Lok Sabha election results 2024: People have placed faith in NDA for 3rd consecutive time, a historic feat, says PM Modi

New Delhi

In clear signals that he would stake the claim for government formation for the third time in a row, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday described the 2024 Lok Sabha election results as "historical."

"People have placed their faith in NDA, for a third consecutive time! This is a historical feat in India's history. I bow to the Janata Janardan for this affection and assure them that we will continue the good work done in the last decade to keep fulfilling the aspirations of people. I also salute all our Karyakartas for their hard work. Words will never do justice to their exceptional efforts," the PM said after leads fell massively short of PM's own 370-seat target for the BJP and 400-plus for the NDA.

In overall leads that came, the BJP fell short of a simple majority on its own, for the first time in a decade, clocking 244 leads at 8 pm today even though the ruling NDA posted 292 leads, ahead of the halfway mark of 272 in a 543-member Lok Sabha.

After a heavy upset in the Hindi heartland states of UP, Rajasthan and Haryana, where the BJP lost considerable ground today, the PM hailed the verdicts in Andhra Pradesh and Odisha Assembly and Lok Sabha polls.

In Andhra Pradesh, the TDP, BJP and Jana Sena alliance swept the Assembly and national elections today while in Odisha the BJP bagged 19 of the state's 21 Lok Sabha seats, besides clear simple majority in the state Assembly.

"Andhra Pradesh has given an exceptional mandate to the NDA! I thank the people of the state for their blessings. I congratulate Chandrababu Naidu, Pawan Kalyan and workers of all three NDA parties," PM said.

He said the NDA will work for the all-round progress of AP and ensure the state prospers in the times to come.

The PM also hailed the Odisha verdict as an endorsement of good governance and Odisha's unique culture. The Naveen Patnaik led BJD stood decimated in Odisha national and state polls today.

PM Modi to take oath for third time on Saturday, submits resignation to President

New Delhi
Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his council of ministers on Wednesday met President Droupadi Murmu and tendered their resignation as the final results of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections were out with 291 wins for the BJP-led ruling NDA and 230 for opposition INDIA bloc parties.The PM earlier chaired a meeting of the union cabinet where he discussed his plans for the next government and reiterated his pledge for Viksit Bharat. Later, the PM and ministers called on Murmu and submitted their resignations.

The President accepted the resignation and requested the Prime Minister and the Union Council of Ministers to continue in office till the new Government is formed.

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Relieve me of govt duty, want to focus on Assembly polls: Fadnavis after BJP's Maharashtra Lok Sabha debacle

Mumbai

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Wednesday said he would request BJP top leadership to relieve him from the government duties so that he could focus on state assembly polls, a statement coming a day after the BJP suffered a drubbing in Lok Sabha polls in the state.

He also conceded that issues of coordination exist with Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar of NCP.

"I take full responsibility for the BJP's defeat in Maharashtra. I fell short in some places, and the setback in Maharashtra is my fault. To focus on the next assembly elections and fix the shortcomings, I request the top brass of my party to relieve me of my government duties. I will meet my seniors and communicate my expectations to them," Fadnavis said while addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters in Mumbai.

Fadnavis said he would hold discussions with his seniors and will work as per their guidance.

"There were some issues of coordination with chief minister Eknath Shinde and deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar, which we will meet and discuss soon," he said.

CM's son makes a hat-trick in Kalyan, Shinde Sena wins Thane

Thgane

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's son Shrikant Shinde made a hat-trick by winning from the Kalyan Lok Sabha constituency third time in a row.

By 8 pm Tuesday, Shrikant was comfortably ahead by 2.09 lakh votes as he polled 5,89,636 votes against his opponent Shiv Sena (UBT) candidate Vaishali Darekar-Rane who polled 3,80,492 votes.

Meanwhile, Shiv Sena candidate from Thane, also emerged victorious as Naresh Mhaske defeated the incumbent Thane MP and UBT candidate Rajan Vichare by a comfortable margin of over 2.17 lakh votes.

Shrikant had earlier won from Thane seat in 2019 and 2014.

In Kalyan constituency, Marathi speakers forms the majority of the voting population followed by North Indians and other communities.

Around 50 per cent of registered voters had turned out to vote on the poll day.

Shrikant while interacting with journalists outside the counting centre in Dombivli said, "The development works I have done in the Kalyan constituency is turning out to be the key factor behind the positive performance in the election. I thank all the voters, supporters and party workers."

Intensive campaigning in the region, taking along leaders from regional communities in his rallies and other campaigns programmes, visiting big housing societies and approaching all caste and language groups and publicizing his works could be attributed to the Shrikant's victory.

During his election campaign, the CM's son had claimed that since he had done excellent development works in the constituency in the past 10-years and that he is confident of victory with a huge margin this time. However, Shrikant's margin has dipped from previous year.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Shinde while contesting from undivided Shiv Sena had won by beating Babaji Balaram Patil of NCP by a margin of 3,44,343 votes which was 38.68% of the total votes cast. In 2014, Shinde was the winner in this seat beating Anand Prakash Paranjpe of NCP by a margin of 2,50,749 votes which was 30.42% of the total votes polled in the constituency.

The lesser than expected votes to Shrikant is being attributed to anti-incumbency and rifts with local BJP leaders.

The local BJP leadership in the constituency has opposed Shrikant Shinde's candidature and even passed a resolution during a party meeting last year stating there would be non-cooperation with the Sena in the constituency.

This hostility further intensified with BJP MLA from Kalyan East, Ganpat Gaikwad, allegedly firing on Mahesh Gaikwad, the Kalyan city president of the Eknath Shinde faction of the Shiv Sena, and a party activist, inside a police station in Ulhasnagar.

There was also an underlying sympathy for the Thackerays in the region.

The win of Shinde from the Kalyan constituency would not be a surprise to anyone. Many people already perceived the Kalyan constituency as a one-sided battle between a two-time sitting Member of Parliament, a political heavyweight in the region, and a relatively less popular, less influential, and lightweight candidate.

But Sena (UBT) backed her saying their tradition has been giving a chance to grassroots party workers.

Mhaske wins from Thane

Emerging victorious in the bitterly fought battle to conquer Shiv Sena's oldest forts, Shinde Sena candidate Naresh Mhaske defeated the incumbent Thane MP and UBT candidate Rajan Vichare by a huge margin of over 2.17 lakh votes on Tuesday.

Photo finish in Mumbai North West: Waikar defeats Kirtikar by 48 votes

Mumbai

In the closest fight of 2024 Lok Sabha elections, Shiv Sena candidate Ravindra Waikar defeated Shiv Sena (UBT) candidate Amol Kirtikar by 48 votes in Mumbai North West constituency. The contest was a cliffhanger of sorts with the two rival candidates — Amol Kirtikar and Ravindra Waikar — celebrating victories within a few hours.

It was, however, on a slender lead of 48 votes — 47 of which were cast through postal ballot — that saw Waikar and his supporters have the last laugh at the NESCO grounds in Goregaon where the counting was taking place.

Such was the interest this particular contest that party workers from other seats also started flocking here, leading the police to increase security at the spot. The supporters of both factions of Sena came face to face and started shouting slogans. However, there no law and order problems emerged but a surprising turn around of the

result saw Waikar, an MLA from Jogeshwari, who was perceived to have not been too eager to contest this seat, emerge winner.

During the course of the day, both Kirtikar and Waikar kept trumping each other as leads for each round were announced. At the end of 26 rounds, however, Kirtikar, who was tipped to win this seat, eventually trumped Waikar by around 681 votes.

When the result was announced, Shiv Sena UBT and Congress party workers started celebrating. Even Amol Kirtikar visited NESCO and told media that his victory was the result of people's trust in him.

However, a dramatic turn of events was soon to follow. Since the margin by which Kirtikar appeared to have won was small, Waikar demanded a re-counting. Since ECI rules permit it, the 9,51,582 EVM votes were re-counted with a nervous looking Waikar and Kirtikar sitting on the dais of the returning officer and their supporters chanting slogans outside.

After the re-counting, it

appeared that Kirtikar had one vote more than Ravindra Waikar. Later, when the postal ballots were rechecked, Waikar was ahead by 49 votes, giving him a total lead of 48 votes. The final tally as per the ECI was 4,52,644 votes for Waikar, while Kirtikar secured 4,52,596 votes, losing by a margin of 48 votes. The third highest was Parmeshwar Ranshur from Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) who polled 10,052 votes.

As per ECI rules, if the margin is less than the postal ballots found invalid, the invalid postal ballots have to be checked again, which was done. It was only when none

of the invalid votes were found valid that Waikar was declared the winner.

As the results were announced, supporters of Waikar started celebrating, while those of Amol Kirtikar started shouting slogans against the result. Later, in a press conference, Uddhav Thackeray told the media that the North West constituency counting process had some issues and his party is most likely to challenge the verdict in court.

This seat was crucial for both Thackeray and Shinde, as they were directly competing against each other. Amol Kirtikar's candidacy faced opposition

from former Congress MP Sanjay Nirupam, who criticised him for his alleged involvement in the khichdi scam during the Covid-19 pandemic. Nirupam, who left Congress, strongly opposed Kirtikar's nomination.

There were rumors of other potential candidates such as Bollywood actor Govinda, who joined Shinde Sena, and Sanjay Nirupam himself, but Shinde ultimately nominated Ravindra Waikar, who had switched to the Shinde faction just before the final candidate declaration. Waikar has been under scrutiny by the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

Amol Kirtikar, the son of former MP Gajanan Kirtikar, remained loyal to Uddhav Thackeray despite his father's switch to the Shinde faction. In the previous election, Gajanan Kirtikar achieved a significant victory for Shiv Sena against Sanjay Nirupam, winning by a margin of 2.60 lakh votes. The voter turnout in this Lok Sabha election in the North West constituency stood at 58.84%.

NDA wins 291 seats; set to form government, INDIA bloc 230

We are in NDA, asserts TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu ahead of Delhi meeting

New Delhi

The BJP has consolidated its lead winning 240 of the Lok Sabha's 543 seats and the ruling NDA combine has won 291 in the final Election Commission tally published on Wednesday morning.

Past the majority mark of 272 in the House, the NDA is set to form the next government at the Centre.

The opposition INDIA bloc is meanwhile at 230 seats with all eyes on the evening meeting of the parties at the residence of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge.

The NDA side stacks up as follows -- BJP 240, TDP 16, JDU 12, Shiv Sena Shinde 7, LJP (Ram Vilas) 5, Janata Dal (Secular) 2, RLD 2, AGP, RSP, Apna Dal Soneylal, All India Jharkhand Students Union, NCP, HAM and SKM at one each.

The Congress has emerged as the single largest opposition party with 99 wins against 44 in 2014 and 52 in 2019.

The INDIA bloc figures are -- Congress 99, SP 37, TMC 29, DMK 22, Shiv Sena Uddhav 9, NCP Sharadchandra Pawar 8, RJD 4, CPM, 4, IUML 3, AAP 3, JMM 3, CPIML 2, CPI 2, JKNC

2, RLP, BAP, VCK one each.

Nineteen MPs of other non-affiliated parties have won.

The Congress for its part could not cross the 100 seat mark in the Lok Sabha.

The BJP, attacking the Congress over anti-Modi remarks for the saffron forces falling short of a simple majority on their own, said the Congress had won just 145 seats in 2004 and 206 in 2009 and had on both occasions gone ahead to form the government.

"The BJP, after two terms, has won 240 seats on its own. Let that sink in," BJP IT cell chief Amit Malviya said.

Amaravati

TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday said his party was in NDA and that he will be attending the National Democratic Alliance meeting to be held in New Delhi later in the day.

NDA constituent Janasena party's chief Pawan Kalyan will also be attending the NDA meeting at the national capital, a day after the alliance emerged victorious in Assembly and Lok Sabha polls in Andhra Pradesh.

"We are in NDA. I am going for an NDA meeting. In the course of time, if there is anything we will report to you," Naidu said in a press conference when asked about his Delhi visit.

Janasena sources told PTI that Kalyan also left for the national capital to attend the NDA meeting.

Senior leaders of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance are meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday to take stock of the Lok Sabha poll results

and deliberate on the details of government formation.

The TDP and Janasena, which won 16 and two Lok Sabha seats respectively from Andhra Pradesh, will play a crucial role in government formation at the Centre. The BJP won two seats in the state.

Naidu said Andhra Pradesh has suffered a lot during the past five years and he has a job to set it right.

He alleged that the destruction caused during the past five years was so immense, even as systems were destroyed and the economy collapsed in the state.

He further said nobody is permanent in politics and there will be ups and downs.

"The country is permanent, democracy is permanent, political parties are permanent, but power is not permanent," he said.

In a veiled reference to the YSR Congress party, Naidu said political parties will also vanish if they are not straight forward.

Result moral defeat for Modi: Kharge

New Delhi

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday said the Lok Sabha election results were a mandate against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and it was his "political and moral defeat".

Kharge, accompanied by the three Gandhis – Sonia, Rahul and Priyanka – turned up at the AICC office here where party supporters were celebrating the good show put up by the Congress in the Lok Sabha elections.

"People did not give a clear majority to one single party. The BJP sought votes for a single person. The mandate is against Modiji," Kharge said, referring to PM Modi's oft-repeated target of 400 seats for the NDA. Kharge said BJP sought votes on the basis of "One person, one face". "This is their (BJP's) political and moral defeat," he said, accusing the BJP of using government machinery to create obstacles in the path of the Opposition alliance.

Rahul Gandhi launched an

attack on PM Modi and said the country does not want him as their leader. Talking about the INDIA bloc's impressive show in Uttar Pradesh, Rahul said, "UP ne kamaal kar ke dikha diya (UP's public did wonders)". "The country has made it clear to Narendra Modi, "we don't want you". The country has unanimously and clearly stated that they do not want Mr Narendra Modi and Mr Amit Shah to be involved in the running of this country," Rahul said.

Rahul Gandhi 'bravest of all': Priyanka hails brother's efforts after poll outcome

Lok Sabha election results 2024 : People of India do not want PM Modi, Amit Shah to run country, says Rahul Gandhi

New Delhi

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday hailed her brother Rahul Gandhi's efforts describing him to be the "bravest of all", after the party's good showing in the Lok Sabha election, results of which were announced on Tuesday.

Priyanka acclaimed Rahul Gandhi stating that the former Congress chief never "backed down whatever the odds" and "never stopped fighting for truth".

In a heartfelt message on X, Priyanka said, "You kept standing, no matter what they said and did to you, you never backed down whatever the odds, never stopped believing however much they doubted your conviction, you never stopped fighting for the truth despite the overwhelming propaganda of lies they spread, and you never allowed anger and hatred to overcome you, even when they gifted it to you every day."

"You fought with love, truth and kindness in your heart. Those who could not see you, see you now, but some of us have always seen and known you to be the bravest of all," she said of her brother.

"Bhai @RahulGandhi, I am proud to be your sister," Priyanka Gandhi said.

The Congress, part of the opposition INDIA alliance, won 99 seats in the Lok Sabha elections compared to 52 in 2019, eating into the BJP's share in Rajasthan and Haryana.

