from the Institute of Neurosciences Kolkata, for constructing a medical college and hospital campus in Kolkata on a design and build mode. This involves a 605-bed hospital and a medical college. The project is to be executed in two phases over a period of 60 months. The scope of work includes civil structure and external development works. L&T's Buildings and factories business has also received several add-on orders. Larsen & Toubro is a 27 billion dollar Indian multinational enterprise engaged in Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) projects, hi-tech manufacturing and services operating across multiple geographies. —*PTI*

UN revises India's growth to 6.9 pc

It's an upward revision from 6.2 pc in January

UNITED NATIONS, 17 MAY



The UN World Economic Situation and Prospects 2024 report was launched in January *PHOTO: PIXABAY*

The United Nations (UN) has revised upwards India's growth projections for 2024, with the country's economy now forecast to expand by close to seven per cent this year, mainly driven by strong public investment and resilient private consumption.

The World Economic Situation and Prospects as of mid-2024, released Thursday, said, "India's economy is forecast to expand by 6.9 per cent in 2024 mainly driven by strong public investment and resilient private consumption. Although subdued external demand will continue to weigh on merchandise export growth, pharmaceuticals and chemicals exports are expected to expand strongly."

The 6.9 per cent economic growth projections for India in the mid-year update is an upward revision from the 6.2 per cent GDP forecast made by the UN in January this year. The UN World Economic Situation and Prospects 2024 report that was launched in January had said that growth in India was projected to reach 6.2 per cent in 2024, amid robust domestic demand and strong growth in the manufacturing and services sectors. The projection in January for India's GDP growth for 2025 remains unchanged at 6.6 per cent in the latest assessment of the economic situation.

The update said that consumer price inflation in India is projected to decelerate from 5.6 per cent in 2023 to 4.5 per cent in 2024, staying within the central bank's two to six per cent medium-term target range. Similarly, inflation rates in other South Asian countries declined in 2023 and are expected to decelerate further in 2024, ranging from 2.2 per cent in the Maldives to 33.6 per cent in Iran.

In India, labour market indicators have also improved amid robust growth and higher labour force participation, it said. India's government remains committed to gradually reduce the fiscal deficit, while seeking to increase capital investment.

South Asia's economic outlook is expected to remain strong, supported by a robust performance of India's economy and a slight recovery in Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Regional GDP is projected to grow by 5.8 per cent in 2024 (an upward revision of 0.6 percentage points since January) and 5.7 per cent in 2025, below the 6.2 per cent recorded in 2023. However, still tight financial conditions and fiscal and external imbalances will continue to weigh on South Asia's growth performance. —*PTI*

NIFTY ADVANCES

Sensex climbs 250 pts on buying in Reliance

MUMBAI, 17 MAY



PHOTO: PTI

Equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty closed higher on Friday as buying in index majors M&M, Reliance Industries and ITC helped the indices rebound from early lows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 253.31 points, or 0.34 per cent, to settle at 73,917.03. The NSE Nifty advanced 62.25 points, or 0.28 per cent, to 22,466.10. M&M was the biggest gainer on the Sensex chart, rising 5.97 per cent, followed by JSW Steel, Ultra Cement, Kotak Bank, ITC and NTPC.

Reliance Industries gained 0.73 per cent to close at Rs 2,871 apiece. In contrast, TCS, HCL Tech, HUL, Nestle Industries, Bajaj Finserv, Wipro and Infosys were among the losers. "Despite mixed global signals and uncertainties surrounding the US Fed, the Indian market experienced a robust recovery, largely fuelled by the outperformance of the broader market and positive Q4 earnings.

"Further, some index heavyweight earnings surpassed expectations, and midcap and small-cap stocks continued to exhibit buying interest during dips. Auto and consumer durables particularly stood out with strong earnings momentum," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. In Asian markets, Shanghai and Hong Kong logged gains, while Seoul and Nikkei closed in the red.

