

# 8/87 schools score 100% results in CBSE class XII Board exams

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 05 MAY:**

While only eight out of the 88 senior secondary schools in Sikkim affiliated to CBSE scored 100% results in class XII Board exams this year, a majority of the schools posted 75%-plus pass percentage and only a handful posted worryingly poor results. Two Kendriya Vidyalayas – the ones at Gangtok and Singtam – find themselves in the exclusive club of eight alongside EMRS-Gangyap, JNV-Rohtak, Little Angel School [Nandok], and government senior secondary schools of Luing, Mangshila and Kitam. There is also a group

NAME OF SCHOOL	MANGEMENT	DISTRICT	PASS	COMP	FAIL
J N V ROTHAK SIKKIM	CENTRAL	WEST	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
KENDRIYA VIDYALAYA TADONG GANGTOK SIKKIM	CENTRAL	EAST	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
GOVT SR SECONDARY SCHOOLKITAM SOUTH SIKKIM	STATE	SOUTH	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
GOVT SR SEC SCHOOL MANGSHILA NORTH SIKKIM	STATE	NORTH	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
GOVT SEC SCHOOL LUIING EAST SIKKIM	STATE	EAST	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
KENDRIYA VIDYALAYA NHPCsingtameastsikkim	CENTRAL	EAST	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
LITTLE ANGEL SCHOOL NANDOK RANIPOL EAST SIKKIM	INDEPENDENT	EAST	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
EKLAVYA MODEL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL GANGYAP WEST SIKKIM	CENTRAL	WEST	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%

of 17 schools which have recorded a 90-99% pass percentage while all the remaining schools, save three, have posted 50%-plus results. The school-wise performance tabulated by the HRD Department reveals that only three schools in the

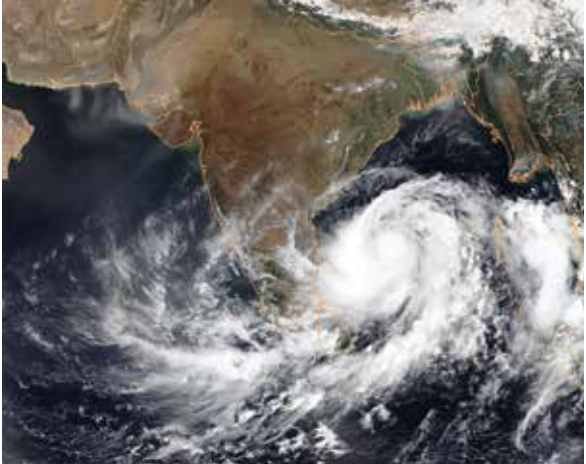
state had less than 50% of their class XII students passing this year’s board exams. The worst-performing among the bottom-three is JNV-Pakyong which saw only 45.45% of its students passing while 24.24% received compartments

and 30.30 failed the board exams. Government Senior Secondary School, Mangalbaria, had 49.15% of its students passing while 22.03% of the class XII students have compartment results and 28.81% failed. Similarly, Govt SSS,

Perbing, saw 26.09% of its class XII board exam students fail, 26.09% get compartments and only 47.83% of the students pass. The private candidates who took the CBSE class XII board exams fared rather poorly with only

28.91% of them passing the exams, 54.69% receiving compartment results and 7.43% failing. Readers would have noticed that there is only private school among the eight schools which posted 100% results this year.

## From its formation to landfall, how IMD tracked cyclone ‘Fani’



**NEW DELHI, MAY 5 (PTI):** Thirteen days before cyclone ‘Fani’ hit the Odisha coast, the IMD had an indication that the low pressure in the Bay of Bengal and the Equatorial Indian Ocean could balloon into a massive storm and started preparing for the onslaught, the weatherman said.

On April 21, based on data from various sources, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecast that conditions were conducive for formation of a low-pressure area in the Equatorial Indian Ocean and south Bay of Bengal. A low-pressure area is the initial stage of the formation of a cyclone. Armed with data from different institutes of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), the meteorologists deliberated on how low pressure could pan out to be. The IMD and other institutes of the Ministry of Earth Sciences ran data through 10 specialised weather models. “We realised all the models suggested that it was going to turn into a cyclone. So, from April 25 we started issuing special bulletins,” IMD’s Additional Director General (services) Mritunjay Mohapatra told PTI. Mohapatra, a veteran in tracking cyclones,

played a critical role in tracking Fani’s progress and accurately predicting its path. Elaborating on the formation stage of cyclone ‘Fani’, he said help from other institutes of the MoES played a crucial role in predicting the development of the cyclone. The National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai has over 20 buoys in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea that collected data on rainfall, temperatures below the sea and above, wind speed, Mohaptara said. Different satellites provided data and images on clouds in oceanic area for monitoring low pressure systems, said IMD’s Director General K J Ramesh. Satellite data was also used in running the models. “There are island observatories that fed us with data,” Mohapatra said. Ramesh said data was processed under different weather models by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune and National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF), Noida. These two institutes have two supercomputers that process data. The data was further processed by the Indian National Centre for Ocean