New Delhi

The INDIA bloc will meet and decide on Wednesday whether to approach former partners such as the JD(U) and the TDP to attempt government formation at the Centre, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said.

"We are going to have a meeting with our partners tomorrow. These questions will be raised and answered there," Gandhi told a press conference here when asked if the Congress and its allies will approach parties that are part of the NDA to try and form a government.

He was addressing the press conference with senior Congress leaders as the Lok Sabha poll results and trends showed the BJP was set to become the single-largest party but would fall short of the magic figure of 272.

"We won't say anything without asking the opinion of our allies. Our alliance will decide tomorrow and whatever they decide we will act on that," Gandhi said.

The Congress leader said the General Election was a fight to save the Constitution.

"It was on my mind that the people of this country would rally together to save the Constitution. The first and biggest step towards saving the Constitution has been taken," he said, adding that it was the poor and the marginalised who stood up.

"India's poorest and backward stood up to save the Constitution," he said.

He added that the Congress, and the INDIA bloc have given India a new vision, a pro-poor vision.

"The main thing this election has said, the country has said, is that we don't want Narendra Modi, Amit Shah to be running this country," he said.

He said all Congress leaders respected INDIA bloc allies and wherever the alliance fought "we fought as one".

Gandhi offered special thanks to the electorate of Uttar Pradesh for supporting the Congress and "protecting" the Constitution.

When asked if he would keep the Wayanad or Rae Bareli seat, Gandhi said he has not taken a decision yet.

On Congress candidate K L Sharma wresting the Amethi seat from the BJP's Smriti Irani, Gandhi said the party loyalist had been working in the constituency for the past 40 years and his victory was certain.

'Will stay humble, not filled with ego': Congress MP KL Sharma after defeating BJP's Smriti Irani from Amethi

New Delhi

After Congress' KL Sharma defeated Bharatiya Janta Party's Smriti Irani in Uttar Pradesh's Amethi, the newly elected party MP asserted that the senior leaders had asked him to stay humble and not fill himself with ego after becoming an MP.

After leaving from 10 Janpath- the residence of Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi, KL Sharma said, "I had brought with me Rahul Gandhi's winning certificate and sought Madam's (Sonia Gandhi's) blessings. Priyanka Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, and KC Venugopal were also there."

He added, "They asked me to stay

humble, just as I am. I should not be filled with ego just because I became an MP. This is what they asked of me and I will follow their instructions." Asserting that he would work for everyone, irrespective of whether people voted for him or not, Sharma said, "I am everyone's MP and I will work for everyone. When one wins, then

responsibilities also fall on one's shoulders. And I will fulfil that responsibility. When I will work together with the people, I will be successful. I will listen to what they want and I will never make any plans without involving the people of Amethi."

Notably, KL Sharma defeated Smriti Irani with a margin of 1,67,196 votes. Sharma secured 5,39,228 votes while Irani garnered 3,72,032 votes.

Declaration of results of the 18th Lok Sabha election in the 543-member Parliament saw the BJP-led NDA winning 294 seats and the INDIA bloc bagging

234 seats. A party or coalition requires a simple majority of 272 seats to form the government.

According to the Election Commission of India, the BJP won 240 seats, much lower than its 2019 tally of 303. The Congress, on the other hand, registered a strong growth, winning 99 seats.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has secured a third term, but the BJP is relying on the support of other parties in his coalition - JD (U) chief Nitish Kumar and TDP's chief Chandrababu Naidu, as it needs 32 seats to reach the 272 majority mark.

For the first time, since the BJP swept to power in 2014, it did not secure a majority on its own.

Food delivery, e-commerce platforms unite to protect their delivery partners from heatwave

New Delhi

With large swathes of India being under the grip of heatwave and several cities recording temperatures above normal levels, food delivery and e-commerce platforms have come up with a slew of measures to shield their delivery partners from the scorching heat.

Food delivery platform Zomato has established 450 rest points for delivery partners across the country, regardless of their company. The rest points are equipped with comfortable seating, free drinking water, mobile charging points, and clean washroom facilities.

It has procured over 5 lakh units of refreshments, juices, and glucose that will be distributed to active delivery partners at more than 450 locations in over 250 cities.

"To address any health/medical emergency, a 15-minute ambulance and 24x7 SOS support is made available in over 530 cities for all delivery partners for immediate and prompt assistance, if needed.

"We also send out pre-emptive signals of upcoming heatwaves, and have introduced full-sleeve, dry-fit t-shirts for all delivery partners," informed CEO Rakesh Ranjan, Food Delivery, Zomato.

The food delivery platform also urged its users on X to avoid ordering during peak afternoon unless absolutely necessary.

Swiggy's quick commerce platform Swiggy Instamart runs over 900 recharge zones in high-demand areas, which offer rest areas, beverages, mobile phone charging points, and restrooms accessible to all delivery partners across the industry.

Blinkit, a quick commerce platform owned by Zomato, has integrated SOS support into the delivery partners' app to provide quick assistance in case of medical emergencies.

Blinkit CEO Albinder Dhindsa said the company is installing air coolers in the waiting areas of its stores to provide immediate relief from the heat.

All active delivery partners on both Zomato and Blinkit are insured under IPD cover up to Rs 1,00,000 and OPD cover up to Rs 5,000 for medical support at no extra cost, Ranjan added.

E-commerce platform Flipkart is also taking measures to protect its wishmasters (delivery workforce) from the torrid summer.

"Flipkart's supply chain forms the backbone of our business. As an employee-first organisation that prioritises a culture of care. We are ensuring that our last-mile executives are consistently provided access to the right resources.

"During the current summer season, a few additional inclusions in the daily routine of our wishmasters include the distribution of glucose beverages, provision of additional fans and coolers across facilities, and facilitating summer safety management briefings to ensure heatwave advisories are adhered to," said Prajakta Kanaglekar, Vice President and HR Leader at Flipkart.

PM Modi launches tree plantation campaign on World Environment Day

New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a tree plantation campaign on Wednesday by planting a sapling at the Buddha Jayanti Park here to mark World Environment Day.

Under the campaign, 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam', millions of trees will be planted across the country.

Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav and Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena joined PM Modi at the event.

Judges reflect sense of continuity of values amid elections: Chief Justice DY Chandrachud

Oxford

While elections lie at the core of India's constitutional democracy, judges reflect a sense of continuity of constitutional values that protect the system, Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud has said.

Addressing the famous Oxford Union Society here on Tuesday on the topic of the humanising role adjudicators can play in society, the senior-most judge of India's apex court highlighted the role of technology in injecting greater transparency into the judicial system. Acknowledging some of the "unfair" criticism aimed at judges on social media, the Chief Justice asserted that the overall impact of technology is to help the judiciary reach out to a wider section of society.

"Elections lie at the core of constitutional democracy ... judges are not elected in India and for a reason; judges reflect a sense of continuity of conditions, a continuity of constitutional values," he said in response to a question on the general elections, the results of which were declared earlier in the day.

"The judiciary has a vital role to play in a democracy, which is that we reflect a sense of tradition and what the future of a good society should be," Chief Justice Chandrachud said.

Asked about political and societal pressures he may have faced while handing down judgments, the Chief Justice stated that he has never faced a "sense of political pressure from the powers that be" in his 24 years as a judge. "We live lives which are relatively isolated from the political arm of the government … but obviously judges have to be conversant with the impact of their decisions on the polity at large. That's not political pressure but an understanding by the court of the likely impact of a decision," he said.

Chief Justice Chandrachud, who took questions from the student audience members, was asked about the Supreme Court's Special Marriage Act judgment that ruled against legalising same-sex marriage in India last year.

"I'm not here to defend the judgment because, as a judge, I believe once a judgment is delivered, it becomes the property of not just the nation but global humanity. The Special Marriage Act was a law enacted by Parliament … which contemplates a marriage in a heterosexual relationship," he said, going on to share that he was in the minority in that case in a certain specific aspect as he was in favour of recognising civil unions for same-sex couples "until such time as Parliament stepped in".

"Three of my colleagues didn't agree with us because they felt even the recognition of same-sex unions was beyond the purview of the court ... What happens in courts in modern democracies is not really to be looked at in terms of the substantive outcomes of the case. The court is involved in a continuous process of dialogue, not only with the litigating parties but a dialogue with civil society," he said. This was the main motivation behind his decision to livestream important constitutional cases, he added.

"We need to take the process of justice and administration of law to the homes and hearts of people," he said.

As an independent, student-led society with a membership primarily drawn from the University of Oxford, the Oxford Union Society, commonly referred to as the Oxford Union, dates back to 1823 as one of the world's leading debating societies created to uphold the principles of free speech.

In his keynote address, Chief Justice Chandrachud spoke at length about the judiciary as an instrument of justice that brings order and certainty and combats the dehumanising effects in society through a humanising approach towards adjudication.

"Technological intervention has humanised the process for the parties and the administrative staff of our courts. However, it is my duty to place a small caveat: I'm not a proponent of the complete automation of procedures. Since I believe that the absence of the human mind will remove the human element from the process," he noted.

"It is important that we understand and value the pros and cons of technological usage to ensure a humanised mechanism of justice. Artificial Intelligence is replete with unique possibilities for the future. We must also ensure that we impose guardrails to control Artificial Intelligence itself and not shift the process of communication from a judge to a robot," Chief Justice Chandrachud added.

TDP wins big in Andhra, Naidu to be CM again
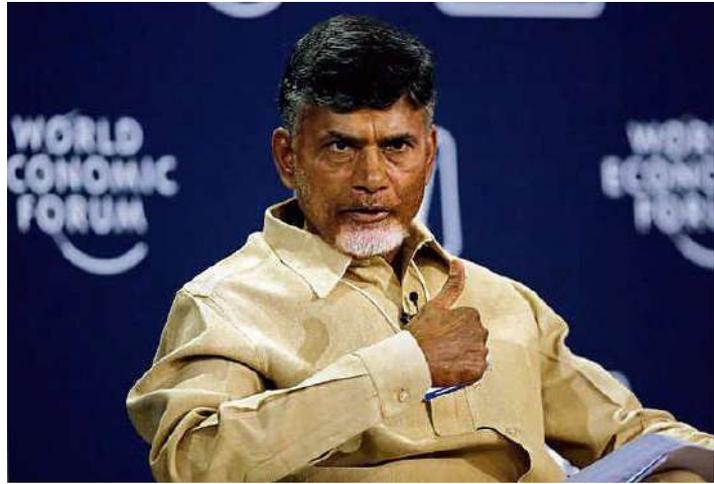
New Delhi

The NDA comprising TDP, BJP and Janasena has won 164 seats in the 175-member Assembly in Andhra. The TDP won 135 seats on its own.

Chandrababu Naidu (74), the TDP chief who was the CM of undivided Andhra from 1995 to 2004 and earned the reputation of a "CEO CM" by bringing the state on the IT map of the world, is expected to be the CM again. The YSRCP was decimated as it secured a mere 11 seats, in a near reversal of results over the 2019 state poll when the TDP was wiped out.

Left makes a comeback in Bihar after 3 decades

New Delhi

After its successful run in the 2020 Bihar Assembly elections, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) has won two parliamentary seats in the state after a gap of three decades. The last time a CPI (ML) MP was elected from Bihar was in 1989, when Rameshwar Prasad won from Arrah.

The party has won the Arrah and Karakat Lok Sabha seats.

The Karakat constituency came into existence in 2008 and since then only NDA candidates have won. Former Union Minister Upendra Kushwaha, who contested from the Rashtriya Lok Morcha, lost from Karakat this time. He had won the seat in 2014. In 2019, Mahabali Kushwaha from JD(U) had emerged victorious. Raja Ram Singh Kushwaha of the CPI (ML) won the Lok Sabha seat from Karakat this time.

In Bihar, where voters are divided on caste lines, the CPI (ML) banked on its assessment that the Kushwaha vote bank in Karakat was drifting away from the NDA. Raja Ram Singh, who is himself a Kushwaha, had an edge due to better ground connection. The caste equation was further muddled for Upendra with the entry of Bhojpuri singer Pawan Singh into the fray.

Union Minister RK Singh, who contested from Arrah on the BJP symbol, lost the seat to Sudama Prasad of the CPI (ML). Singh had won from Arrah in the 2014 and 2019 LS polls. This is the only seat where the BJP and the Left were directly contesting.

Didi emerges unscathed from Sandeshkhali

New Delhi

Belying PM Narendra Modi's assertion that the BJP would sweep the Lok Sabha elections in West Bengal, it was the Trinamool Congress (TMC) led by Mamata Banerjee that called the shots by bagging 29 of the state's 42 seats. The BJP's tally came down to 12 from the 18 seats it had won in 2019. In 2019, the TMC had won 22 seats.

Banerjee, who refused to have any truck with either the Congress or the CPM, led the campaign from the front with her focus on welfare schemes that her government had launched in the last three years, especially the 'Lakshmir Bhandar' cash incentive scheme. Ahead of the Lok Sabha poll, the Mamata government had increased the monthly allowance from Rs 500 to Rs 1,000 for women in the general category, while for those in the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe categories, the amount was revised from Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,200. While campaigning in Bengal, Narendra Modi and other BJP leaders had kept the focus on the allegations of corruption against the TMC, citing the teachers' recruitment scam and coal and cattle smuggling. Some of the TMC leaders, including ministers Partha Chatterjee and Jyotipriya Maallik, are in prison in connection with these cases.

Allegations of sexual assault on women in the island of Sandeshkhali in North 24-Parganas also failed to make an impact with the voters as TMC candidate Haji Nurul Islam, was ahead with a massive margin of 3.33 lakh votes from Basirhat, of which Sandeshkhali is a part.

In Indore, NOTA is runner-up

New Delhi

Indore has won the dubious distinction of recording the highest number of NOTA votes beating the usual high NOTA voting tribal constituencies in Andhra Pradesh, MP, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and UP.

The Indore seat recorded a total of 2.18 lakh NOTA votes due to political circumstances rather than disaffection with the polity as has been the case in the tribal districts of five states. Here, Congress nominee Akshay Kanti Bam withdrew his candidature and joined the BJP shortly after a decades old attempt to murder case was opened against him.

Indian Air Force's Sukhoi fighter crashes in Nashik; pilot, co-pilot eject safely

Mumbai

A Sukhoi fighter plane of the Indian Air Force crashed in Nashik district of Maharashtra on Tuesday, police said.

The pilot and co-pilot ejected safely, Special Inspector General of Nashik Range D R Karale said.

The plane crashed in a field near Shirasgaon village, the IPS officer said.

The fighter jet was being flown by Wing Commander Bokil and his second in command Biswas when it crashed in a farm in Nifad tehsil at 1.20 pm.

Both the pilots ejected safely and have suffered minor injuries,

another police official said. They were shifted to the HAL hospital.

After it crashed, the aircraft caught fire which was doused. The parts of the plane are now spread in a 500 metre radius, he said.

Teams of Indian Air Force, HAL security and HAL technical unit visited the spot.