European markets were trading in the negative territory. Wall Street ended in the green in the overnight trade on Thursday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude rose 0.25 per cent to USD 83.48 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors offloaded equities worth Rs 776.49 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. On Thursday, the BSE benchmark climbed 676.69 points or 0.93 per cent to settle at 73,663.72. The NSE Nifty surged 203.30 points or 0.92 per cent to 22,403.85. —*PTI*

M&M SHARES RALLY NEARLY 8 PC; CLIMB FOR 2ND DAY

NEW DELHI, 18 MAY

Shares of Mahindra & Mahindra continued to rally on Friday, climbing nearly 8 per cent, after the company reported a 4 per cent rise in consolidated profit after tax (PAT) for the March quarter. The stock jumped 7.66 per cent to Rs 2,554.75 -- its 52-week high -- on the BSE.

At the NSE, it climbed 7.68 per cent to the 52-week peak of Rs 2,554.10 apiece. It emerged as the biggest gainer among the BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty firms. The company's market valuation climbed to Rs 3,13,356.83 crore.

On Thursday, shares of Mahindra & Mahindra climbed nearly 4 per cent. Mahindra & Mahindra on Thursday reported a 4 per cent increase in consolidated PAT to Rs 2,754 crore for the March quarter, driven by strong performance of its automotive and farm sector segments. The company had posted a consolidated PAT of Rs 2,637 crore in the January-March quarter of the 2022-23 fiscal, M&M said in a regulatory filing. —*PTI*



PHOTO: PTI



The use of iron ore with less iron content needs beneficiation which adds to the cost of steel production *PHOTO: PTIW*

'Govt working on policy for low grade iron ore'

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

The government is working on a policy for low grade iron ore beneficiation, a move that will increase the usage of iron ore with less iron content in steel production. Speaking to PTI, Steel Secretary Nagendra Nath Sinha said the Ministry of Steel along with the Ministry of Mines and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change of India is working on the policy.

When asked about the timeline, he said the policy on the beneficiation of low grade iron ore is expected to be completed within three months' time.

"There may be some concessions on the royalty (on production of fines in the policy)," Sinha said without elaborating further. While lump ore or high-grade iron ore contains 65.53% Fe (iron), fines are inferior grade ore and have 64 per cent and less Fe content. The use of iron ore with less iron content needs beneficiation which adds to the cost of steel production. Earlier, Union Steel Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia had asked the domestic steel industry to adopt low-carbon emitting steel-making processes, while cautioning that key raw materials coking coal and iron ore may not be a viable option in the future based on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) parameters. —*PTI*

'ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT'

India needs to focus on manufacturing, says Nirmala

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY



Nirmala Sitharaman *PHOTO: ANI*

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said the country needs to ramp up its manufacturing sector to increase its share in the global value chain and become 'Atmanirbhar'.

Addressing the captains of the Indian industry at a CII Annual Business Summit, the minister also underlined the need of achieving greater sophistication in product manufacturing and policy support.

"I also want to underline much against the advice given by some economists that India should no longer be looking at manufacturing or ramping up manufacturing. I like to highlight the fact that manufacturing must increase. India must also increase with the help of policies its (manufacturing) share in the global value chain," she said.

Some of the economists including former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan have expressed the opinion that India should rather focus on the services sector rather than manufacturing as it has missed that opportunity. China's model of manufacturing-led growth cannot be replicated any more.

However, Sitharaman said, expanding manufacturing will help India become self-reliant. She also expressed hope that India still has an opportunity to ramp up its manufacturing capability as the world is looking at China plus one strategy post-Covid-19.

Quoting a Capgemini Research Institute report released in May, she said, India figures at the top of the list of investment destinations for senior executives in Europe and in the US, who are looking to reduce their dependence on China and shift part of their manufacturing capacity to emerging markets.

Sixty-five per cent of nearly 760 executives surveyed has said that they plan to increase investments significantly in India. Presently, the telecom sector's PLI has helped India to become a better Atmanirbhar as 60 per cent import substitution has been achieved in the telecom sector.This itself gives quite a big scope for our Indian industry, she said, adding, that the PLI scheme is also transforming the mobile and electronics sectors.