## Amar Subba’s charity run builds collaborations and raises aid for ailing student

**SAGAR CHHETRI**  
**GANGTOK, 05 MAY:**

Amar ‘Marathon Man’ Subba raised around Rs 30,000 for the ailing Bandana Limboo through a charity run he undertook from Singtam to Gangtok on Sunday. Mr Subba’s effort to build wider societal involvement to aid Ms Limboo’s treatment received heartening support with not only celebrities joining sections of his run but also lay people and even a seven-year-old. Addressing a short function at MG Marg on the conclusion of his run, Mr Subba thanked everyone who joined him on the charity run and expressed gratitude towards all organisations and individuals who came forward to support the cause. He expressed happiness over the handsome turnout in support of the run. International footballers from Sikkim, Sanju Pradhan and Bikash Jaiu, national footballers, long distance runners, athletes and people from all walks of life have joined the Marathon Man on his charity run today. The run was supported by Sikkim Limboo Youth Association [SLYA] and Press Club of Sikkim [PCS]. SLYA has been raising funds for Ms Limboo



and has raised around Rs 80,000 till date. Their collection drive will continue till 10 May. “Life has no guarantees and we can die any moment but while we are alive we should do good by others when we can,” Mr Subba said. 21-year-old Bandana Limboo is from Chisopani in South Sikkim and a student at Nar Bahadur

Bhandari Degree College, Tadong. She is presently undergoing treatment for Leukaemia [Blood Cancer] at AIIMS, New Delhi. Prerna, the women’s wing of Marwari Yuwa Manch, donated a sum of Rs 11,000 while former bureaucrat, Kiran Rasaily, contributed another Rs 10,100.

*turn to pg02*

## Singtam overrun by animal bite cases

**YOGEN THATAL**  
**SINGTAM, 03 MAY:**

The District Hospital here at Singtam has attended to 92 animal bite cases in the month of April. The numbers are worrying, and even more so since the problem does not appear to be going away any time soon. Confirming the number, the registration clerk at the hospital, Pravin Tamang, said, “Everyday, approximately three animal bite cases are brought in. The victims include everyone – children, teens, elderly, men, women... In short, every-

one is affected.” While 80% of the cases are of dog bites, patients have also been brought in after being bitten or scratched by cats, monkeys and even rats. Singtams medical concerns don’t end with animal bite cases and of late, there has been an increase in the number of skin diseases being reported. With a skin specialist available at the hospital only three days a week, not only is the doctor over-worked when on duty, the people have continuing irritations.

## Major Gogoi suffers ignominy of seniority reduction and exit from Kashmir Valley

**SUMIR KAUL**  
**SRINAGAR, MAY 5 (PTI):**

Major Leetul Gogoi, who was at the centre of the 2017 ‘human shield controversy’, will suffer the ignominy of reduction in seniority and exit from Kashmir Valley with the Army headquarters confirming the punishment for “fraternising” with a local woman last year, officials said here on Sunday. A court martial had held Gogoi and his driver Sameer Malla guilty on two counts – “fraternising” with a local woman in spite of instructions to the contrary and “being away from the place of duty while in operational area”, the officials said. The company commander of the unit of Malla, who was facing charges of unauthorised absence, has been authorised to decide on his punishment which includes a “severe reprimand”. Malla was recruited in the Territorial Army in 2017 and he was posted with 53 sector of Rashtriya Rifles, a counter-insurgency force fighting militancy in Jammu and Kashmir. The proceedings of the court martial were

confirmed by the Army headquarters after which it was decided to shift him out the valley, the officials said, adding that the final orders were received very recently. Gogoi and Malla’s summary of evidence was completed in early February, followed by the initiation of the court martial proceedings, they said. The statements of the both the accused as well as other witnesses were recorded by the Army court and the punishment, which has been vetted by the Army headquarters, has been given, they added. Major Gogoi and his driver were detained by Jammu and Kashmir Police following an altercation with the hotel staff when he was allegedly trying to enter it with an 18-year-old woman on May 23 last year. The woman had expressed her unwillingness to depose during the court martial proceedings and informed the Army authorities that she had given a statement before a magistrate and the same should be treated as her final stand.