Smriti Irani, Arjun Munda, Ajay Mishra Teni among 13 losing Union ministers

New Delhi

BJP heavyweights Smriti Irani, Arjun Munda, Ajay Mishra Teni and Kailash Chaudhary were among the 13 Union ministers who tasted defeat in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, as stunning losses in three Hindi heartland states forced the BJP to rely on allies to form the government.

Irani, who had clinched the Amethi Lok Sabha seat after defeating Rahul Gandhi in 2019, lost to Congress candidate and a close aide of the Gandhi family Kishori Lal Sharma by 1,67,196 lakh votes.

In Kerala's Thiruvananthapuram Lok Sabha seat, Union Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology Rajeev Chandrasekhar lost to Shashi Tharoor of the Congress by over 16,077 votes.

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Ajay Mishra Teni, whose son was arrested in connection with the violence in Lakhimpur Kheri of October 2021, lost to the Samajwadi Party's Utkarsh Verma by over 34,329 votes.

The SP contested the Lok Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh in alliance with the Congress.

Minister of state for education Subhas Sarkar was defeated by Trinamool Congress candidate Arup Chakraborty in Bankura Lok Sabha seat of West Bengal by a margin of 32,778 votes.

In Jharkhand's Khunti Lok Sabha constituency, Union Tribal Affairs Minister and sitting MP Arjun Munda lost to Congress candidate Kalicharan Munda by 1,49,675 lakh votes, according to the Election Commission.

Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Kailash Choudhary stood in third position in Rajasthan's Barmer, with a gap of 4.48 lakh votes from the winning candidate, Ummeda

Ram Beniwal. Union Minister of State for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying L Murugan lost to DMK's A Raja by a big margin of 2,40,585 lakh votes in Tamil Nadu's Nilgiris.

BJP's north Bengal face and Union minister of state for home Nisith Pramanik lost the Cooch Behar seat to TMC's Jagadish Chandra Basunia by over 39,000 votes.

Union minister Sanjeev Balyan lost the Muzaffarnagar Lok Sabha seat to Samajwadi Party's Harendra Singh Malik by a margin of over 24,000 votes, while Nityanand Rai grabbed the Ujiarpur Lok Sabha seat in Bihar, defeating nearest rival Alok Mehta of the RJD by 4,661 votes.

Among the winners, Union Home Minister Amit Shah swept the Gandhinagar Lok Sabha seat in Gujarat, defeating his nearest Congress rival Sonal Patel by 7,44,716 lakh votes.

Defence Minister and senior BJP leader Rajnath Singh won a third consecutive term from the prestigious Lucknow seat by a comfortable margin of 1,35,159 votes over the Samajwadi Party's Ravidas Mehrotra.

Union minister of state for Defence and Tourism Ajay Bhatt won the Nainital-Udham Singh Nagar Lok Sabha seat in Uttarakhand, defeating Congress' Prakash Joshi by 3,34,548 votes.

Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari defeated his nearest rival, Congress' Vikas Thakare by 1,37,603 votes to win the Nagpur Lok Sabha constituency, while Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal appeared on course for an easy victory in Mumbai North with a confident lead of 3,56,996 votes.

Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav, contesting his first Lok Sabha elections, defeated his nearest rival Lalit Yadav of the Congress in Rajasthan's

Alwar by 48,282 votes.

Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting Anurag Thakur secured a fifth term from Himachal Pradesh's Hamirpur seat, defeating Congress' Satpal Raizada by 1,82,357 votes.

MoS Panchayati Raj Kapil Patil lost to Suresh Gopinath Mhatre of NCP (Sharad Pawar) in Maharashtra's Bhiwandi and the Congress' Kalyan Vaijnath Rao Kale defeated BJP leader and MoS Railways Raosaheb Danve in Jalna. Bhaskar Bhagare of NCP (Sharad Pawar) clinched the Dindori seat in the state, trouncing Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Bharati Panwar by 1,13,199 votes. MoS Housing and Urban Affairs Kaushal Kishore is trailing SP's RK Chaudhary by 70,292 votes.

Minister of Earth Sciences Kiren Rijiju secured the Arunachal West seat defeating his nearest rival, Nabam Tuki of the Congress, by 1,00,738 votes.

Union ministers Arjun Ram Meghwal (Bikaner) and Gajendra Singh Shekhawat (Jodhpur) won by 55,711 and 1,15,677 votes, respectively.

Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya won Gujarat's Porbandar by a comfortable margin of 3,83,360 votes.

Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan won by 1,19,836 votes against Pranab Prakash Das of the Biju Janata

Dal (BJD) in Odisha's Sambalpur. Culture Minister and BJP President in Telangana G. Kishan Reddy clinched the Secunderabad Lok Sabha constituency, defeating his nearest Congress rival Danam Nagender by 49944 votes.

Union ministers Pralhad Joshi and Shobha Karandlaje (BJP) posted wins in Dharwad and Bangalore North Lok Sabha segments, respectively, according to the Election Commission, while another Union minister Bhagwanth Khuba was defeated in Bidar by Karnataka Minister Eshwar Khandre's son Sagar Khandre.

Union minister of state for ports, shipping and waterways Shantanu Thakur was leading in West Bengal's Bongaon seat by 73,693 votes.

Union minister of state for commerce and industry Anupriya Patel defeated Samajwadi Party's Ramesh Chand Bind by a margin of 37,810 votes in Mirzapur parliamentary seat of Uttar Pradesh.

The BJP suffered stunning losses in three Hindi heartland states, partial poll results showed Tuesday, forcing the party to rely on allies to form the government after a bitter and divisive election that was projected as a referendum on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's popularity.

After 12 hours of counting of votes that began at 8 am, the BJP won or was ahead in 240 seats to emerge as the single largest party, a far cry from the 303 it had won last time in the 543-member Lok Sabha to mark the return of coalition politics.

BJP's key allies N Chandrababu Naidu's TDP and Nitish Kumar's JD(U) were leading or winning 16 and 12 seats in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar respectively. With the support of its other allies, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance was on course to reach the 272 majority mark.

BJP's political drought ends in Kerala as Suresh Gopi wins by impressive margin

Thrissur (Kerala)

Ending its over-seven-decades-long political drought in Kerala, the BJP on Tuesday finally opened its account in the state through actor-turned politician Suresh Gopi, who cemented his historic victory with a massive lead of over 74,686 votes in the Thrissur Lok Sabha segment.

Gopi defeated CPI leader V S Sunilkumar in an exciting fight.

While Gopi garnered a total of 4,12,338 votes, Sunilkumar had to make do with 3,37,652 votes, according to the EC figures.

Congress's senior leader and MP K Muraleedharan settled in the third position with 3,28,124 votes, it said.

The result came as a rude shock for the ruling CPI(M)-led LDF and the Congress-headed UDF, which even till the last minute rubbished the various exit polls that predicted a Gopi victory and the chances of the lotus blooming in the state.

The political rivals asserted that the fight would be between their candidates V S Sunilkumar (CPI) and K Muraleedharan (Congress). The counting of postal votes even gave the impression that their calculations might go right, as Sunilkumar initially enjoyed an upper hand.

But Gopi came into the picture in the

subsequent rounds, increased his lead consistently, and then there was no looking back.

With a strong lead and impressive victory, Suresh Gopi has proved wrong the long-held belief of the traditional fronts that Kerala would remain elusive for the saffron party as always.

The national award-winning actor had earlier tried his luck in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls and the 2021 assembly election from the same central Kerala constituency, but the voters had given him the thumbs down then.

What US said about reports of external influence over Indian elections by western powers

Washington

The US has commended the Indian government and the people for successfully participating and completing the Lok Sabha elections.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is poised to form the government for a third consecutive term with the BJP-led NDA getting a majority in the Lok Sabha, notwithstanding crushing losses in three Hindi heartland states after a bitterly fought election that was projected as a referendum on his popularity.

The Election Commission of India has declared results for 542 of the 543 Lok Sabha constituencies, with the BJP winning 240 seats and the Congress 99.

"On behalf of the United States, we want to commend the government of India and voters there for successfully completing and participating in such a massive electoral undertaking, and we look forward to seeing the final results," State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller told reporters at his daily news conference on Tuesday.

He was responding to a question on the Lok Sabha elections in India, in which the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) crossed the halfway mark of 272 seats, paving the way for a third consecutive term for Modi.

"First of all, our understanding is that the election results have not been finalised. So we will wait for the finalisation of those election results before we offer any definitive comment," Miller said when asked to comment on the results.

"I'm also not going to comment on winners and losers in an election, as is our case around the world. What is important for us and what we have seen over the past six weeks is the largest exercise of democracy in history as the Indian people came to the polls," he added.

He also denied reports of external influence in Indian elections by Western powers, including the US.

"We always will express our views clearly and openly. We express them with foreign governments privately and, when we have things that we are concerned about, we also express them publicly, including from this podium. That's what I've done. But that, in no way, is an attempt to influence an election in India or anywhere else," Miller said.

He said he expects the close partnership between the US and India to continue.

"There is a great partnership, both at the government level and at the people-to-people level, and I fully expect that to continue," Miller said.

Giorgia Meloni congratulates PM Modi on Lok Sabha electoral victory, says 'we will continue...'

New Delhi

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni was among other foreign leaders to congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the third consecutive electoral victory in the Lok Sabha elections.

She said that she was certain that both leaders would work together to strengthen the friendship that will unite the two countries.

The Italian PM said that both nations will cooperate on various issues that bind the two nations and are for the well-being of the people.

"Congratulations to @narendramodi on the new electoral victory and my warmest wishes for good work. Certain that we will continue to work together to strengthen the friendship that unites Italy and India and consolidate cooperation on the various issues that bind us, for the well-being of our Nations and our peoples," Italian PM Meloni said in a post on X.

Earlier in the day, other global leaders had offered their heartfelt congratulations to PM Modi and the BJP-led NDA government on their win.

Nepal PM Pranchanda, Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe and Mauritian Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth congratulated PM Narendra Modi.

'Cheaters don't like getting caught': Vice President Kamala Harris speaks about Donald Trump conviction on 'Jimmy Kimmel Live!'

Washington

Vice President Kamala Harris spent part of a Tuesday episode of 'Jimmy Kimmel Live!' rehashing how she found out about former President Donald Trump's conviction on 34 felony counts in his criminal hush money trial.

She deflected a light-hearted question from Kimmel about whether the people she watched the verdict with were "pretending to not be happy" when the conviction was announced. Harris instead spoke of the six-week deliberations and the 12-person jury, before adding "the reality is, cheaters don't like getting caught".

Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, was convicted on all counts related to a scheme during his 2016 presidential campaign to pay off porn actor Stormy Daniels, who said the two had sex. The former president slammed the verdict as politically motivated, and has blamed it on President Joe Biden — while seeking to make himself a political martyr in the eyes of supporters, suggesting that if this could happen to him, similar things might befall them.

Harris' comments came a day after Biden tore into his predecessor and likely opponent in November's election for sowing doubt in the judicial process.

"It's reckless and dangerous and downright irresponsible for anyone to say that it's rigged just because you don't like the verdict," Biden said at a fundraiser in Greenwich in Connecticut on Monday night.

Chinese probe lifts off from far side of moon

Beijing

China's Chang'e-6 probe on Tuesday lifted off from the far side of the Moon for its journey back to Earth carrying the first rock samples ever collected from the rarely explored terrain, in an ambitious mission that underscored the country's rise as a major space power. The ascender has entered a pre-set orbit around the Moon after taking off from the far side this morning, the China National Space Administration announced. At 7:38 am (Beijing Time) on Tuesday, it lifted off from the lunar surface. Its return journey to Earth is estimated to take about three weeks.

Reality check for BJP

LOUD and clear is the message conveyed by India's voters to Prime Minister Narendra Modi — never take us for granted. The BJP-led NDA has managed to get the better of the INDIA bloc in the 2024 General Election, but its victory was anything but emphatic. The landslide predicted by the exit polls failed to materialise; the ruling alliance's 'abki baar 400 paar' slogan remained just that — a slogan. The BJP's all-out attempts to bulldoze the Opposition into submission largely came a cropper as the Congress-spearheaded bloc put up a spirited fight. And at the end of the day, PM Modi didn't look all that mighty — for a change, he would have to rely heavily on regional satraps like Nitish Kumar and N Chandrababu Naidu to keep his government intact.

The BJP, in its heart of hearts, knew that a few influential allies would come in handy when the going got tough. No wonder Bihar CM Nitish's Janata Dal (United) returned to the NDA fold in January, while the Naidu-led Telugu Desam Party forged a tie-up with the BJP in March. The BJP has done well to upset Biju Janata Dal's applecart in Odisha and made major inroads in the South, but the reversals in Uttar Pradesh have left it shell-shocked. The inauguration of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya was projected by the BJP as the high point of the PM's second term, but even this momentous event did not work wonders for the saffron party in UP, easily India's most important state in political and electoral terms. The Samajwadi Party-Congress combine turned the tables on the BJP with a remarkable performance. The beleaguered grand old party — which was in danger of losing its pre-eminence within INDIA — bounced back with a vengeance to nearly double its 2019 nationwide tally.
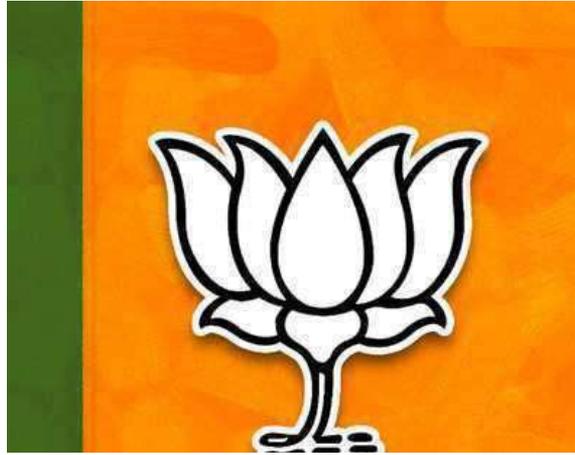
The good news for Indian democracy is that the country is in no danger of becoming Opposition-mukt. The BJP is likely to be kept on its toes not only by its allies but also Congress and Co. Socio-economic issues such as unemployment, inflation and growing inequality, which played a significant role in influencing voters' choices, will have to be addressed on priority by the new government.

// satyasya paramaṁ nidhānam //

We would like to hear from you. Please share your comments on editor.acrossstate@gmail.com

The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.
-Nelson Mandela

Healthcare relief

Policyholders to get cashless claims in 3 hours

THE Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has taken a much-needed step to smoothen the health insurance landscape by mandating a three-hour limit for settling cashless health claims. This significant directive is aimed at enhancing the efficiency and customer-centricity of health insurance services in India. By stipulating that insurers should decide on cashless authorisation within an hour and settle claims within three hours of discharge, the regulatory authority is setting a new benchmark for responsiveness and reliability in the sector.