From 78 per cent import to dependence in 2014, she said, today 99 per cent of all mobiles sold in India are made in India. —*PTI*

IIFL SECURITIES Q4 PROFIT DOUBLES TO ₹180 CRORE

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

IIFL Securities on Friday announced its net profit more than doubled to Rs 180.4 crore in three months ended March 2024 driven by strong growth in all the business segments.

In comparison, the company had posted a net profit of Rs 86.4 crore in the year-ago period, IIFL Securities said in a statement. Total income surged 74 per cent year-on-year to Rs 704.4 crore for the quarter under review from Rs 405.2 crore in the January-March quarter of the FY 2022-23. "We witnessed strong growth in all our business segments. Our institutional broking and investment banking franchise has significantly improved their competitive position with stellar operating performance. Indian capital market businesses will continue to witness secular growth given multiple tailwinds over the next decade," "Venkataraman, Chairman, IIFL Securities, said.

The company's board of directors in its meeting in March approved an interim dividend of Rs 3 per equity share of the face value of Rs 2 each for the financial year 2023-2024."The same has been paid in compliance with the provision of the Companies Act, 2013 and is considered as final," it added. For the financial year 2023-24, the company said its net profit reached to an all-time high of Rs 512.1 crore from Rs 248 crore in the preceding fiscal and total income stood at Rs 2,231.3 crore, marking a 63 per cent year-on-year jump from FY23. —*PTI*

Zydus inks licensing, supply pact with MSN for cancer drug in US



PHOTO: PTI

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

Zydus Lifesciences Ltd on Friday announced an exclusive licensing and supply agreement with MSN Laboratories for generic cancer treatment drug Cabozantinib tablets, for the US market.

The company's wholly-owned subsidiary, Zydus Lifesciences Global FZE, has entered into an exclusive licensing and supply agreement with MSN Laboratories for Cabozantinib tablets for the US market, Zydus Lifesciences Ltd said in a regulatory filing. Cabozantinib tablet is the generic version of CABOMETYX of Exelixis.

Under the agreement, MSN Laboratories will be in charge of manufacturing and supplying the generic version of CABOMETYX, following the receipt of regulatory approval, the company said. Zydus will exclusively market, distribute, and sell the product in the US market, it added.

"MSN was a first sole ANDA (abbreviated new drug application) applicant for Cabozantinib tablets, to submit a substantially complete ANDA with a paragraph IV certification and therefore may be eligible for 180 days of generic drug exclusivity for the generic version of CABOMETYX, " Zydus Lifesciences said. —*PTI*

WFH NO LONGER A CONCERN

Demand for work spaces sees surge

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY



Demands of premium office space across major cities is likely to exceed 70 million square feet this year *PHOTO: PIXABAY*

The demand of premium office space across major cities is likely to exceed 70 million square feet this year and going forward as work-from-home is no longer a concern for the Indian commercial real estate market, said Cushman & Wakefield India chief Anshul Jain.

Cushman & Wakefield, one of the leading global real estate consultants, is bullish on the Indian office market, driven by high demand from global capability centres (GCCs) and domestic companies across major sectors.

In an interview with PTI Videos, Jain, Chief Executive, India & Southeast Asia and Head of Asia Pacific Tenant Representation, Cushman & Wakefield, said, "India is now being called the Office of the world interestingly. And the demand in India is one of the highest in Asia, and in fact the rest of the world."

Indian office market across seven major cities is witnessing a very strong demand, with both gross leasing and net leasing reaching around pre-COVID level, he said.

"So, from an office market perspective, barring the year 2020 of course, and perhaps part of 2021, 2022 and 2023 have been very strong years and we do expect 2024 to continue to be an exceptionally strong year," Jain said.

According to Cushman & Wakefield data, the gross office leasing across the top 8 cities stood at a record 74.6 million square feet while the net office space leasing was 41.1 million square feet during the 2023 calendar year.

The highest net absorption was recorded in 2019 at around 44 million square feet. Elaborating more on office demand, Jain noted there is a huge demand coming in from new global capability centres (GCCs), he said, adding that the demand is also high from startups.