*turn to pg02*

# Most Indian adults not aware they are suffering from Hypertension: Study

**NEW DELHI, MAY 5 (PTI):** Hypertension prevalence in India is high, but only 45 per cent of people are aware of their diagnosis, according to a first large scale population based study of hypertension care in India. Researchers have used National Health and Family Survey (NFHS-4, 2015-16) data of 731864 individuals aged 15-49 years, which covered each district of 29 states and 7 union territories of India. The study published in PLOS Medicine suggests that 3 out of 4 individuals with hypertension ever had their blood pressure measured, less than half of individuals (45 per cent) had been diagnosed, 13 per cent reported currently taking hypertensive medication, while 8 per cent had their blood pressure under control. The study was carried out by researchers at the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health, the Heidelberg Institute of Global Health, the University of Birmingham and the University of Gottingen. The study also found adults living in rural areas, men, and those who were poorer, were even less likely to receive the care they need. Only 5.3 per cent of hypertensive men and 10.9 per cent of hypertensive women aged 15-49 years have their blood pressure under control (i.e., they are taking medications and have a normal blood pressure), it stated. There is huge state-level variation in hypertension screening. Screening of hypertensive individuals was lowest in Madhya Pradesh (61.3 per cent) and highest in Haryana (93.5 per cent). More than half of

Indians aged 15-49 years with hypertension are not aware of their hypertension status. Awareness level was lowest in Chhattisgarh (22.1 per cent) and highest in Puducherry (80.5 per cent). 27 major states/union territories have blood pressure control rates below 10 per cent. Daman and Diu was the highest, but still only 1 in 5 adults there are under control. The study highlighted the urgent need of improvements in hypertension awareness, care and control for all Indians specially amongst the most productive years (15-49 years). Dr Dorairaj Prabhakaran, Vice President, Research and Policy, at PHFI and one of the authors of the study, said detection of hypertension is straightforward, treatments are simple yet effective, and hence hyper-

tension can be easily controlled. “Control of hypertension prevents future stroke, heart attacks and deaths. However, it is an unfortunate paradox that India does not perform well in any of the measures of detection, treatment and control. I believe the new National Health Mission through the health and wellness clinics has the potential to address the issue,” he said. Dr Lindsay Jaacks, faculty at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and visiting faculty at PHFI said, “This is not just an assessment of health systems. We need demand-side interventions to raise awareness in India that hypertension is relatively easy and cheap to treat, and that keeping it under control can have huge benefits in terms of preventing heart attacks and stroke.



## Fate of 134 candidates to be decided in 12 LS seats of Rajasthan on Monday

**JAIPUR, MAY 5 (PTI):** Two former Olympians, one former IAS and one former IPS officer, and two seers are among the 134 candidates whose fate will be decided by voters in Rajasthan's 12 Lok Sabha seats that will go to the polls on Monday. Of the 12 seats where polling will take place from 7 am to 6 pm, Jaipur Rural, Bikaner, Dausa and Alwar are some of the keenly-watched constituencies.

Former Olympians Rajyawardhan Rathore and Krishna Poonia have locked horns in the Jaipur Rural seat, where sitting MP Rathore is banking on the Prime Minister Narendra Modi factor. The BJP nominee has underlined national security as a key issue during campaigning, whereas Congress MLA Poonia has questioned the works done by Rathore in the constituency in her campaign.

The seat, which former Army officer Rathore had won with a margin of 3.32 lakh votes in 2014, is dominated by Jats. Thus, the caste equation is favourable for Poonia, who hails from the community. In Bikaner, Union minister and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate Arjun

Ram Meghwal is facing a tough fight from his cousin, Congress candidate Madangopal Meghwal. Arjun Ram Meghwal is a former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, while Madangopal Meghwal is a former Indian Police Service (IPS) officer.

From Nagaur, founder of the Rashtriya Loktantrik Party (RLP) Hanuman Beniwal is in the fray against Congress candidate and former MP Jyoti Mirdha. The RLP is an ally of the BJP. Beniwal was himself in the saffron party earlier.

Mirdha, who comes from an influential family of politicians, had won the seat in 2009 but in 2014, he had lost to BJP's C R Chaudhary, who went on to become a Union minister.

A Congress bastion, Nagaur was represented in the Lok Sabha by Jyoti Mirdha's grandfather and prominent Jat leader Nathuram Mirdha for six times since 1971.

Two seers -- Sumedhanand Saraswati and Baba Balaknath -- are contesting the polls from Sikar and Alwar respectively. Both are from the BJP and Sumedhanand is the sitting MP from Sikar.

### Major Gogoi...

The woman had also stated that she had gone out with Major Gogoi on her own will, besides disclosing that she had become a friend of the Army officer through his fake Facebook profile, where he had named himself Ubaid Arman.

Immediately after the incident came to light last year, Army chief Bipin Rawat had said that exemplary punishment would be given to Major Gogoi if he was found guilty of "any offence".