Health insurance claims pose major challenges to customers. Lengthy processing often results in financial strain as patients and their families must raise funds immediately to pay hospital bills. Delays in cashless claims can lead to additional charges, prolonged hospital stays and potential disruptions in treatment. The rigmarole exacerbates the patients' stress. Further, erratic service and a lack of transparency contribute to deep distrust in the system, deterring many from purchasing health insurance policies altogether. The new directive also includes a provision for a no-claim bonus and mandates a wider range of products to be offered by insurers, catering to the needs of all kinds of patients.

These reforms are aimed at boosting customer confidence and, subsequently, increasing insurance penetration in a country where health insurance coverage remains relatively low, with a significant section of the population reliant on government schemes. The lack of awareness about health insurance is another stumbling block. By streamlining the claims process and suggesting a discount on the premium amount for claim-free years, the IRDAI has taken on these challenges head-on. It must now ensure that the health insurance companies align their operations with the new guidelines by the July 31 deadline.

South African polls

Coalition era begins as ANC loses grip

SOUTH Africa is at a pivotal juncture following the historic 2024 election results, which have ended the African National Congress' (ANC) three-decade dominance. The ANC, which liberated the country from apartheid and established its democratic foundations under Nelson Mandela, has failed to secure a majority for the first time since 1994. This shift signals a profound

transformation in South African politics, with coalition talks set to shape the nation's future. Widespread voter dissatisfaction, driven by high unemployment, crime, corruption and inadequate public services, contributed to the ANC's decline. President Cyril Ramaphosa, seeking a second term, faces the daunting task of negotiating alliances with Opposition parties to form the government. His ability to address people's concerns will be crucial in determining South Africa's trajectory.

The Democratic Alliance, which garnered around 21 per cent of the votes, is a potential coalition partner, advocating for market-friendly reforms and privatisation. In stark contrast, parties like the Economic Freedom Fighters and Jacob Zuma's uMkhonto weSizwe Party are pushing for radical changes, including land redistribution and nationalisation. The ANC's choice of partners will significantly impact economic policy and investor confidence. This momentous shift offers an opportunity to reinvigorate South Africa's democracy, potentially fostering greater accountability and responsiveness to the needs of its citizens.

The election results have significant global implications, particularly as the nation assumes the presidency of the Group of 20 (G20) later this year. The composition of the ruling coalition could have a bearing on South Africa's international relations, given its stance on issues like the Gaza conflict and its historical ties with Russia. South Africa's relationship with India, a key BRICS partner, could be impacted, depending on the coalition's policies. The world will keenly observe how South Africa navigates these complexities.

Bomb threats

No room for complacency despite false alarm

BOMB threats have become alarmingly frequent across the country in recent weeks, even though all have turned out to be hoaxes. Tissue paper with 'bomb@5.30' written on it was found in the lavatory of an IndiGo plane at the Delhi airport on Tuesday morning. The authorities promptly evacuated the crew and passengers and launched a search operation. No suspicious

item was found, even as an investigation is in progress. The incident took place a day after the Mumbai traffic police received a message on their WhatsApp helpline number, claiming that bombs had been planted at the Mumbai airport and Hotel Taj Mahal. A thorough search drew a blank at both places.

In recent months, scores of schools in Delhi-NCR, Kanpur, Lucknow, Jaipur, Kolkata and other cities have been rocked by bomb threat emails. Probe agencies have their work cut out — they have to find out which individuals/gangs are involved in these nefarious activities, where they are based and whether a common thread runs through these threats, which must not be dismissed as mere mischief. The Delhi Police have traced the IP address of emails sent to 150-odd schools to Budapest, Hungary. A Cyprus-based mailing service company has been identified as the source of threatening emails sent to hospitals, the IGI Airport and Tihar Jail in Delhi earlier this month.

The ongoing probe into various cases indicates that gangs of cybercriminals residing in foreign countries are causing widespread disruptions in India with ease. They are apparently working in league with miscreants based in India. There is no room for complacency, especially amid the Lok Sabha elections. Every city needs to be adequately equipped with bomb detection and disposal squads. A comprehensive action plan should be formulated and implemented so that panic and chaos induced by the threats are minimised. All stakeholders must be well prepared for the worst-case scenario — after all, not every such email/call/message may prove to be a hoax.

Tragic negligence

Akhnoor bus mishap calls for accountability

The suspension of six J&K transport department officials following a mishap in which an overloaded bus fell into a gorge in Akhnoor, leaving 22 dead, underscores the dire need for accountability and systemic reform. The bus, with a capacity of 55, was carrying around 85 passengers. Such blatant disregard for norms and the fact that the bus was previously challaned for overloading are a sorry reflection on the regulatory mechanism. The situation is exacerbated by the poor condition of roads in Jammu district. Most of them are poorly maintained and have sharp bends, leading to frequent accidents. Last year alone, over 890 lives were lost on J&K's roads.

The magisterial inquiry and the suspensions must lead to a paradigm shift in road safety and the enforcement of rules. It is also imperative to address the root causes of frequent accidents. The inquiry panel, tasked with submitting its report within a week, must operate in a thorough and transparent manner. It should also look into the regulatory framework.

The involvement of technical experts in analysing the wreckage and the inclusion of eyewitnesses' testimonies are critical to getting to the bottom of the matter.

This bus accident should catalyse a comprehensive review of transport policies and practices. Perfunctory investigations ordered after every major mishap have failed to curb the fatal errors committed by drivers. Robust measures to improve road infrastructure, scale up driver training and stringent enforcement of traffic regulations are essential for

justice is served so that devastating losses are prevented. Only through rigorous accountability and proactive measures can we hope to transform our

fostering safe driving practices in the long run. It is crucial to ensure that

roads from deathtraps to safe pathways for all.

Heatwave havoc

Urbanisation under fire as region sizzles

THE tragic death of a 40-year-old man due to heatstroke in Delhi underscores the lethal consequences of the ongoing heatwave. With temperatures reaching unprecedented levels, including a questionable 52.9°C in Delhi, the NCR is grappling with an environmental crisis with far-reaching impacts. The previous record was 51°C, clocked by Rajasthan's Phalodi in 2016. The scorching reality extends to Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan, where the mercury has soared alarmingly in the past week. Rohtak recording 48.8°C and Chandigarh experiencing its hottest day at 46°C are some telling examples.

These extreme conditions are part of a broader pattern affecting North India. The brutal weather has forced schools in the region to shut a few days ahead of the scheduled vacation and raised the risk of heatstroke for people working outdoors. This is compounded by a severe water crisis. As temperatures soar, the demand for water has escalated, but supply remains critically inadequate. Residents in some affected towns and cities are receiving it through tankers, leading to scenes of desperate residents jostling for water. This dire situation poses significant public health risks.

The struggle is symptomatic of climatic shifts affecting urban India. Record-breaking temperatures, exacerbated by urban heat islands, highlight the urgent need for adaptive measures. This phenomenon, in which urban areas experience significantly higher temperatures than their rural surroundings, is driven by factors such as rampant concrete expansion and dwindling green spaces. Climate change is intensifying heatwaves across the globe. Urbanisation, without adequate planning for climate resilience, has turned cities into furnaces. The frequency and severity of heatwaves will increase, unless comprehensive mitigation and adaptation strategies are implemented. The tragic death in Delhi should serve as a wake-up call for sustained action to protect vulnerable populations from global warming.

Trump's conviction

Ex-President remains defiant amid legal troubles

DONALD Trump has become the first US President to be convicted of felony after a grand jury in New York found him guilty — on as many as 34 counts — of falsifying business records to conceal a hush money payment to a porn star ahead of the 2016 presidential election. True to form, the 2024 presidential aspirant has described the trial as 'rigged' and 'disgraceful'. Trump has alleged that the Joe Biden administration is trying to settle a political score. Likening himself to none other than Mother Teresa, he has hinted that even the great nun would not have been able to escape conviction in the presumably sham trial. With his trademark dramatic flourish, he has vowed to fight till the end because 'our country has gone to hell'.

The conviction will not prevent Trump from contesting the November election. The sentencing is scheduled for July 11, four days before the Republican National Convention where he is scheduled to be formally nominated as the party's presidential candidate against Biden. Trump, who has a knack for playing the victim card, is expected to ensure that his campaign revolves around his court cases. Ever since the outcome of the 2020 presidential election, which Biden won, Trump has been raising a hue and cry over one 'conspiracy' after another to keep him out of the White House. He is facing three other criminal trials, including two related to his alleged attempts to overturn his poll defeat. Trump is accused of having incited his supporters, who went on to storm the US Capitol on January 6, 2021. The deplorable incident not only shamed American democracy but also drew international opprobrium.

Nevertheless, Trump remains as defiant and unapologetic as ever. Even as his legal troubles are set to mount, he will keep pleading his innocence. It's up to the American voters to figure out whether he is more sinned against than sinning.

Deadly turbulence

A wake-up call for the aviation industry

THE 1,800-metre descent of a Singapore Airlines airplane amid severe turbulence, which left a 73-year-old British man dead and 71 injured, is shocking. Marking the airline's first fatality in 24 years, it underscores the growing threat of disturbance in modern air travel. Turbulence, particularly the clear-air variety that is suspected in this incident, is a formidable threat despite advances in meteorological technology. Experts say that it is most hazardous as it often strikes without warning or visibility to pilots near jet streams and other atmospheric boundaries. The unpredictability makes it vital for passengers to heed the seatbelt sign at all times, as unbuckled individuals are at a higher risk of suffering injuries during such sudden episodes, even as turbulence fatalities are very rare.

The emergency landing in Bangkok and the treatment of injured passengers, including six in a critical condition, illustrate the severity of the incident as also the potential for harm by bumpy rides. A thorough investigation, as promised by Singapore's Prime Minister, should unravel the causes of and circumstances around the deadly drop, thereby helping understand and mitigate such risks. It is believed that climate change is exacerbating turbulence. Scientists at Reading University have noted a significant increase in severe turbulence over the past four decades, attributing the rise to changing wind patterns driven by global warming.

As air travel soars, so does the likelihood of encountering turbulent zones, complicating flight planning and passenger safety. The aviation industry must adapt to these new realities. Enhanced forecasting tools, rigorous training for crew and stricter adherence to safety protocols are essential. Airlines must also prioritise passenger education, ensuring the importance of staying buckled up throughout the flight. As the skies get rougher, concerted efforts are needed to navigate these challenges and ensure safer journeys for all.

GDP grows 7.8% in Q4, 8.2% in FY24; surpasses RBI projection

New Delhi

India recorded a provisional GDP growth of 8.2 per cent for 2023-24, as against 7 per cent in the previous fiscal owing to a good show in the manufacturing sector.

A sharp decline in non-performing assets and growth in other key sectors like agriculture, construction, industries and services also contributed to the GDP's growth, which surpassed the RBI's projection of 7 per cent and the World Bank's 6.6 per cent.

The GDP growth propelled the Indian economy to $3.5 trillion and set the stage for achieving the $5-trillion target in the next few years.

The growth for March quarter of 2023-24 was 7.8 per cent, second-highest for the fourth quarter in the past 10 years, with the highest being 8.6 per cent recorded in 2022-23.

Sources said strong corporate and bank balance sheets, continued capex push by the government and strategic trade pacts like India-EFTA (European Free Trade Association) agreement, were among the bright spots for India even as several major economies like China (5.2 per cent), Japan (1.9 per cent) and the US (2.5 per cent) were facing downturn.

Elevated financial market valuations globally (particularly in the US) and possible spill over effects on Indian markets were expected, they said, adding there could also be an impact on the sentiment and household finances due to rising retail exposure to direct stock investments and derivatives positions. Overall, however, there are no systematic risks to the domestic economy, they said. The forecast of a normal monsoon was another positive development, the sources pointed out.

S&P to watch government policies for next 2 years

New Delhi

S&P Global Ratings on Friday said it will watch the fiscal numbers for the next 1-2 years, besides pro-growth policies of the new government, before deciding on India's sovereign rating upgrade.

"Within the next 2 years we will be closely observing whether the government's depiction of fiscal consolidation path will carry on... We will be observing... to see how this fiscal numbers will come to pass," S&P Global Ratings Analyst YeeFarn Phua said.

NHAI hikes tolls across highways by 5 pc

New Delhi

Motorists using expressways will have to shell out more from Monday as the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has decided to hike tolls across the country by an average of 5 per cent.

The annual revision of highway user fee, which is expected to be in the range of average 5 per cent, was earlier to come into effect on April 1. But the hike was deferred due to the Lok Sabha elections.

"The new user fee will come into effect from 3.6.2024," a senior NHAI official said on Sunday.

The change in toll fee is part of an annual exercise to revise the rates that are linked to the changes in the wholesale price index (CPI)-based inflation.

There are around 855 user fee plazas on the national highway network on which user fee is levied as per the National Highways Fee (Determination of Rates and Collection) Rules, 2008.

Out of these, around 675 are public-funded fee plazas and 180 are operated by concessionaires.

Around one-third employees experience age-related discrimination at work: Study

Mumbai

Overall 31 per cent of employees in India have experienced age-related discriminations across sectors with the highest prevalence reported in multinational companies, a study said on Monday.

The 'Ageism in the Workplace' study by talent company Randstad India revealed that 31 per cent of employees in India have experienced discriminations due to their age and such discriminations are mostly prevalent during recruitment process, especially in job advertisements of organisations.

About 61 per cent respondents said job advertisements in India have age biases (qualifying age criteria or years of experience), it added.

In India, around 42 per cent of employees interviewed, aged below 55 years, have experienced or witnessed ageism or age related discriminations at their workplaces, compared to 29 per cent aged above 55 years, said the study.

The data suggested that younger age groups faced more age discriminations than older age groups as there was a general lack of trust in the youngest age group's abilities and skills while the oldest age group experienced the privilege of age-based and seniority-based respect.

Surprisingly, 42 per cent of women reported experiencing or witnessing ageism, compared to 37 per cent of men, clearly a reflection of how ageism at work intersects with other dimensions of diversity, it added.

"Ageism is one of the most overlooked unconscious biases made at the workplace across levels. Overcoming ageism requires a conscious effort to recognise and challenge stereotypes to create an environment where experience and fresh perspectives are equally valued. By fostering an inclusive culture that embraces employees of all ages, organisations can harness the full potential of their workforce, driving collaboration, innovation, and growth," Randstad India managing director and CEO Viswanath PS said.

The study is based on qualitative survey including focus group discussions and individual interviews among human resource heads and C-suite executives across age groups, sectors and regions in India. It also included quantitative survey among 956 respondents across job levels, industries and locations.

It further revealed that the sectors with the highest proportions of respondents who had experienced ageism were pharma, healthcare and life science (43 per cent), business process outsourcing or IT-enabled services (43 per cent), and construction, infrastructure, and real estate (41 per cent).

Most employees from multinational corporations headquartered in India reported higher instances of ageism, with 41 per cent affirming they faced age-related biases, the study said.

RBI shifts 100 tonnes of gold from vaults in UK to India

New Delhi

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has shifted around 100 tonnes of its gold kept in bank vaults in the UK to its own vaults in India in a move aimed at saving storage costs, according to media reports.

This is the first time since 1991 that India has undertaken such a large-scale overseas transfer of gold reserves.