"India is the third largest startup community in the world. Startups are maturing, becoming unicorns, so they need sort of an organised space for their staff and they are expanding very fast," Jain said.

- The demand of premium office space across major cities is likely to exceed 70 million square feet this year and going forward as work-from-home is no longer a concern for the Indian commercial real estate market, said Cushman & Wakefield India chief Anshul Jain

On whether 'work from home' is still a cause of concern, Jain said, "Not at all. I think we have completely overcome that phase."

Recently, he said, "I read an article in one of the newspapers where we read that Cognizant has finally given a diktat to their people to kind of come back to office. So, even last of the companies, which were resisting coming back to office are coming back to office. And this is the interesting piece, right." —*PTI*



Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Ltd on Friday said it has received final approval from the US health regulator *PHOTO: COMPANY WEBSITE*

Glenmark gets USFDA nod for ophthalmic solution

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Ltd on Friday said it has received final approval from the US health regulator for its generic brimonidine tartrate and timolol maleate ophthalmic solution indicated in the treatment increased pressure in the eye caused by glaucoma or other conditions.

The final approval by the US Food & Drug Administration (USFDA) is for brimonidine tartrate and timolol maleate ophthalmic solution of strength 0.2 per cent/0.5 per cent, Glenmark said in a statement. The company's brimonidine tartrate and timolol maleate ophthalmic solution, 0.2 per cent/0.5 per cent has been determined by the USFDA to be bioequivalent and therapeutically equivalent to Combigan ophthalmic solution, 0.2 per cent/0.5 per cent of AbbVie, Inc, it added.

The solution will be distributed in the US by Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Inc, USA, it added. Combigan ophthalmic solution, 0.2 per cent/0.5 per cent achieved annual sales of approximately $290 million, the company said citing IQVIATM sales data for the 12-month period ended March 2024. —*PTI*

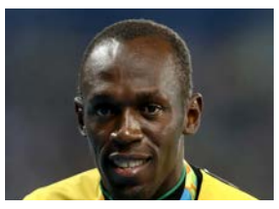


PHOTO: PTI

My records are not under threat for now: Usain Bolt

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

Usain Bolt is going to be back at the Olympics after eight years. But competitors need not worry, the world's fastest man will be in Paris to merely watch the action and feel chuffed about his phenomenal records which, he believes, are "not under threat" in the foreseeable future. In a telephonic interview with PTI from New York, where he is currently promoting next month's ICC T20 World Cup as its ambassador, Bolt spoke about life after retirement, the nagging itch to compete, especially when he watches his sport, and also a desire to visit India sometime in future. His superhuman efforts of 9.58 seconds (100m) and 19.19 seconds (200m) at the 2009 World Championships in Berlin have not been threatened ever since.—*PTI*

Decision to retire driven by instinct: Sunil Chhetri

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

Indian football captain Sunil Chhetri on Friday said his decision to retire after next month's World Cup qualifier against Kuwait was driven by instinct and he would like to take a "sabbatical" after completing his obligations in the domestic circuit. Chhetri, 39, announced his decision to retire from international football after the FIFA World Cup qualifying match against Kuwait on 6 June, bringing the curtains down on a 19-year career during which he became India's top goal-scorer with 94 strikes. He will leave the scene as India's most-capped player. "The retirement decision was not because of the physical aspect, I am still fit, running, chasing, defending.—*PTI*



PHOTO: PTI

Bhaker continues to dominate Selection Trials

BHOPAL, 17 MAY

Olympian Manu Bhaker displayedcomplete dominance in the 10m air pistol Olympic Selection Trials (OST), shooting asuperb score to overcome the challenge of Asian Games medallist Esha Singh hereon Friday.Bhaker, coached by the legendary pistol marksmanJaspal Rana, shot a superb 241.0 in the third OST to push back the challenge ofEsha (240.2) and Rhythm Sangwan (220.3) at the MP State Shooting Academyranges.—*PTI*