"If any officer of the Indian Army is found guilty of any offence, we will take strictest possible action," General Rawat had said.

Major Gogoi hit the headlines after he tied a man to a jeep purportedly as a shield against an unruly mob which was hurling stones during a by-poll at Budgam, which forms part of the Srinagar Lok Sabha seat, on April 9, 2017.

### Amar Subba's...

Footballer Sanju Pradhan, while welcoming the effort to generate community participation for a social cause, commented that such events will help the younger generation learn connect and build wider collaborations for the future.

"Although it was a challenging task for us to cover the distance from Singtam to Gangtok, but we wanted to set an example and encourage others to come forward as well. This run also gave us a chance to realize that our people are always ready to support people in need," he said.

The run started at 9:15 AM from Singtam Bazaar and runners received warm welcome from different organisations and individuals at different points along the route. Mr Subba and his team finally reached MG Marg at 1:40 PM and took a round of MG Marg. They were warmly received by SLYA members and other organisations at MG Marg.

The run has also featured the participation of a very young seven-year-old runner, Chunzang Lepcha.

International footballer Bikash Jairu also expressed his happiness over having taken part in this charity run and appealed that if everyone come forward in support.

National footballer, Nim Tshering Bhutia also appealed for support for the ailing Ms Limboo.

[with additional reporting by SONAKSHI SUBEDI and HISSEY LAMU BHUTIA]

### From its...

Information Services (INCOIS), Hyderabad that gave predictions on the extent, depth and duration of the inundations in the low-lying areas due to the cyclone, Ramesh said.

A similar model is run by Indian Institute of Technology Delhi to help the IMD with information on inundation.

The IMD also used its radars at Chennai, Karikal, Machilipatnam, Visakhapatnam, Gopalpur, Paradip, Kolkata, Agartala to the fullest.

"Twelve hours before the landfall, we kept sending updates on locations to concerned states every half hour using our radars, besides releasing hourly bulletins," Ramesh said.

'Fani' intensified into a cyclone on April 27. It became a 'severe cyclonic storm' on April 29 and into a 'very severe cyclone' on April 30. A day later, it took the form of an 'extremely severe cyclone' and slammed into the Odisha coast on May 3 with a speed gusting to 175 kilometres per hour.

The IMD also earned praised from different quarters of the world for its predictions.

# Mangan vegetable centre cold storage reopens



**MANGAN, 05 MAY (IPR):**

The organic vegetable centre-cum-cold storage located at Lal Bazar, Mangan, was reopened today by the North District Zilla Panchayat.

With reopening, farmers can avail the fa-

cilities to store their vegetables on payment of rates as charged by the concerned committee.

The cold storage is owned, operated and maintained by the North District Zilla Panchayat under the guidance of the

District Planning Officer.

This new facility provides a good opportunity to farmers to market their organic produce at a good price. The reopening has given mutual benefit to both the local public and the lo-

cal farmers.

The function was also attended by Somnath Adhikari (ADM/North), KR Limboo (ADC, Dev), Pempa Bhutia (DP0/NDZP), officials from the line Department and the local dignitaries.

## Delhi HC quashes Centre's 2018 IAS, IPS cadre allocation, orders fresh

**NEW DELHI, MAY 5 (PTI):**

The Delhi High Court has quashed the Centre's cadre allocations of IAS and IPS officers of 2018 batch under the new policy and ordered a fresh cadre allocation.

A bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli accepted the submission of the officers, who had approached the court challenging the process, that cadre allocation is a matter which would affect their careers for all times to come.

It noted that re-allocation of cadres by the authorities should not take much time as it is done electronically, that is through computer program or software, and the authorities already possess the requisite data in this regard.

"For all the aforesaid reasons, we are inclined to allow these writ petitions and to quash the cadre allocations made by the respondents of the IAS officers vide communication dated December 3, 2018, and the IPS officers vide OM dated December 19, 2018. We, accordingly, direct so," the bench said.

It said the court was inclined to grant relief to the petitioners considering that they have approached the court at the very earliest and at a stage when neither the IAS officers nor the IPS officers of the 2018 batch have commenced their on-site training which are cadre specific.

"We, therefore, direct the respondents to undertake fresh cadre allocation of the successful candidates allocated to the IAS and IPS, according to their merit and by taking into consideration the preferences given by the candidates irrespective of whether they have filled '99' in any of the zones or cadres.

"If a candidate is not able to get any of the preferred cadres according to his rank, cadre allocation in respect of such a candidate may be resorted to in the manner set out in...., that is, he may 'be allotted along with other such candidates in

the order of rank to any of the remaining cadres, arranged in alphabetical order, in which there are vacancies in his category if allocation of all the candidates who could be allotted to cadres in accordance with their preference," the bench said and disposed of four petitions.