Economist Sanjeev Sanyal, a member of the PM's Economic Advisory Council, said, "While no one was watching, the RBI has shifted 100 tonnes of its gold reserves back to India from the UK."

"Most countries keep their gold in the vaults of the Bank of England or some such location (and pay a fee for the privilege). India will now hold most of its gold in its own vaults. We have come a long way since we had to ship out gold overnight in 1991 in the midst of a crisis," he added.

"For those of my generation, the shipping out of gold in 1990-91 was a moment of failure that we will never forget. This is why this shipping back of gold has a special meaning," he pointed out.

In 1991, when the country was in the grip of a severe foreign crisis with no money to pay for essential imports, the Chandra Shekhar government pledged gold to raise funds. The RBI then pledged 46.91 tonnes of gold with the Bank of England and the Bank of Japan, to secure $400 million.

More than half of the RBI's gold reserves are held overseas in secure custody with the Bank of England and the Bank of International Settlements, while approximately a third is stored in the RBI's vaults in Nagpur and

Mumbai.

The central bank held 822.1 tonnes of gold as part of its foreign exchange reserves as of March 31, 2024, an increase from the 794.63 tonnes held at the same time last year, according to the annual data released by the RBI.

RBI has, like other central banks, been buying gold as a safe-haven asset. The strategy of holding gold is primarily aimed at hedging against inflation and reducing foreign currency risks, especially in times of uncertainty triggered by geopolitical tensions.

The share of gold in India's total foreign exchange reserves increased from 7.75 per cent at the end of December 2023 to about 8.7 per cent by the end of April 2024.

IRDAI sets three-hour limit to settle cashless health claims

New Delhi

In a significant development, the insurance regulator — Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) — released a master circular on health insurance specifying that an insurer will have to decide on cashless authorisation within an hour of its request and a three-hour limit to clear the cashless claim.

According to experts, the move is a master stroke towards empowering policyholders and bringing in inclusive health insurance growth. Also, it will enhance the confidence of customers and thus increase the insurance penetration in the country.

Currently, the health insurance penetration in India is extremely low due to limited reach, lack of awareness and education. In the fiscal year 2021-22, the number of persons covered under health insurance in the country stood at 52.04 crore, according to a reply to a question by Union Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat Karad in the Lok Sabha last year. A majority of the people are covered under the government-funded health insurance schemes, followed by the corporate sector,

which is largely limited to urban households. There are only around four crore individual health insurance policies.

"Decide on cashless authorisation requests within one hour and final authorisation on discharge from hospital within three hours of request from the hospital," the circular said. The master circular on health insurance products repealed 55 circulars issued earlier.

Experts feel that the IRDAI's new directives are a game-changer for the health insurance industry. This move ensures that policyholders receive swift approvals, allowing them to access necessary medical treatment without financial delays.

According to the circular released by the regulator, health insurance policy-holders will also be able to avail a discount on the

premium payable if there were no claims made in the previous year.

The IRDAI has also asked general and health insurance companies to reward the policyholders by giving them 'No Claims Bonus' (NCB) in the form of either increasing the sum insured or by offering a discount on the premium amount if they have not made any claims.

The circular also said wider choice should be provided by the insurers by making available products, add-ons, riders by offering diverse insurance products catering to all ages, regions, medical conditions, all types of hospitals and healthcare providers to suit the affordability of the policyholders.

Insurance companies have been given time till July 31 to put the necessary systems and procedures in place.

55 circulars repealed

The IRDAI has released a master circular on health insurance products, repealing 55 circulars issued earlier. The new norms will require insurers to decide on cashless authorisation requests within one hour and final authorisation on discharge from hospital within three hours of request from the hospital

Unclaimed deposits with banks rise 26%

Mumbai

Unclaimed deposits with banks have witnessed a 26 per cent jump year on year to Rs 78,213 crore at the end of March 2024, as per the RBI Annual Report released on Thursday. The amount with the Depositor Education and Awareness Fund stood at Rs 62,225 crore at the end of March 2023.

Banks, including cooperative banks, transfer unclaimed deposits of account holders lying in their accounts for 10 or more years to RBI's Depositor Education and Awareness (DEA) Fund.

As a measure to assist the account holders and with a view to consolidating

and rationalising the extant instructions on inoperative accounts, the Reserve Bank issued a comprehensive guidelines earlier this year on the measures to be put in place

by the banks covering various aspects of classifying accounts and deposits as inoperative accounts and unclaimed deposits, as the case may be.

The RBI advised banks

for a periodic review of such accounts, measures to prevent fraud in such accounts, grievance redress mechanism for expeditious resolution of complaints, steps to be taken for tracing the customers of inoperative accounts or unclaimed deposits, including their nominees or legal heirs for re-activation of accounts, settlement of claims or closure and the process to be followed by them. These instructions were expected to complement the ongoing efforts and initiatives taken by banks and the Reserve Bank to reduce the quantum of unclaimed deposits in the banking system and return such deposits to their rightful owners.

Sebi cuts approval time for net-based trading

New Delhi

Markets regulator Sebi on Thursday significantly reduced the time taken by stock exchanges for granting approval to stock brokers for internet-based trading to seven days from the current 30 days.

The move is aimed at facilitating ease of doing business. Under the rule, the broker is required to apply to the respective stock exchange for a formal permission to provide internet-based trading service.

Further, the stock exchange, which was required to communicate its decision to the member within 30 calendar days, will now have to do so within 7 days, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in its circular.

The internet trading can take place through order routing systems, which will route client orders to exchange trading systems for execution. Thus

a client sitting in any part of the country can trade using the internet as a medium through brokers' internet trading systems.

Additionally, Sebi has abolished the existing requirement of periodic confirmation of internet-based trading (IBT) statistics by stock brokers before they are published by stock exchanges. Instead, exchanges would publish IBT statistics on the basis of details of IBT terminals provided by stock brokers. Further, exchanges, in this regard, can obtain information/declaration about IBT terminals from stock brokers as deemed fit by them.

The decision has been taken after Sebi received requests pertaining to internet-based trading from the Industry Standard Forum (ISF) of stock brokers. The new guidelines will be applicable with immediate effect, Sebi said.

Maran to seek Rs 1,323 cr in damages from SpiceJet

New Delhi

KAL Airways and Kalanithi Maran on Monday said they will seek more than Rs 1,323 crore in damages from SpiceJet and its chief Ajay Singh as well as challenge a recent Delhi HC order in the ongoing dispute between the two sides.

On May 17, a division bench of the court set aside a single judge bench order that had upheld an arbitral award asking SpiceJet and its promoter Ajay Singh to refund Rs 579 crore plus interest to Maran.

As part of an agreement, Maran and KAL Airways had claimed to have paid SpiceJet Rs

679 crore for issuing warrants and preference shares. Maran alleged

SpiceJet had neither returned the money, nor issued warrants.

Coffee exports rise 12% to $1.28 billion

New Delhi

India's coffee exports rose by 12.22 per cent to $1.28 billion in 2023-24 on higher demand for Robusta coffee in the global markets, according to the commerce ministry data.

The country exported coffee worth $1.14 billion in 2022-23. India is Asia's third-largest producer and exporter of coffee. The country grows Arabica and Robusta varieties.

Arabica coffee beans have less caffeine content than the Robusta. Arabica has sweet and smoother taste, while Robusta is generally more bitter and harsher on the taste buds.

Government directs telecom operators to block incoming international spoofed calls

New Delhi

The government has directed telecom operators to block all incoming international spoofed calls that display Indian mobile numbers, an official statement said on Sunday.

The Department of Telecom (DoT) said that it has been reported that fraudsters are making international spoofed

a system to identify and block such international spoofed calls from reaching any Indian telecom subscriber. Now directions have been issued to the TSPs for blocking such incoming international spoofed calls," the statement said.

The incoming international spoofed calls with Indian landline numbers are being already

calls displaying Indian mobile numbers to Indian citizens and committing cyber-crime and financial frauds.

Such calls appear to be originating within India but are being made by cyber-criminals from abroad by manipulating the calling line identity (CLI) and have been misused in recent cases of fake digital arrests, FedEx scams, drugs or narcotics in courier, impersonation as government and police officials, disconnections of mobile numbers by DoT or TRAI officials, etc.

"DoT and Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) have devised

blocked by the TSPs as per the directions issued by DoT.

"Despite best efforts, there may still be some fraudsters who succeed through other means. For such calls, you can help everybody by reporting such suspected fraud communications at the Chakshu facility on Sanchar Saathi," the statement said.

Last week, the DoT issued directives to the telecom operators to carry out immediate re-verification of 6.8 lakh mobile numbers within 60 days that are suspected to have been obtained using invalid, non-existent, or fake documents.

'Make in India' Range Rover soon

New Delhi

Fifty-four years after it started manufacturing Range Rover in the UK, Tata Motors-owned Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) has decided to drive home the British luxury brand along with Range Rover Sport and produce these locally. India will be the first country to manufacture the two SUVs exclusively outside the Solihull plant in the UK, the home of Range Rover since 1970. The additional production of the SUVs for the Indian market will supplement the global production of Range Rover. The prices of the two luxury models, which will produced at JLR's facility in Pune, are expected to come down in the range of 18-22 per cent. Range Rover Velar, Range Rover Evoque, Jaguar F-PACE and Discovery Sport are already locally manufactured in Pune. "In our 54-year-long history, we are witnessing an increasing demand for Range Rover across the globe. This is an unprecedented success story and India is a very important part of it.

With local manufacturing, Range Rover will enable the brand to respond to the growing demand across the country," said Geraldine Ingham, Managing Director, Range Rover. In the last fiscal year, JLR India reported retail sales of 4,436 units, witnessing a year-on-year growth of 81 per cent and one of the best performances in the market since the company's launch in India in 2009. The sales were the highest in the last five years. "While Range Rover will now be 'Made in India' for clients in this market, its exemplary British design remains distinctive and will continue to define the aesthetic grace and technological sophistication that is synonymous to the Range Rover brand." said Lennard Hoornik, Chief Commercial Officer, JLR. Also, the move will enable the customer to benefit from shorter wait times for Range Rover's pinnacle vehicles, expanding JLR's ability to offer a modern luxury client journey.

'Mumbai and Tel Aviv Effect': An Alternative to the 'Bandwagon Effect' of Brussels and Washington in Global AI Regulations

Additionally, there is a relative lack of urgency or capability in these countries to set global benchmarks for tech giants, unlike the approaches taken by the EU and the US. National security considerations and geopolitical rivalries, often diverging from Western paradigms, also play a role. The use of unique languages like Hindi and Hebrew adds another layer of complexity. Thus, the equilibrium between AI's potential risks and its benefits necessitates a distinct assessment for each of these countries, differentiating themselves from the frameworks established in the EU or US.

Key Imperatives
Democratic Stability

In both Israel and India, complex social fabrics and geopolitical contexts make these societies particularly susceptible to AI-driven disinformation campaigns, which could undermine electoral integrity and exacerbate tensions or influence public opinion in ways that are detrimental to the democratic process. To capitalise on the Mumbai and Tel Aviv Effect, countries should adopt proactive frameworks and methodologies aimed at mitigating the risk from AI-powered interference in their democracies. This can have an internal effect as well as an international effect, and that would prevent cross-border AI-driven deep-fakes for mal-information and more sophisticated cyber threats.

The impact of foreign intervention using AI tools to increase social polarisation or influence elections is especially significant in relatively new or complex democracies. However, disinformation extends beyond just affecting elections; it is also a crucial player in the arena of cyberattacks on the private sector. The threats include the manipulation of markets and public perception through the rapid dissemination of false narratives or manipulated data by AI-trained chatbots and botnets. Such scenarios can lead to stock market manipulations, precipitate bank runs, or falsify government transactions. Consider the potential chaos from the takeover of a news outlet's platform to broadcast a false terrorist attack; such misinformation could trigger catastrophic financial reactions within minutes. The risk of disinformation carries a heavier toll in environments with fragile democratic institutions, or in emerging markets, where financial and regulatory frameworks are more vulnerable to destabilisation through AI-fabricated disclosures.

National Security

Israel and India both face significant national security threats, necessitating AI policies that are acutely attuned to defence and security needs. AI offers potent capabilities for defence, surveillance, and cybersecurity. However, it also presents new vulnerabilities, such as AI-powered cyber-attacks and autonomous weapons systems. The Mumbai and Tel Aviv Effect, applied to national security, advocates for a policy approach that leverages AI's strengths in protecting citizens and safeguarding national interests while implementing stringent safeguards against the risks AI poses of escalating conflicts or enabling new forms of warfare. Incorporating national security into the AI policy framework requires not only a focus on the defensive and offensive capabilities of AI but also the consideration of international norms and partnerships to prevent an AI arms race, in order to ensure global stability and align with broader humanitarian principles.

Equal Economic Gain

While the epicentres of the biggest tech companies predominantly reside in the United States, nations like India and Israel must ensure that the economic growth and benefits stemming from the AI technology sector permeate their entire societies, rather than being monopolised by a handful of large corporations. Tel Aviv and Mumbai, as the financial capitals of their respective countries, are instrumental in shaping these outcomes. Consequently, AI regulation should be closely tied to competition laws. The focus, however, should not be solely on contending with Big Tech companies, as seen in the US and EU. Instead, it should primarily aim to be watchful of the acquisition of deep-tech startups in critical and emerging technologies in a manner that could suppress competition and domestic innovation.

Linguistic Challenges of LLMs

Both Israel and India are likely to be dependent on the AI foundation models developed abroad. This poses a challenge, since AI models might not perform as accurately in Hebrew, or the multitude of languages spoken in India, as they do in more widely represented languages like English. This could lead to suboptimal, or even discriminatory outcomes in AI-driven services, as seen in the past regarding automated content moderation in social media platforms. Policies that encapsulate the Mumbai and Tel Aviv Effect would prioritise the development of high-quality, inclusive AI language models and content moderation procedures that cater to these diverse linguistic needs, ensuring that AI risks are mitigated and the solutions are culturally relevant.

Emphasis on Local Interests

As much as Big Tech companies such as Microsoft or Amazon would involve themselves in the drafting of AI policy in countries like India or Israel, their interests may be misaligned with local needs. Big Tech companies are not only revenue-oriented but also inherently anti-state—i.e., they prefer global, borderless regulation over regulation grounded in community and nation-specific vulnerabilities. Therefore, it is crucial to create top-down policies that, foremost, consider local interests.

Optimising the Mumbai and Tel Aviv Effect: A Blueprint

While the Mumbai and Tel Aviv Effect offers a compelling framework for balancing innovation with ethical, cultural, and societal considerations in AI policy, its implementation faces inherent challenges. First, there is a need to ensure continuous adaptation of regulations to keep pace with rapid technological advancements, fostering international cooperation in a multifaceted global landscape, and securing sufficient resources and expertise to develop and enforce effective AI governance.