Disappointing start for Aditi at Mizuho Americas Open

JERSEY CITY, 17 MAY

Aditi Ashok had a disappointing start at the Mizuho Americas Open, carding 4-over 76, which placed her Tied-99th and in danger of missing the cut. Aditi, who is still looking for her first top-10 finish of 2024 on the LPGA, had two birdies against six bogeys. LPGA Tour rookie, Korea's So Mi Lee shot 6-under 66 to take the lead, while Japan's Mao Saigo shot a 4-under 68 in the first round to sit at tied second.Four players sit in a tie for second, including Saigo, Bianca Pagdanganan of the Philippines, Australia's Gabriela Ruffels, and America's Andrea Lee. Ruffles was one of four players to go bogey-free on Thursday.—*PTI*

RCB and CSK clash for final playoff berth

A washout will take CSK through to the playoffs

BENGALURU, 17 MAY

Royal Challengers Bengaluru's fairytale resurgent run will be up against the might of five-time champions Chennai Super Kings and the weather gods when the two sides clash in an epic do-or-die match to decide the fourth and final team for the IPL playoffs, here on Saturday.

Thursday's washout in Hyderabad meant that Sunrisers Hyderabad joined Kolkata Knight Riders and Rajasthan Royals as the three confirmed teams for the playoffs and the race is now for only one spot with two teams in the fray -- CSK and RCB.

Boasting of a better net run rate and more points, defending champions CSK (13 points, NRR 0.528) start favorites at a venue where they have lost to the home side only once in eight matches. RCB has 12 points and a net run rate of 0.387. However, what has heightened the drama surrounding the game is the forecast of rain. A washout will take CSK through to the playoffs, while RCB will need to win by at least 18 runs or chase the target with about 11 balls to spare. —*PTI*



Virat Kohli and MS Dhoni PHOTO: PTI

TODAY'S MATCH

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS 2024 vs RCB

Time: 7:30 PM

Where To Watch:

Jio Cinema, Star Sports Network

Stadium: M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru

ITALIAN OPEN 2024

Iga to face Sabalenka for Rome title

ROME, 17 MAY

Iga Swiatek swept past Coco Gauff to reach the Rome Open final on Thursday where Aryna Sabalenka will stand in her way of a third title and her bid to match a Serena Williams record. World number one Swiatek eased to a 6-4, 6-3 win over US Open champion Gauff for an 11th straight clay-court victory while second seed Sabalenka defeated Danielle Collins 7-5, 6-2. Poland's Swiatek, a four-time Grand Slam title winner, defeated third seed Gauff for the 10th time in 11 encounters.

Swiatek ended with 26 winners and broke her American opponent four times and now stands one victory away from duplicating the Madrid-Rome clay trophy double achieved by Williams 11 years ago.

"I'm not thinking about statistics or history," said Swiatek, the 2021 and 2022 champion in Rome.

"I'm just playing day by day. It's easier that way, it lets you play more freely.""I thought I played well the majority of the match, it came down to certain moments," she said.

"She came up clutch (with) a lot of balls on the line, close to the line, which is what she does. It just happened at some tough moments for me."

Saturday's final will be a repeat of the Madrid final earlier this month won by Swiatek. The final is scheduled for 18 May. —*AP*



Iga Swiatek and Aryna Sabalenka PHOTO: TENNIS-X.COM



Alexander Zverev PHOTO: TENNIS-X.COM

ZVEREV ENDS TABILO'S RUN, REACHES THIRD ROME FINAL

LONDON, 5 MAY

Alexander Zverev advanced to his 11th ATP Masters 1000 final and first since 2022 on Friday at the Internazionali BNL d'Italia, where he ended Alejandro Tabilo's run with a hard-fought win.

The German rallied from the brink of defeat to overcome Chilean Tabilo 1-6, 7-6(4), 6-2 in an engaging semi-final in Rome.