For no preference in zones and cadres, the candidates had to enter "99".

The court's verdict came on four petitions filed by various officers challenging the notification of Central government allocating the cadres to candidates of Indian Police Service (IPS) on the basis of the results of the Civil Services Examination (CSE), 2017.

They sought direction to the Centre to issue a new list allocating the respective cadres to the selected IPS candidates in the CSE, 2017, purely on the basis of merit and preferences indicated in the online form, by correctly interpreting the Office Memorandum (OM) of September 5, 2017.

The pleas claimed that the interpretation of Cadre Allocation Policy 2017 adopted by the authorities was unreasonable and grossly unfair, unjust and arbitrary.

"The same is violative of the principle of equality in as much, as, the more meritorious candidates, who have ranked higher in CSE, 2017, have been denied allocation to cadres for which they had given their preferences, and less meritorious candidates have been allocated to the said cadres," the officers' counsel had argued.

As per the 2017 office memorandum on cadre allocation policy, the states and joint cadres were divided into five zones.

According to that policy, the candidates were required to first give their choice in the descending order of preference from amongst the various zones. Thereafter, the candidates will indicate one preference of cadre from each pre-

ferred zone.

The candidates will indicate their second cadre preference for every preferred zone thereafter. Similar process will continue till a preference for all the cadres is indicated by the candidate.

If a candidate does not give any preference for any of the zones/cadres, it will be presumed that he has no specific preference for those zones/cadres and accordingly, if he is not allocated to any one of the cadres for which he has indicated the preference, he shall be allotted along with other such candidates in the order of rank to any of the remaining cadres, arranged in an alphabetical order, in which there are vacancies in his category after allocation of all the candidates who can be allotted to cadres in accordance with their preference, it had stated.

The petitioners' grievance was that the authorities have not allocated the cadres to them as per their declared policy of merit-cum-preferences.

The bench agreed with the officers that the interpretation and implementation of the Cadre Allocation Policy, 2017 resorted to by the respondents is unreasonable and arbitrary, since the more meritorious candidates have been denied the cadres to which they were otherwise entitled according to their preference and the same have been allocated to the less meritorious candidates.

"There can be no gain saying that the common thread running in the said Cadre Allocation Policy, 2017 is to reward merit. The more meritorious candidates are entitled to consideration for allocation of cadres before the less meritorious candidates are considered.

"This is clear from the overall scheme/policy ... That principle has been clearly breached by the respondents due to the manner in which they have interpreted and implemented the OM dated September 5, 2017," it said.

## Env min rejects global reports claiming 1.2 million deaths in India due to pollution



**NEW DELHI, MAY 5 (PTI):**

Union minister Harsh Vardhan has discredited the recent global reports claiming over one million deaths in India due to air pollution, saying such studies are only aimed at "causing panic".

The Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is contesting the Lok Sabha polls from Chandni Chowk constituency in the national capital.

In an interview to PTI, the BJP leader said his government is working hard to tackle the problem of pollution and has been supporting the AAP-led Delhi government in this direction.

"We are doing our best to handle air pollution. The number of (achhe din) good days are consistently going up and bad days coming down," he said.

"Regarding the high-profile data of millions of deaths, I do not agree with that because pollution can cause premature illness and other things. Pollution does affect health, but to create such a panicky situation and say millions of people are dying, I do not agree with that," Vardhan told PTI.

A report by environment NGO Greenpeace recently stated that Delhi topped the list of most polluted cities in the world. The US-based Health Effects Institute report revealed that around 1.2 million people were killed in India in 2017 due to air pollution.

The Union minister highlighted the initiatives taken by the Centre and said aggressive campaigns have been organised in the national capital to handle pollution.

"You must be already aware of our National Clean Air Program (NCAP) which we started pro-actively and aggressively to improve air quality in 102 cities, where we found that consistently for five years, the PM 10 levels were beyond the desirable levels.

"You know about our graded response action plan and other activities like rules for dust mitigation and solid waste management. We have been handling it in the most aggressive manner," he asserted.

Vardhan, who is also the Union Minister of Science and Technology, said 60 teams of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) were sent to the national capital to tackle the pollution mess. He said the results

can be seen as compared to the scenario in 2016, 2017 and 2018.

The minister also underlined that the city government led by Arvind Kejriwal was helped by the Centre in every possible way to curb pollution woes.

"On two occasions, we took initiatives jointly. Both the governments (the Centre and Delhi government) did historic 15-20 days extensive drives by visiting various sites causing pollution in the national capital," he said.

"We informed the chief minister and the Lieutenant Governor about it and last year, we made everything transparent on the portal. We are helping the city government in all possible ways," Vardhan said.