Second, effective implementation requires establishing a hybrid

PART I

regulatory framework that merges ethical principles, a risk management concept, and enforceable directives and laws, while ensuring innovation is not stifled. Indeed, both India and Israel have embraced the principle of safety and reliability throughout the lifecycle of AI products and technologies, advocating for values such as equality and fairness, inclusivity and non-discrimination, privacy, security, transparency, accountability, and human-centric approaches to AI, which emphasise the protection and reinforcement of positive human values. These principles are also reflected in a variety of policy documents worldwide. However, ethics alone are insufficient; broad and vague principles cannot significantly impact the market without precise legislation and regulatory frameworks.

Third, prioritisation is crucial: distinguishing between what is critical and immediate and what can await further deliberation. A pressing issue in Europe, for example—real-time facial recognition by law enforcement—may not translate directly to other regions. In contrast, issues like election meddling through Large Language Models (LLMs) should be a higher priority in countries like Israel and India. These countries cannot allow Europe to be the sole decision-maker about issues like classifying algorithms into risk categories or banning overly risky applications, as even algorithms deemed 'medium risk' can still lead to significant issues, especially with unique languages. A balanced approach might involve selective beta testing, combined with imposing limited liability on technology producers and application marketers to incentivise self-examination.

Fourth, there is a need to integrate local legislative frameworks with the adoption of international technological governance standards. Creating regulatory incentives for AI-based products and services, such as professional training, to align with global standards like the US's National Institute on Standards and Technology (NIST), the EU's Committee for Standardization (CEN) and Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (CENELEC), or the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) can further facilitate this integration.

The NIST draft documents on AI Risk Management Framework provide a breakdown of AI-related risk subcategories and actionable items for mitigation. These documents include the Generative AI Profile; Secure Software Development for Generative AI; and Reducing Risks Posed by Synthetic Content, along with NIST's proposed plan for Global Engagement on AI Standards and the challenge program to improve assessments of GenAI, all released in April 2024. Consequently, local legislation can establish priorities, expectations, requirements, and governance frameworks, while international standards will allow governments and organisations to tailor their approaches to specific use cases, sectors, or applications, based on their unique requirements, risk tolerances, and resources. This will ensure responsible, governable, and contestable oversight and governance to enforce regulatory and enterprise-wide compliance in AI system development and outcomes, which will be future-proof in the sense that they will update in tandem with international standardisation and will be applicable to actions varying in relevance to different AI actors.

Sir Tim Berners-Lee, the British computer scientist best known as the inventor of the World Wide Web, the HTML markup language, the URL system and HTTP, wisely stated, "We need diversity of thought in the world to face the new challenges." The notion of the Mumbai and Tel Aviv Effect advocates for more diverse perspectives to the global dialogue on AI policy and governance, moving beyond the conventional dichotomy of the EU's and the US's approaches. It should encourage nations to foster AI ecosystems attuned to local needs that not only drive economic growth and innovation but also safeguard democratic values and individual rights, take into account domestic cultural values and governmental institutions, and enhance national security.

Ultimately, the journey toward responsible AI governance—international and domestic—will require collaboration across borders, sectors, and disciplines. By embracing the principles embodied in the Mumbai and Tel Aviv Effect and heeding the call for diversity of thought, democratic countries can navigate the AI era with foresight and responsibility, ensuring that these transformative technologies enhance, rather than undermine, our shared human future.

As the world navigates the labyrinth of AI regulation, the global landscape is at a critical juncture, with nations veering towards a fragmented legal order where the strategic deployment of AI technologies could intensify global divisions and challenge the bedrock of international cooperation. In this context, the absence of a unified approach risks pushing emerging economies and the Global South towards adopting AI frameworks aligned with non-democratic powers like China and Russia, thereby diluting the influence of democratic norms in the digital realm.

Herein lies another benefit of the Mumbai and Tel Aviv Effect, which transcends regional innovation to offer a balanced, inclusive blueprint that could guide them toward cohesive AI governance. This effect has the potential to resonate with the wider world, particularly in countries of the Global South, which currently lack agency in global norm-making.

Furthermore, there is a need for deeper multi-stakeholder discussion on how the Mumbai and Tel Aviv Effect will impact real-life issues of local concern in these countries. This is particularly vital in sensitive sectors such as social media, the labour market, healthcare, transportation, and AI implementation within the public sector. Additionally, discussions should address basic concepts like the interpretation of "algorithmic transparency". This involves deciding whether to prioritise deep transparency of models for regulatory supervision or to focus on explainability to the public. These are not just technical decisions but important social and cultural ones. Similarly, the interpretation of "algorithmic discrimination" may vary between multicultural and more homogeneous countries, necessitating tailored approaches. There is also a need for a clear framework for identifying decisions and operations that should never be delegated to AI, reflecting local values and considerations. ראש הטופס

In a world grappling with the complexities of AI, the Mumbai and Tel Aviv Effect presents an opportunity to set a new course, championing a geostrategic paradigm that promotes collaboration and shared progress over divisiveness, and shaping a future where global AI regulation is anchored in commitment to democratic principles and respect for humanity as a whole.

The BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity: A Stocktaking

Functional channels and means of connectivity are cardinal to regional cooperation as they facilitate trade, attract investments, bolster tourism, foster people-to-people interactions, and encourage cultural exchanges. The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), upon its inception in 1997, prioritised 'transport and communication' as a fundamental area of cooperation. At the 5th BIMSTEC Summit in March 2022, the group reorganised its areas of cooperation and renamed 'transport and communication' as 'connectivity'.,

To promote seamless connectivity across the Bay of Bengal region, BIMSTEC adopted an updated version of the 2018 Top of Form

adopted the BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity in 2022, comprising 267 transport projects among which 216 are in transport infrastructure and 51 are in soft infrastructure. About 60 percent (134) of the transport infrastructure projects are in the planning stage and require financing. The estimated value of the 134 projects is US$89.9 billion. Created in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the 2018 Master Plan for Transport Connectivity is a 10-year strategy and action plan. It consolidates the details of 141 short-, medium-, and long-term projects within the Bay of Bengal, spanning physical connectivity, trade facilitation, and human resource development at an estimated cost of US$47 billion.

As BIMSTEC strives to forge better regional linkages, the plan demands a critical evaluation of its coverage of physical connectivity infrastructure which forms the bedrock of transport networks in the Bay. This paper has two objectives: to explore the reasons behind the creation of the Master Plan and the role of ADB; and to analyse the connectivity initiatives detailed in the Master Plan and identify the challenges that need to be addressed to enhance its effectiveness.

Master Plan Rationale and ADB's Role

In 2015, India, keen to strengthen ties with its eastern neighbourhood, rekindled connectivity initiatives in the region as lead country for the BIMSTEC sector on 'transport and communication'. Following the failed SAARC Summit of 2016, India worked to prioritise the Bay of Bengal region and jumpstart connectivity initiatives. It hosted the BIMSTEC Leaders' Retreat in Goa in October 2016, where the leaders discussed, among others, drawing up a BIMSTEC framework agreement on Transit, Trans-shipment, and Movement of Vehicular Traffic and initiated talks on a BIMSTEC Agreement on Coastal Shipping. The BTCWG was then tasked to develop the said Master Plan for Transport Connectivity with the technical assistance of the ADB.

The ADB carried out a similar study for BIMSTEC in 2007, called the BIMSTEC Transport Infrastructure and Logistic Study (BTILS), which was updated and enhanced in 2014. As many of the projects identified in the BTILS had been completed or were in the process of completion, the 2018 Master Plan was considered necessary to understand the various initiatives with overlapping domains that had been undertaken in the region. Accordingly, the Master Plan addressed the BTILS concerns as well as various other missing infrastructure requirements in the region, outlining a long-term development program.

The ADB has long been engaged in efforts to craft comprehensive strategies for the Asia-Pacific region. It assists its members and partners by providing loans, technical assistance, grants, and equity investments to promote social and economic development. It also maximises the development impact of its assistance by facilitating policy dialogues, providing advisory services, and mobilising financial resources through co-financing operations that tap official, commercial, and export credit sources. In the Bay littoral countries, the ADB has been at the forefront of financing connectivity projects and undertaking evaluations.

As of 31 December 2022, ADB's five largest shareholders are Japan and the United States (each with 15.6 percent of total shares), the People's Republic of China (6.4 percent), India (6.3 percent), and Australia (5.8 percent). These countries all have stakes in seeking influence and partnerships with the Bay littorals or BIMSTEC member countries, for three primary reasons.

Market and Resource Potential of Bay littorals: The countries outlining the Bay, particularly India and Bangladesh, have remarkable economic potential (see Figure 1). Estimates suggest that India and Bangladesh will be the 11th and 16th fastest growing economies in the world by 2024. Another projection says that by 2030, India will become the 2nd largest market with 773 million consumers, Bangladesh

6th with 87 million consumers, and Thailand 9th with 58 million consumers.

The Bay littoral countries are also valuable partners as they own substantial offshore oil and gas reserves. The Bay of Bengal is home to almost 40 percent of the world's hydrocarbon reserves, with coal reserves of almost 324 billion tonnes, 664 million tonnes of petroleum, 99 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, 11 billion tonnes of biomass, 328 GW of hydropower (large), and renewable energy potential of more than 1,000 GW. This dimension attracts many countries to invest in its littorals as the need for energy resources increases to serve growing economies and bulging populations; China, for instance, has the world's second highest population and is the world's second largest economy.

Need to secure vital shipping routes: The major powers are seeking partnerships with Bay littorals to maintain a foothold in this maritime space close to the Strait of Malacca, through where nearly 60 percent of global trade comprising important resources, particularly energy imports, move annually via shipping routes from the Middle East to South, Southeast, and East Asia.

More than 70 percent of China's energy trade and 60 percent of its entire trade pass through the Strait of Malacca, as does over 55 percent of India's trade. More than 80 percent of Japan's oil imports from the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf also move through this chokepoint. For Australia, the strait is important as it is used by most container and vehicle ships making their way from Europe., China's activities in and around the Bay have generated apprehensions about maintaining freedom of navigation in these routes. Stakeholders are thus heightening their presence in the Bay to ensure an uninterrupted supply of fuels.

The strategic value of the Bay of Bengal: The Bay's strategic significance attracts investments due to its advantageous location. It serves as a pivotal point in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and is a focal area for Indo-Pacific powers, largely to counter China's ascent which challenges the established US-led order and shifts the power dynamics. Consequently, the US is intensifying efforts to bolster its influence in the Bay.

Japan, aiming to tap into South and Southeast Asian markets dominated by China, promotes a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' as well to establish fair economic standards, thus increasing investments in the Bay littorals. Similarly, Australia advocates for a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific', seeing the Bay's stability as crucial for fostering stronger ties with its littoral states, to enhance its connectivity in the Indian Ocean. For India, the Bay is its maritime neighbourhood, intertwined with its economic and security interests. Rivaling China, India is thus deepening ties with Bay littorals which includes the countries of Southeast Asia. This serves India's Neighbourhood First, Act East, and Act Indo-Pacific policies as the Bay is a common maritime space between India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), central to the country's vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

It is impossible to utilise the Bay of Bengal region for any of the above purposes without the necessary connectivity and developmental infrastructure in the littoral countries, which is one of the primary reasons why intra-regional trade remains low. This has resulted in a scramble amongst the major powers to build connectivity supports in the Bay littorals. Their interest has found resonance in the aspirations of these countries for better logistics which will elevate their economic prospects and ability to utilise their natural wealth. Accordingly, these countries have responded positively to the competing offers of the global powers and ADB has emerged as a notable actor in this sphere.

This mutual need for a more connected Bay of Bengal region manifests in the ADB's consistent engagements in this geography and with BIMSTEC. On 24 February 2022, the organisation officially registered the ADB as one of its external partners via a Memorandum of Understanding, by which they agreed to collaborate in transport connectivity and financing; energy connectivity and trade; trade facilitation; tourism promotion; and economic corridor development.

Connectivity Initiatives in the Master Plan and Continuing Concerns

The dense population count of the BIMSTEC region necessitates effective modes of conveyance to ensure the seamless flow of goods and people. Among these modes, road transport accounts for approximately 70 percent of freight transportation within the region.

Meanwhile, the region's railway networks extend over 77,000 route kilometers across member states such as Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. The extensive railway systems serve as vital arteries for trade and transportation, albeit often operating independently, highlighting the need for enhanced coordination and integration.

The region also benefits from maritime and air transport networks. Mainline and deep-sea container ships, along with feeder vessels, connect key ports of the region, facilitating the efficient movement of goods. Furthermore, the presence of established inland waterways and a network of over 350 flights connecting various destinations within the region underscores the importance of multi-modal transport connectivity.

While there have been commendable strides in improving transport connectivity among BIMSTEC member states, significant gaps persist, emphasising the critical role of the BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity.

Policy and Institutional Imperatives for India's Urban Renaissance

India's urbanisation is at a critical juncture, with unprecedented opportunities emerging amid formidable challenges. With more than 50 percent of the country's population expected to live in cities by 2047,[1] rapid urban growth will radically transform India's demographic landscape, putting enormous stress on urban services and resources. While the imminent urban expansion has immense potential for contributing to prosperity, it is riddled with numerous complexities and challenges that impede inclusive, resilient and sustainable growth for all.

Indeed, as cities are poised to propel national economic growth momentum, governments across the federal tiers must rethink the country's urban governance mechanisms and institutional architectures if India is to maintain its promised growth trajectory in the Amrit Kaal[2] (or "immortal era", the 25-year period from 2022 to 2047, when India turns 100).[3] At this critical urban moment for India, ORF publishes this unique anthology, "Policy and Institutional Imperatives for India's Urban Renaissance," which seeks to illuminate pathways for innovative governance frameworks and institutional reforms in the country.

The compendium is divided into two sections. The first section focuses on rethinking urban policy frameworks and innovative institutional reforms, and the second deals with the need for coordinated governance across all the government tiers and how states and cities must respond to the opportunities brought forth by Central schemes. The 14 articles intersect at certain points, as they equally aim to explore themes of governance, policy frameworks, and institutional mechanisms.

Governance lies at the heart of effective urban management—the cornerstone for formulating, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating policies. This compendium examines governance mechanisms and the intricate interplay between central, state, and local authorities. It sheds light on the evolving nature of governance structures and the imperative of adaptive, responsive governance amid existing and emerging urban complexities.

Policy frameworks serve as blueprints for action, delineating the goals, strategies, and interventions necessary to drive sustainable urban development. Our contributing authors explore policy imperatives across various domains—from urban planning and infrastructure to housing, transportation, water, environmental sustainability, and social security. The articles draw upon evidence-based and comparative analyses to offer insights into the efficacy of existing policies and propose innovative approaches to address emerging urban challenges.

Institutional mechanisms provide the scaffolding to translate governance aspirations and policy directives into tangible on-ground outcomes. Our authors underscore the need for institutional reform, capacity building, and innovation to enhance the resilience and effectiveness of urban governance structures.

Beyond widening the scope of academic discourse, this publication offers practical insights for policymakers and urban practitioners, and outlines actionable knowledge to tackle real-world challenges confronting an urbanising India.