The second set was far more competitive and ended in a tie-break. Both players played pretty well, and Zverev was the only player who allowed a breakpoint. Tabilo never faced a breakpoint, but he didn't play sharply in the tie-break either.The third seed was more aggressive, and it proved important because Tabilo didn't handle the pressure that well. He started to miss more, and after he dropped the second set, he couldn't find his level again in the third. —*AP*

Thailand Open: Chirag-Satwik sail into semi-finals

Bangkok, 17 MAY

Indian men's doubles pair Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy progressed to the semi-finals of the Thailand Open 2024 badminton tournament at the Nimibutr Stadium in Bangkok on Friday.

Chirag and Satwik, third in the badminton rankings, dominated Malaysia's Arif Junaidi and Yap Roy King, world No. 64, in the quarter-finals and won the contest 21-7, 21-14 in 38 minutes.

The top-seeded Indian badminton players, who won the BWF Super 500 event in 2019, will take on the unseeded duo of Ming Che Lu and Tang Kai Wei of the Republic of Korea In the semi-finals on Saturday.

In the women's doubles quarter-finals, India's Tanisha Crasto and Ashwini Ponappa, seeded fourth, got the better of sixth-seeded South Korean shuttlers Lee Yu Lim and Shin Seung Chan with a hard-fought 21-15, 21-23, 21-19 victory in 76 minutes.

Another tough contest awaits the Indian shuttlers in the semi-finals against Thailand's Jongkolphan Kititharakul and Rawinda Prajongjai, who are the top seeds at the BWF Super 500 event and world No. 10. Tanisha Crasto and Ashwini Ponappa are India's top-ranked women's doubles pair at world No. 21.

World No. 84 Meiraba Maisnam, who stunned world No. 9 HS Prannoy on Tuesday and higher-ranked Dane in the second round, ran into the reigning world champion and world No. 8 Kunlavut Vitidsarn in the men's singles quarter-finals and suffered a 21-12, 21-5 defeat in 34 minutes.

The Thailand Open 2024 badminton tournament will conclude on Sunday.

—*PTI*



Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy PHOTO: PTI

Parveen's suspension forces India to concede Oly quota

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

In an unprecedented embarrassment for Indian boxing, the country will fight afresh for qualification in the women's 57kg category after being forced to surrender the quota owing to holder Parveen Hooda's international suspension for three whereabouts failures in 12 months.

Hooda was handed a 22-month suspension by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). The 2022 World Championship bronze medallist boxer, who fetched the Olympic quota with an Asian Games bronze last year, failed to file her whereabouts from April 2022 to March 2023 as per WADA rules."

Parveen Hooda has been suspended for 22 months by the International Testing Agency (ITA) for Whereabouts Failures," the Boxing Federation of India said in a media release.However, after discussion with the concerned agencies, Parveen's sanction has been back-dated and she has to now serve a 14-month suspension starting Friday."Under multiple discussions and representations, the ITA has proposed a sanction on Parveen, entailing the imposition of an ineligibility period of 22 months.

—*PTI*



Parveen Hooda PHOTO: PTI

Scottie Scheffler arrested at PGA Championship

LOUISVILLE, 17 MAY

Masters champion Scottie Scheffler was arrested Friday morning on his way to the PGA Championship, with stunning images showing him handcuffed as he was taken to jail for not following police orders during a pedestrian fatality investigation.

In three hours, Scheffler was arrested wearing gym shorts and a tee shirt, was dressed in an orange jail shirt for his mug shot, and returned to Valhalla Golf Club in golf clothes 56 minutes before he was to tee off in the second round.Traffic was backed up for about a mile in both directions on the only road that leads to Valhalla in the morning darkness with light rain, with dozens of police vehicles flashing red-and-blue lights near the entrance.

Police said a pedestrian had been struck by a bus while crossing the road in a lane that was dedicated to tournament traffic and was pronounced dead at the scene at about 5:09 a.m.ESPN reporter Jeff Darlington said Scheffler, the No. 1 player in the world who was to start the second round at 8:48 a.m., drove past a police officer a little after 6 a.m. in his SUV with markings on the door indicating it was a PGA Championship vehicle.

The officer screamed at him to stop and then grabbed onto the car until Scheffler stopped about 10 yards later.Scheffler was booked at 7:28 a.m. — about 2 1/2 hours before he was scheduled to start his second round.