The BJP leader said mobile application SAFAR was launched for real-time monitoring of air pollution in the city.

He, however, added that along with governments, the public should also be conscious and responsible towards environment.

"Ultimately, people have to change their habits and focus on environment-friendly actions. That is why, we launched Green Good Deeds movement in the country which has been recognised by the United Nations and talked about in BRICS. We are doing our best.

"Waste management rules were also modified in 2015-16 to make them more eco-friendly and useful for society," Vardhan said.

The incumbent Chandni Chowk MP, who is sure of a clean sweep in Delhi in the Lok Sabha polls, promised to take more steps for the environment if voted to power again.

"We have already initiated many activities. We have launched the best software in the world for environmental proposals and clearances--PARIVESH. Now the next step is to ensure that the states also have similar software. We have also reduced our clearance timing from 600 days to 100 days," he said.

"Our ministry got the highest award when PM Narendra Modi was conferred with earth care award by the United Nations. On every front, we are trying to do our best. Next year, we will do much better and finish what we started in various fields," Vardhan added.

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## DU celebrates 97th Foundation Day

**NEW DELHI, MAY 5 (PTI):** The Delhi University has celebrated its 97th Foundation Day which was marked by enthralling cultural events presented by students.

Jammu and Kashmir High Court Chief Justice Gita Mittal, Additional Solicitor General Pinky Anand, senior advocates Aman Sinha and Ramji Srinivasan were among others who were present on the occasion.

Speaking at the occasion, Justice Mittal recalled the learnings from the varsity and asked the students to imbibe three attributes in life -- Integrity, Authenticity and Determination.

Senior advocate Aman Sinha praised the university for providing students a holistic exposure and making them resilient.

Sinha has appeared in several landmark cases before the Supreme Court, including Ayodhya land dispute, environment issues, river interlinking, and DU photocopying matter. DU Vice Chancellor Professor Yogesh K Tyagi appreciated the outstanding contributions of the alumni in public life, who were also felicitated at the event. He mentioned that the DU has an extraordinary legacy and a promise for a bright future.

## Dalit man beaten up at wedding reception in Uttarakhand succumbs to injuries

**NEW TEHRI (UTTARAKHAND), MAY 5 (PTI):** A 23-year-old Dalit man succumbed to injuries Sunday, days after he was allegedly beaten up by some upper caste people for eating in front of them at a wedding reception in Uttarakhand's Tehri district, police said.

Jeetendra, a Dalit, was thrashed by the upper caste men who lost their temper as they found him eating in front of them "despite being from a lower caste", DSP Uttam Singh Jimwal said.

The incident took place on April 26 at a wedding reception in Shrikot village of the district, he said.

Jeetendra was critically injured and died at a hospital in Dehradun after nine days of treatment, the DSP said.

On the basis of a police complaint filed by Jeetendra's sister, a case was registered against seven persons -- Gajendra Singh, Soban Singh, Kushal Singh, Gabbar Singh, Gambhir Singh, Harbir Singh and Hukum Singh -- under the SC/ST Act, the DSP said.

Further action will be taken after the post-mortem report arrives, he said.

# Sikkim Himalayan thrashes Maximus Prime 5-1 at Hero India Jr League

**SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 05 MAY:**

Sikkim Himalayan Sporting Club [SHSC] thrashed Maximus Prime Sports 05-01 at the Hero India Junior League for u-15 players in Kolkata. This was SHSC's second match of the tournament.

Coach Pranay Subba informs that Rudra Chettri, Rishal Chettri, Purbanas Thatal, Anil Limboo and Om Hang Limboo scored a goal each for the Sikkim team.

SHSC had played a 2-2 draw in its first match against Aizwal FC and now has 4 points from two matches.



es. Aizwal FC also has 4 points from two games and plays its last match against Maximus Prime

Sports while SHSC plays AU Rajasthan FC in its third and final group match on May 7.

Only one team will progress into the next round and goal difference could come into

play if SHSC and Aizwal FC find themselves evenly placed on the points tally.

## Cyclone Fani: Pre-emptive measures ensured zero loss of life at sea, says Coast Guard



**NEW DELHI, MAY 5 (PTI):** Pre-emptive measures undertaken by the Indian Coast Guard like alerting the fisherfolk and merchant marine community resulted in zero loss of life at sea during Cyclone Fani, the maritime security agency said Sunday.

In a statement, the Coast Guard said on April 24, when Fani was in its formative stages, it started working on risk assessment of the vulnerabilities on eastern coast. All the seven Indian Coast Guard (ICG) stations and six of its district headquarters on the east coast were put on alert.