Hitesh Vaidya and Chetan Vaidya open the volume with their article where, citing examples of global cities, they identify India's policy gaps and institutional infirmities and explore recommendations for how India can achieve people-centred urban development. This, the authors argue, should have a strategic focus, and promote multi-level coordination, data-driven, collaborative and participatory governance; as well as capacity building and fiscal empowerment of city governments.

Confronting the delicate issue of delimitation of election constituencies that has led to certain urban agglomerations being underrepresented in the state Legislatures and the Lok Sabha, Ritwika Sharma calls on the Government of India to pave the way for the immediate rollout of the pending Census of India and conduct a fresh delimitation exercise. Delimitation has implications for representative democracy and federalism, and it must no longer remain a political domain but become a collaborative exercise, with the active engagement of experts in political science, urban governance, constitutional law, and psephology.

Nandan Dawda then charts the evolution of India's urban transport policies, explaining how the unresolved challenges in their practical implementation and the lack of integration between various transport schemes and missions have created unsustainable transportation systems in Indian cities. The author recommends holistic policy reforms focusing on integrated transport planning, covering all modes of transportation, both public and private.

In their piece, Himani Jain and Sourav Dhar also tackle the subject of urban transport, and propose the setting up of a Regional Unified Transport Authority (RUTA) whereby each region can have mobility interdependence with at least one million-plus city or a large economic hub or urban continuum. Consolidated mobility services markets will facilitate private sector participation, synchronise public transit planning, and optimise operations costs.

Sivasubramaniam Jayaraman and Vaishali Singh, for their part, examine the progressive measures taken by several cities across India to rethink urban transport policies and institutions. They call for the broader and deeper adoption of autonomous Unified Metropolitan Transport Authorities (UMTAs) in all cities with the financial empowerment and decision-making freedom to meet the ever-changing urban transportation demands.

Yet, transportation is only one among the critical issues that cities need to address if they were to become truly engines of growth and development; an equally urgent imperative is to tackle the grave gaps in women's safety and security. In their article, Nikhat Shaikh and Ankita K enumerate the critical role of One-Stop Centres (OSCs), offering the experience of two OSCs in Mumbai for lessons and calling for these centres to be upscaled.

Rounding off the first section is a contribution from Vinita Ajgaonkar and Rama Shyam, which discusses the findings from a primary survey of the beneficiaries of all the Central and state government social welfare schemes in informal settlements across the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. The survey aimed to identify the hurdles encountered by these schemes in reaching the eligible targeted beneficiaries. They recommend specific interventions that will consider the ground realities confronting the urban poor to broaden existing social safety nets through improved mechanisms to measure 'absolute poverty' indicators in urban India.

The second section of this compendium begins with an article by Ramanath Jha, evaluating the Central government's efforts for urban reforms through decentralised governance and financial empowerment of the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). The author cautions that "there is no space for unfunded mandates for the well-being of the ULBs," underscoring why the Government of India must rethink its approach and be involved more with its cities if the country is to achieve its promise of becoming an economic powerhouse by 2047.

In the subsequent essay, Deepty Jain advocates both top-down and bottom-up targeted approaches at the national and state levels with an integrated reporting and monitoring system to identify potential strategies for achieving the SDGs and India's net-zero commitments.

Sejal Patel then highlights the need to align the states and cities with the 'rightsized' role of the Government of India to address the growing shortage of affordable housing in India's cities. Evaluating the performance of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U) and its various sub-schemes, she urges the Ministry of Housing Urban Affairs to conduct regular performance and reform audits of all the housing projects planned and implemented by the states and ULBs.

Highlighting the numerous overlapping mandates in city governance between the ULBs, state departments and parastatals and the state's predominance in decision-making, Dhaval Desai calls for the emancipation of the third tier of government as India aspires to grow as a developed economy by 2047.

Janak Parmar, in his article, makes a case for the proactive implementation of the ULB governance and institutional reforms mandated by the central government. He advocates for a more assertive role of the Government of India through dedicated monitoring mechanisms, regular and transparent audits, and performance reviews.

What follows is a piece by Saswat Bandyopadhyay and Gargi Mishra, which highlights the fragmented infrastructure delivery and poor land-use planning in India. They advocate for a 'City Infrastructure Investment Pipeline' of projects prioritised and aligned with spatial evidence-based development plans of cities, optimally leveraging the land value appreciation through planned urban growth.

Vikas Rana closes the volume explaining why and how, amid the water crises facing urban India, cities must turn the problem of wastewater generation into an advantage. This can be done, he argues, by establishing the necessary strategies and mechanisms to achieve a circular water economy.

As India embarks on its journey toward an urban renaissance, the need for informed, collaborative action has never been more pressing. It is our hope that the expert insights curated in this publication will provoke debates and inspire innovation, which in turn can help propel India's cities toward a future that is prosperous, sustainable, and inclusive.

This volume is a testament to the collective wisdom of scholars, policymakers, and practitioners who have dedicated themselves to understanding India's urban dynamics. It recognises the pivotal role of government and its multiple institutions in steering the course of urbanisation and how the effectiveness of governance machinery and institutional architecture—from municipal administrations to national policies—profoundly influences the liveability, resilience, and equity of urban spaces.

Surveillance cameras in cities: A threat to privacy?

Technology continues to grow in its pervasive presence in our daily lives. One such area is video surveillance through closed-circuit television (CCTV) found at home, at the workplace, in businesses, on streets and in public spaces. Consequently, technology is progressively becoming central in the management of city spaces. On the flip side, the intense invasion and examination of the lives of individual citizens through constant surveillance could have serious consequences on people's freedom and private space.

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The use of surveillance cameras in private spaces has been a rising phenomenon. More and more homes are installing security cameras. Globally, there were 122.1 million households that were using security cameras at home, estimated to rise to 180.7 million households by 2027. For families, where every member goes out to work, security cameras keep unceasing vigilance at home to secure family property. CCTV systems that are fortified with intruder alarm systems do even better and significantly heighten home security. Furthermore, the 'live feed app' allows parents to keep a tab on housekeepers, especially when a little child is left behind. Indeed, being constantly in touch with home provides great peace of mind to working couples.

Just as at homes, businesses and offices around the world are progressively placing more and more reliance on such technological assistance for surveillance and security. A smartly designed CCTV system installed in a business premise can provide comprehensive coverage on real real-time basis that is accessible from anywhere in the world. Besides enhanced security, reduced insurance costs and quality evidence for misdemeanours when required, the monitoring of employee behaviour has also led to greater worker productivity in firms, restaurants and call centres. Such monitoring has also been employed in healthcare facilities and schools. Positive consequences, including improved performance, have accrued through such surveillance.

The use of surveillance cameras for street surveillance is even more significant and is the subject of discussion in this article. A street camera is an electronic device that is strategically located in a street for automated data collection. There is no doubt that cameras on streets act as a deterrent. They discourage potential wrongdoers from crossing the propriety line and warn criminals to desist from engaging in unlawful activities. They

make public spaces safer. Furthermore, they record events on the street that can be reviewed if the need arises. Since the record of visual evidence is the best form of evidence, it is a huge help in solving crimes and convicting criminals. CCTV helps not merely in identifying individuals who committed the crime but is equally useful in identifying witnesses. A study conducted in regard to the efficacy of cameras in crime solving concluded that CCTV was valuable in 65 percent of cases and was useful for all crimes except drugs, weapons possession and fraud. While eyewitnesses of events may be biased and may not always bring forth the truth, video records may sometimes be unclear but are never biased. Hence the trustworthiness of such evidence is generally beyond doubt.

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Since cameras are on duty 24 hours, they provide a modicum of psychological feeling of safety when people are walking the streets, no matter how lonely or crowded the streets are. Its round-the-clock presence and alertness cannot be matched by the best human presence. An added advantage, apart from constant presence, is that cameras can be placed where they are most needed and, at optimum angles to provide the best view. Additionally, they can be monitored from a central location. Many cities are already using artificial intelligence-enabled traffic cameras,

which provide critical assistance in traffic management by capturing and processing real-time data. They perform the added service of capturing traffic delinquencies, such as jumping red lights, speeding, disregarding stop signs and dangerous lane cutting.

Street surveillance cameras are equally essential in crowded spaces like airports, train stations, stadiums and large gatherings and in access control. The cameras allow immediate corrective measures and help avert incidents such as stampedes. In traffic and transportation, they can monitor passenger flows and provide decision-makers with valuable data for reducing congestion and ensuring smoother traffic flows. A study in Chandigarh revealed that cameras on the streets increase on-the-ground tickets. They can also capture the passive (shirking) or active (rent-seeking) malfeasance of government personnel. Overall, while such remote monitoring technology may not become a complete substitute for on-the-ground enforcement, it can be a great complementary instrument.

With pervasive street and business surveillance becoming the order of the day, questions emerge about emerging threats to people's way of life. Widespread visual surveillance may have a serious impact on free speech and activity. Fears are raised that CCTV surveillance creates an almost Orwellian potential for surveillance and virtually invites abuse. Political debate also rages about the proper balance between ensuring the effectiveness of CCTV and protecting the privacy of citizens.

As surveillance technology is getting smarter and wider in its proliferation, questions in regard to the invasion of

privacy have become more pronounced. There is no doubt that surveillance of public spaces has seriously diminished private space. Right from the moment an individual steps out on the street till the time he or she is back home, a person is literally under watch. Whether one is chatting with a friend in a park, sharing jokes in a gathering or expressing an opinion on subjects—it is very likely that these events and utterances would be public property. Combined with artificial intelligence and a dramatic drop in equipment costs, it is today possible to install miniscule, high-definition devices that are completely concealed and can record and transmit to computers almost anywhere. The 'chilling effect' of such surveillance could result in human behavioural modifications where people may decide to eschew the exercise of their basic rights, such as freedom of speech or peaceful protest, for the sake of personal safety. Furthermore, there are worries that public surveillance may even help perpetuate societal discrimination. When algorithms are fed with biased data, they would reinforce biases within the data and intensify unwarranted discrepancies in law enforcement.

Combined with artificial intelligence and a dramatic drop in equipment costs, it is today possible to install miniscule, high-definition devices that are completely concealed and can record and transmit to computers almost anywhere.

Thus, while useful positives emerge out of the surveillance of public spaces, a huge quantum of private data becomes available to public authorities. And it cannot be asserted that bits of such data will never be used for harassment of individuals or groups. Governments have recognised privacy-related gaps in the use of surveillance cameras and in the administration of the systems that could result in an undesirable privacy breach. Therefore, appropriate laws are essential to ensure the rightful use of such private data. Public authorities must put in place policy guidelines for governmental and security agencies entrusted with handling such data and appropriate penalties for their breach. One of the major suggestions regarding penalties has been that the misuse of personal data should invite heavy compensation to be paid to the wronged individuals. Personal data that is no longer required ought to be destroyed forthwith. While some democratic countries are moving ahead in expanding privacy laws, small businesses and individual enterprises appear to be the most unregulated. It is evident that technological advancement, public surveillance, and privacy laws will continue the cat-and-mouse game for some time to come.

Varun Dhawan, Natasha Dalal welcome first child

Actor Varun Dhawan and his wife Natasha Dalal have become parents to a baby girl.

The 37-year-old actor shared the news on Instagram, posting an animated video which stated that the baby was born on Monday.

'Our baby girl is here. Thank u for all the good wishes for the mama and the baby,' Dhawan wrote in the caption.

Several industry colleagues, including Karan Johar, actors Kareena Kapoor Khan, Abhishek Bachchan, Sanya Malhotra, Samantha Ruth Prabhu, Priyanka Chopra Jonas and Parineeti Chopra congratulated the couple.

Singer Sonu Nigam awarded Honorary Fellowship in UK for worldwide impact in music

Bollywood singer Sonu Nigam, who was in the UK for a concert series, has been awarded an Honorary Fellowship by a leading Indian diaspora students' organisation for his worldwide impact in the field of music.

The National Indian Students and Alumni Union (NISAU) UK conferred Nigam with the fellowship during his packed performance at Wembley Arena in London last weekend. It was presented on stage by veteran British Indian Labour MP Virendra Sharma and Professor Rachel Dwyer, Emeritus Professor of Indian Culture at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS).

"You once mentioned that music is not just your profession but your reason for being. It is this passion, coupled with your commitment to give back to the community that resonates deeply with what we stand for at NISAU," said NISAU UK Chair Sanam Arora in her speech at the ceremony.

"We strive to empower, to lead, and to inspire, principles you embody through your actions every day. You are not just a musical icon, but a bridge uniting hearts, minds and nations through music; and fostering community through your philanthropic efforts be it your fight for performers' rights or your championship of gender equality for instance through launching the world's first transgender band," she said.

The Honorary Fellowship, previously conferred upon actor Shabana Azmi, writer Javed Akhtar and spiritualist Sri Sri Ravi Shankar among others, acknowledges individuals who significantly impact Indian cultural exchange, education, and social improvement on a world stage.

"I am very touched to hear and read such kind words for me. Thank you NISAU for your love and this honour. I consider this as another precious gift from my Almighty," said Nigam on receiving the honour.

The 50-year-old multi-platinum selling Bollywood playback singer and Padma Shri concluded a UK-wide tour performing in London, Leeds, Glasgow, and Birmingham as part of a concert series celebrating 30 years of his chart-topping cinematic numbers including 'Kal Ho Naa Ho', 'Shukran Allah' and 'Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham'.

Yami Gautam wishes husband Aditya Dhar on their 3rd wedding anniversary

New parents Yami Gautam and Aditya Dhar who are celebrating their third wedding anniversary, on Tuesday, dropped an adorable picture along with wishes for each other.

Yami took to her Instagram account to drop a cutesy picture with her husband and filmmaker Aditya from their recent professional collaboration for the film 'Article 370'.

In the picture, the couple can be seen smiling as they pose for the camera.

The 'Article 370' actress looked cute in a pink dress as she flaunted her baby bump.

Aditya on the other hand, looked stylish as he carried a monochromatic look.

Along with the picture, the actress wrote a sweet caption that read, 'Happiest 3 (accompanied by red-heart emoji) And quite literally now,' followed by a baby and a woman raising hand emoji. She also added a hashtag mentioning, '#HappyAnniversarytoUs (Smiling face with halo emoji)'.

Yami also added a retro dash with an old classic song, 'Ye Zamin Gaa Rahi Hai' in the background.

Kartik Aaryan flaunts his washboard abs as he does 'weight-lifted pull ups'

Actor Kartik Aaryan flaunted his well-chiselled physique as he did 'weight-lifted pull-ups' during his gym workout.
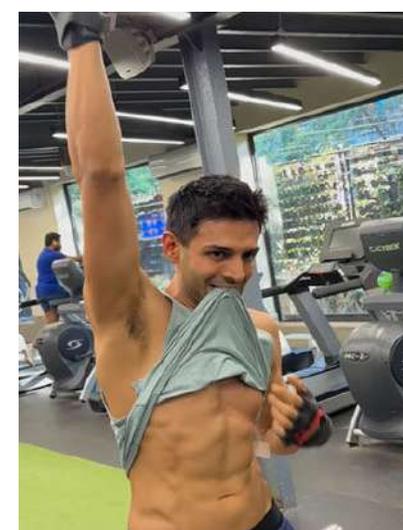
Kartik took to Instagram and shared a video of his workout.