—*PTI*



Scottie Scheffler PHOTO: PTI

AFI ANNOUNCES EQUAL PENALTIES FOR COACHES AND ATHLETES

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

Introducing a revolutionary policy that aims to hold coaches accountable for failed dope tests of their wards, the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) on Friday announced equal punishment for both in the event of adverse analytical findings.

By extending the consequences of failed dope tests to coaches, the AFI hopes to create a culture of clean sports and reinforce the message that doping will not be tolerated at any level.

AFI president Adille Sumariwalla said, "It's high time perpetrators are called out, named, and shamed.""If an athlete is found doping and is given a sentence, their coach will get a similar sentence from AFI," Sumariwalla told reporters during an interaction with media after AFI's Executive Council meeting."

The coach will be as responsible because this whole issue of doping has gone beyond control. High time that people are called out and they named and shamed and action is taken against them," he added."All coaches have to register with the AFI including NIS diploma holders. While filling their dope forms, whenever they are called for dope control, the athletes will have to declare the name of their coach."

This way there will be clear identification of who is the coach, which will also prevent a scramble for the cash reward when the athlete succeeds."When an athlete wins, the coaches are ready to run and take their cash awards.



Adille Sumariwalla PHOTO: PTI

Fermin Lopez double earns Barcelona win

HAMIRPUR, 12 MAY

Young Barcelona midfielder Fermin Lopez struck twice to secure his team a hard-fought 2-0 win at Almeria on Thursday in La Liga. The 21-year-old reached 10 goals for the season in his breakthrough campaign on a night Barcelona struggled but eventually overcame their already-relegated opponents. In the hours before the game Spanish media reported



PHOTO: X /@U_D_ALMERIA

Barcelona president Joan Laporta did not travel to the match in Almeria because he was unhappy with coach Xavi Hernandez's pre-match comments. —*AP*

FIFA TO SEEK LEGAL ADVICE

Palestine proposes to suspend Israel from int'l soccer

BANGKOK, 17 MAY

FIFA will seek independent legal advice before holding an extraordinary council meeting by 20 July to decide on a Palestinian proposal to suspend Israel from international soccer because of the conflict with Hamas.

FIFA president Gianni Infantino outlined the plan at the FIFA congress on Friday after representatives of the Palestinian and Israeli football federations had a chance to speak in front of the 211 member associations.

"FIFA will mandate as of now, independent legal expertise to analyze the three requests (from the Palestinian FA) and ensure the statutes of FIFA are applied in the right way," Infantino said. "This legal assessment will have to allow for inputs and claims of both member associations.



FIFA President Gianni Infantino PHOTO: X/THAINEWS.PRD

- FIFA will seek independent legal advice before holding an extraordinary council meeting by 20 July to decide on a Palestinian proposal to suspend Israel from international soccer because of the conflict with Hamas.

The results and the recommendations ... will be forwarded to the FIFA council.

"Due to the urgency of the situation, an extraordinary FIFA Council will be convened and will take place before July 20 to review the results of the legal assessment and to take the decisions that are appropriate." The Palestine Football Association's proposal to 211 member federations called for "appropriate sanctions, with immediate effect, against Israeli teams," according to FIFA documents released a month before the congress and council meetings in Bangkok.

The motion noted "international law violations committed by the Israeli occupation in Palestine, particularly in Gaza" and cited FIFA's statutory commitments on human rights and against discrimination. The Palestinian FA wrote that "all the football infrastructure in Gaza has been either destroyed or seriously damaged, including the historic stadium of Al-Yarmuk" and said it had support for the motion from the federations of Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, and Yemen. On Friday at the congress in Bangkok, Palestinian Football Association leader Jibril Rajoub said "The Palestinian people, including the Palestinian football family, are enduring an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe." Rajoub said he had been threatened because of his sanctions proposal. "The Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs has made serious threats to imprison me if I do not withdraw this proposal, but no power in the world can stand in the way of truth,". —*AP*