"No loss of life has been reported at sea. ICG Disaster Response Teams are assisting the state administration in the relief operations," the Coast Guard said.

Around 14 ICG ships and four aircraft were tasked daily at sea to warn fishing and merchant marine community since April 24, it said.

"ICG ships, aircraft and shore based remote operating stations relayed warning to fishing and merchant mariners on very high frequency (VHF) along the entire east coast," the Coast Guard said.

Warnings were also broadcast in regional languages for the benefit of local fishing community. Contingency meetings were held with authorities at Mandapam, Puducherry, Chennai, Vishakapatnam, Paradip, Bhubaneswar, Haldia and Kolkata to chalk out mobilisation plans, it added. Special community interaction programmes were conducted

at 13 fishing hamlets with participation of local community leaders to ensure no fishing boat ventured at sea, the agency said. Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres (MRCC) at Chennai and Mumbai were tasked to update the merchant mariners over Navigational Telex and International Safety Net.

Neighbouring MRCCs were also alerted to keep a lookout for stranded Indian vessels and provide assistance.

"As the cyclone made landfall in the forenoon of May 3, five capital ships of ICG braving the inclement weather and rough seas proceeded towards the Odisha coast for assisting the state administration in response and relief operation and undertaking damage assessment," it said.

ICG ships were stocked up with food packets, potable water and relief material.

"A total of 34 Coast Guard Disaster Response Teams (DRT) were put to action along with life-saving equipment, basic relief material, food packets and water. Emergency Medical Teams were formed along with Critical Care Ambulance and Emergency Medicines at Vishakapatnam, Gopalpur, Paradip, Bhubaneswar, Haldia and Kolkata," the maritime agency added.

The death toll in Cyclone Fani rose to 29 Sunday, two days after the "extremely severe" storm barrelled through coastal Odisha, causing widespread destruction and leaving hundreds grappling with water shortage and power cuts.

# BJP responsible for attack on me: Kejriwal

**NEW DELHI, MAY 5 (PTI):** Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Sunday held the BJP responsible for the attack on him during a roadshow and charged that the police is merely following the script given by the ruling party.

Kejriwal was slapped allegedly by a disgruntled AAP supporter during a roadshow in Moti Nagar on Saturday.

Noting that it was the ninth attack on him and the fifth since he became the chief minister, Kejriwal said it was not an attack on him but on the mandate of the people of Delhi. No immediate response was received either from the BJP or the police. "They (BJP)



do not want common man to enter politics so we are being targeted, he told reporters.

Kejriwal said Delhi Police's response was carefully scripted. "It was done at the behest of the BJP, he charged.

He also dismissed the charge that the attacker was an AAP supporter as claimed by the police.

Delhi Police said Saturday that preliminary

interrogation has revealed that 33-year-old Suresh, a scrap dealer in the area, was a supporter of AAP and he used to work as organiser of its rallies and meetings.

An inquiry by a DCP-level officer has been ordered to find out how this person was allowed to be in the reception/proximate group, Additional PRO, Delhi Police Anil Mittal had said.

## Cancer patient fan appeals to Ajay Devgn to not promote tobacco products

**JAIPUR, MAY 5 (PTI):** Nanakram, a 40-year old cancer patient from Rajasthan, has made a public appeal to Bollywood actor Ajay Devgn to stop doing advertisement of tobacco products in the interest of the society.

The patient's family said that he was a fan of Devgn and used the same product which the actor advertises for but now he realises that tobacco has had an adverse effect on his life.

Nearly 1000 pamphlets addressed to

Devgn, in which Nanakram asks the actor about how much he or his family chew tobacco, have been circulated and pasted on the walls in Sanganer, Jagatpura and nearby areas of the city.

"My father Nanakram Meena started chewing tobacco a few years ago and was using the same brand for which Devgn does the advertisement. My father was impressed by Devgn but when he was diagnosed with cancer, he felt that such a big

star should not advertise for these kind of products," Dinesh Meena, the patient's son, told PTI.

In the pamphlet, Nanakram said that advertisements of things like liquor, cigarette and tobacco were harmful and that actors should not promote these things.

A father of two children, Nanakram, who used to run a tea-stall earlier, cannot speak and runs the family by selling milk at home in Sanganer town of Jaipur.

## Clash of titans on cards in fifth phase polling in UP



**LUCKNOW, MAY 5 (PTI):** The fifth phase of polling in 14 Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh Monday will see a clash of titans including Union ministers Rajnath Singh and Smriti Irani, UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi and Congress president Rahul Gandhi.

The BJP had bagged 12 of these seats in 2014 with the Congress winning Sonia Gandhi's Rae Bareilly and Rahul Gandhi's Amethi -- the only two constituencies where the Congress succeeded out of the 80 in the entire state.