In the clip, he is seen doing pull-ups with 15 kg of weight tied around his waist.

The actor captioned it, 'Weight-lifted push ups ke baad weight-lifted pull ups'.

Talking about his work, Kartik, is gearing up for the release of his upcoming film 'Chandu Champion', directed by Kabir Khan.

In the film, Kartik plays Murlikant Petkar, India's first Paralympic gold medallist. The biographical sports drama is set to release on June 14.

Kartik began his career with 'Pyaar Ka Punchnama' in 2011 and gained the spotlight with the blockbuster 'Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweety'.

His next project is 'Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3' with Tripti Dimrii, the third instalment in the 'Bhool Bhulaiyaa' franchise. The first film, released in 2007, starred Akshay Kumar, Vidya Balan, Shiney Ahuja and Ameesha Patel. The second film of the horror comedy instalment, released in 2022, starred Kartik Aaryan, Tabu and Kiara Advani.

Vin Diesel surprises four-year-old fan after leukaemia treatment

Hollywood star Vin Diesel made a pre-schooler fan's dreams come true by surprising him after a leukaemia treatment.

The 56-year-old actor appeared at FuelFest in Los Angeles, where he met the four-year-old Colton Pursglove, who is in remission from leukaemia.

"Colton was so giddy and couldn't believe he got to meet his real-life hero," said Jordan Pursglove, the child's mother, in a statement shared with people.com.

Last November, Jordan posted a photo of her son dressed as Diesel's film character on Instagram.

'When your four-year-old watches 'Fast & Furious' movies on repeat and thinks he looks just like Dom, you gotta dress him up as his favourite movie character!' she wrote in the caption.

According to the FuelFest website, the event features "top modified, exotic, performance-built, and rare cars from all over the world," along with live drifting and drag racing shows.

'Fast & Furious' is a franchise telling the tale of action films that are largely dealing with street racing, heists, spies, and family.

The first film was released in 2001. However, with the ever-burgeoning fandom, the film has had almost ten parts released. It also had a spin-off film, 'Hobbs & Shaw' in 2019.

Actress Vidya Balan describes her tryst with reels on social media

Acclaimed actress Vidya Balan has become a social media sensation thanks to her engaging 'reels' on the platform, which she says she started making about two years ago and is now having real fun.

Vidya shared, "It has been about two years, and I was shooting in London for the film Neeyat, and I had a lot of time at hand. And that's why one fine day, I just decided what my manager had been telling me, 'Why don't we do reels'."

After her first reel video went viral and received love fromfans, Vidya found herself hooked. An avid social media user, she consistently entertains her followers with her clips.

"I would do one reel in one or two months, and then she said we have the time to shoot a reel, and I was just having fun. After it went viral, I realised that I did what I enjoyed, and people are also enjoying it. So, I started doing it quite regularly. I am just having a lot of fun, honestly," said the actress, who boasts a following of over 9.4 million on Instagram.

Raveena Tandon was not drunk, her car didn't hit anyone: Police

The Mumbai Police, in the course of its investigation into the road rage incident involving actor Raveena Tandon, has found that her car did not collide with anyone, an official said on Sunday.

In a viral video, a man had claimed that Raveena's driver hit his mother, and when questioned, she started assaulting her. He had claimed the incident happened when he was walking with his mother, sister, and niece near the actor's house.

According to the Khar police official, CCTV footage from the vicinity of the Khar-based building, where the incident occurred, showed that women were in close proximity to the actor's car but were not struck by it.

The video shows a group of locals accusing Raveena and her driver of assaulting three women.

The incident took place on Carter Road in Bandra Saturday night, police said. While no FIR has been registered, a station diary entry has been made at the Khar police station, the official added.

There was no word yet from Raveena on the incident.

Her driver allegedly hit three persons with the vehicle, following which the crowd became angry and it led to an altercation, an official had said.

After Raveena got out of her vehicle to speak to the crowd, she was allegedly pushed and hit, he said. In the viral video, Raveena is heard saying 'Please don't hit me'.

In the video, the man claimed that the actress was inebriated and she started assaulting the woman after stepping out of the car.

After the incident, a group of people confronted Raveena and her driver inside the premises of a building on Carter Road.

The incident took place after the driver reversed his car, the official said. The viral video shows a woman complaining that Raveena and her driver assaulted her and caused bleeding in her nose.

In view of the altercation, both parties visited the Khar police station and submitted written statements asserting no grievances against each other, the official said.

Naqiyah Haji talks about a fight sequence in Shaitani Rasmein

Naqiyah Haji from Star Bharat's Shaitani Rasmein is happy with her stint in the show. She talks about her emotions during the Nikki versus Malik sequence, "Honestly, this particular fight is a major point for the entire team. The audience has seen Nikki defeat Kapalika and kill Chhaya, and now she faces her greatest enemy. It's a one-time opportunity for her to completely defeat Malik and gain a major victory. This sequence is packed with action and thrill, and we are all working very hard to make it perfect."

She adds, "I do get overwhelmed because I feel all eyes are on me, and I need to meet the expectations of the entire team and, most importantly, the viewers. In the middle of the shot, I take a moment to breathe and gather myself. I am giving my best to perform well throughout, and I can't wait for the audience to feel the thrill. If my acting conveys the intended intensity, I will be thoroughly satisfied, and my hard work will have paid off."

Netherlands open T20 World Cup campaign with six-wicket win over Nepal

Texas

Netherlands beat Nepal by six wickets with eight balls remaining in a tight contest that was delayed by rain at the Grand Prairie here.

The Dutch opted to bowl first and dismissed Nepal for 106 in 19.2 overs, led by captain Rohit Paudel's 37-ball 35.

Tim Pringle (3-20 in four overs) and Logan van Beek (3-18 in 3.2 overs) did the damage as Nepal lost wickets at regular intervals on a surface suited for fast bowlers.

Dutch opener Max O'Dowd led the successful chase, hitting 54 not out in 48 balls as his team finished on 109-4 in 18.4 overs.

Sompal Kami, Dipendra Singh Airee and Abinash Bohara took a wicket apiece. Nepal's hopes were briefly raised when Netherlands dropped to 80-4 in the 16th over after Bohara bowled Netherlands captain Scott Edwards (5).

But O'Dowd and Bas de Leede (11 not out) shared an undefeated 29-run partnership for victory.

India and Ireland meet in New York in the first of Wednesday's three games.

Australia takes on Oman at Bridgetown, Barbados and Papua New Guinea is against Uganda in Providence, Guyana.

Mbappe relieved with Real move

METZ

Kylian Mbappe is thrilled his long-awaited move to Real Madrid has been confirmed, but the France captain is now concentrating on the national team as they prepare for Euro 2024.

"Everyone knows the news, it's official, I'm going to be a Real Madrid player for the next five seasons," Mbappe told reporters ahead of France's friendly with Luxembourg. "I am very happy, liberated, relieved and extremely proud."

High five for Farooqi as Afghanistan thrash Uganda

Providence (Guyana)

Pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi produced a fiery spell after Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadran struck half-centuries in a solid opening partnership as Afghanistan began their T20 World Cup campaign with a comprehensive 125-run victory over debutants Uganda here.

Opener Gurbaz (76 off 45 balls) and his partner Zadran (70 off 46 balls) registered the second-highest opening partnership (154) in the men's T20 World Cup as Afghanistan posted a challenging 183/5 after being asked to bat.

Left-arm pacer Farooqi (5/9) then knocked the wind out of the Ugandan batting line-up with his maiden five-wicket haul, with the debutants being shot out for 58 in 16 overs.

"The kind of start we wanted as a team. Does not matter

who we play, it is about the mindset," skipper Rashid Khan, who polished off the tail.

Seamer Farooqi was twice on the brink of claiming a hat-trick. He was lethal with the new ball.

After being hit for a four off his first delivery, he bowled a brilliant in-swinger which clipped Ronak Patel's bat before crashing into the stumps. He then trapped Roger Mukasa lbw with a similar delivery.

"I have missed it (getting the hat-trick) a few times. Something that is not under my control and if I get a chance again, I will try to get that hat-trick," Farooqi said while collecting his Player of the Match award.

Indonesia open: Rajawat shows Prannoy the door, Lakshya eases into Rd 2

Jakarta

Star Indian shuttler Lakshya Sen and compatriot Priyanshu Rajawat entered the men's singles second round of the Indonesia Open Super 1000 with straight-game wins over their respective rivals here today.

While Lakshya took just 40 minutes to get the better of Japan's Kenta Tsuneyama 21-12 21-17 in an opening-round

clash, Rajawat beat former world No. 6 HS Prannoy 21-17 21-12 in an all-Indian contest.

Lakshya, who sneaked into the Olympics qualification with back-to-back semifinals finishes at the French Open and All England Championships, will next be up against Japan's Kenta Nishimoto. The Japanese stunned seventh seed Anthony

Sinisuka Ginting of Indonesia 17-21 21-11 21-8 in another opening-round match.

Rajawat will take on eighth seed Kunlavut Vitidsarn of Thailand next.

However, it was curtains for Kiran George in the men's singles event, but not before giving a tough fight to Hong Yang Weng of China 21-11 10-21 20-22.

The Indian mixed doubles pair of B Sumeeth Reddy and Sikki Reddy had to battle hard before prevailing 18-21 21-16 21-17 over the American pair of Vinson Chiu and Jennie Gai in the opening round.

The Indian women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand also tasted success in the opening round, beating Chinese Taipei's Yu-Pei Cheng and Yu Hsing Sun 21-15 21-11.

They will play seventh seeds Mayu Matsumoto and Wakana Nagahara of Japan next.

Bopanna to team up with Balaji at Paris

New Delhi

World No. 4 Rohan Bopanna has picked N Sriram Balaji as his partner for the Paris Olympics and the All India Tennis Association (AITA) is unlikely to have any objection to the choice made by the veteran player.

The 44-year-old Bopanna wrote to the AITA and also marked TOPS in the mail, conveying his decision.

Balaji and his Mexican partner MA Reyes-Varela Martinez had tested the formidable combo of Bopanna and Australia's Matthew Ebden before losing their men's doubles third round match at the French Open on Monday.

Balaji played well from the baseline with a strong serve backing his game and was equally impressive at the net — a performance that would have convinced Bopanna that the player from Coimbatore is the best option for him when he returns to Roland Garros for a final shot at an Olympics medal next month.

Bopanna, only the third Indian to win a Grand Slam title, came close to winning a medal at the Rio Games but he and Sania Mirza lost the mixed doubles bronze medal match to the Czech combination of Radek Stepanek and Lucie Hradecka.

"I have sent an email to AITA," Bopanna said, adding that he will comment on his choice only after hearing back from the national federation.

When contacted, AITA secretary general Anil Dhupar said he does not have any objection to Bopanna playing with Balaji, ranked 84, at the Paris Olympics.

"Rohan has written to us that he wants to play with Balaji. Balaji played well in Pakistan also, rising to the occasion. He also did well at the French Open. If Rohan wants that we have no objection to that," he said.

Sprinter Dutee Chand suspended till 2027

New Delhi

Indian sprinter Dutee Chand's hopes of getting her suspension overruled has been dashed by the National Anti-Doping Agency's (NADA) appeal panel after her suspension order was uploaded on its website today.

Dutee, who is the country's fastest 100m women sprinter, was banned after traces of selective androgen receptor modulators (SARMs) were found in her urine sample. She had appealed against the ban but the panel had upheld the earlier order.

As per the order by the anti-doping disciplinary panel, her four-year suspension will run from January 3, 2023 to January 2, 2027. SARMs, which are touted as supplements, help in increasing muscle mass.

Her sample was collected in December 2022 and she had previously failed to provide satisfactory reasons for inadvertently consuming a medicine, which formed the basis of her failed dope test. She was then issued a provisional suspension under Article 2.1 and 2.2 of the anti-doping rule violations that puts the onus on athletes' to ensure that no prohibited substance enters their bodies and puts the responsibility on the athletes for presence of any prohibited substance or its metabolites/ markers present in their samples.

National Anti-Doping Agency's Disciplinary Panel revokes Bajrang Punia's suspension till NADA issues Notice of Charge

New Delhi

The National Anti-Doping Agency's Disciplinary Panel (ADDP) on Monday revoked the provisional suspension imposed on Bajrang Punia till NADA issues a Notice of Charge to the wrestler, who had refused to provide his sample for dope test after the selection trials in March.

NADA had suspended Tokyo Games bronze medallist Bajrang on April 23 and subsequently the world governing body UWW also took similar action.

The trials to pick the men's national team for the Asian Olympic Qualifiers in Bishkek were held in Sonepat on March 10 and Bajrang had walked off the venue without providing his urine sample after losing a bout.

He did not compete in the 3rd-4th place bout.

Bajrang had challenged the provisional suspension through his lawyers and reiterated in his reply to ADDP that he never refused to provide sample but just demanded to know why NADA has not replied to his earlier query on action taken by the National Anti-Doping Agency for sending expired kit to take his sample in December 2023.

"The hearing panel is of the opinion that at this stage when Notice of Charge is yet to be issued to the Athlete and without going into the merits of the submission/explanations/ justifications given by the Athlete for refusing to give the sample and counter the submission of Ld. Counsel appearing for the NADA, the provisional suspension of the Athlete is revoked till NADA decides to issue Notice of Charge formally charging the athlete for violation of Anti-doping rules, 2021," the ADDP order, a copy of which is with PTI, said.

French Open: Alex de Minaur Australia's pride & joy

PARIS

Alex de Minaur broke a 20-year Australian hoodoo at the French Open today as the 11th seed battled from a set down to stun fifth seed Daniil Medvedev 4-6 6-2 6-1 6-3 and advance to his first Roland Garros quarterfinal.

Aryna Sabalenka powered past Emma Navarro

De Minaur became the first man from his nation to reach the last-eight stage at the claycourt Grand Slam since Lleyton Hewitt in 2004, with the victory on Suzanne Lenglen coming after a mid-match blip for Medvedev following a foot blister.

"It's great. It's amazing. It's a great position to be in," De Minaur told reporters.

Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka beat American Emma Navarro 6-2 6-3 to advance to the ninth Grand Slam quarterfinal of her career. "I was ready to fight for every point,

I was ready for long rallies," Sabalenka said.

Italian 12th seed Jasmine Paolini fought back to beat Elina Avanesyan 4-6 6-0 6-1 and reach her first Grand Slam quarterfinal. She will face fourth seed Elena Rybakina in the last-eight stage. — Reuters

Bopanna-Ebden enter quarters

Paris: Rohan Bopanna and Matthew Ebden erased a one-set deficit to edge past the fighting pair of N Sriram Balaji and MA Reyes-Varela Martinez in the super tiebreaker, moving to the French Open quarterfinals, here today. The second-seeded Indo-Australian pair won 6-7(2) 6-3 7-6 (10-8) winners in the men's doubles third round.