Around 2.47 crore people are eligible to vote in Dhaurahra, Sitapur, Mohanlalganj (SC), Lucknow, Banda, Fatehpur, Kaushambi (SC), Barabanki (SC), Faizabad, Bahraich (SC), Kaiserganj and Gonda constituencies where 182 candidates are in the contest.

The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) is contesting on five seats - Dhaurahra, Sitapur, Mohanlalganj, Fatehpur and Kaiserganj.

Its ally Samajwadi Party (SP) is fighting for seven seats -Lucknow, Banda, Kaushambi, Barabanki, Faizabad, Bahraich and Gonda.

In Amethi and Rae Bareilly, the SP-BSP alliance has not put up any candidate, leaving the two constituencies for the Congress.

Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh is seeking re-election from Lucknow, while his colleague

at the Centre Smriti Irani is again taking on Rahul Gandhi in Amethi. In the Faizabad parliamentary constituency, under which the temple town of Ayodhya falls, sitting BJP MP Lallu Singh is taking on Nirmal Khatri of the Congress. Khatri is a former Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee chief.

Former Union minister and Congress candidate Jitin Prasad is contesting from Dhaurahra against former Chambal brigand Malkhan Singh.

Malkhan Singh, 76, has been fielded by Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party-Lohia, floated by SP founder Mulayam Singh Yadav's brother Shivpal Yadav.

On Friday, the final day of campaigning for the fifth phase, BJP chief Amit Shah along with a host of party leaders held a roadshow in Amethi, seeking support for Smriti Irani.

On Friday, Bollywood actor Sonakshi Sinha, the daughter of SP candidate from Lucknow Poonam Sinha, took part in a roadshow in the state capital.

Poonam Sinha's husband, actor-turned-politician Shatrughan Sinha, who is the Congress candidate from Patna Sahib, had joined her last month when she filed her nomination papers as the Samajwadi Party candidate.

Polling will be held in the state in the next two phases as well.

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## Need NGOs

*Not just to solve problems, but also to acquire confident pride*

There are many problems that only non-governmental volunteers can solve. Discomforting situations, especially the ones that are social in nature, require agencies from outside to find deliverance. The State can at best play the role of a facilitator by putting in place the right laws and making available the required funds to aid the process.

In contrast, when the government takes on the role of the NGOs, there is too much tokenism and too little engagement which does not help anyone. This is not for want of intent, but more a fallout of the lack of commitment caused by haphazard prioritisation. Government officials are after all in transferable jobs and have other considerations weighing on their minds like career progression to get too involved with the social cause they might at a given time be only ex-officio or otherwise involved in. Without complete involvement and felt understanding, social problems cannot be solved and this commitment can only be guaranteed by committed volunteers of an NGO. Government functionaries will be satisfied with an elaborately staged “World Day” observance of their present responsibility or the odd workshop and seminar talking down to corralled audience, but that does nothing for the issue or problem at hand beyond feeding a press release. Real work involves getting the hands dirty and that is too much to expect from individuals with temporary responsibility of the problem. The government is also handicapped by the red tape they wrap themselves in and the procedures and hierarchies they are habituated to. Work on the field demands instant decisions and improvisations which government officials are either not trained for or unwilling to risk.

In Sikkim, unfortunately, the NGO culture is still nascent. There is something definitely wrong with the picture when governments and project developers float their own organizations to do “social work” which should ideally be undertaken by well networked “local” NGOs. Without taking anything away from the efficacy of the present kind of NGOs, a fact which cannot be ignored is that under the present structures, the NGOs become an extension of the bureaucratic system of chakari in which political masters [or funding company] gain primacy over the people among whom the organisations should be working. This subverts the whole role of a social engagement from being one of linking aspirations and concerns from the grassroots up, to becoming handling agents of dole trickling down from above. What this awkward arrangement also delivers is government-NGO relationship which is not one of mutual respect. Since most NGOs here are completely dependent on the State for funds and directions, their independence is restricted. It is time the NGO culture developed into a viable deliverer of services and information to the Sikkimese, especially those in the rural areas.

Many changes are afoot at present and NGO involvement in cushioning their impact is an urgent need. Absent of committed and informed social workers, a fatalistic streak is created among the people who start losing faith in their ability to solve problems on their own. If this notion is allowed to take roots, very soon, a society mistakenly convinced of its incompetence will even stop trying very hard to improve its situation. A responsible network of NGOs will go a long way in combating this defeatist trait and help in reacquiring the confidence which slips away fast in a welfare state.

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# Leonardo da Vinci's helicopter: 15th-century flight of fancy led to modern aeronautics

JONATHAN RIDLEY  
*theconversation.com*

Humankind has always had a desire to fly. Flight may be normal for us now, thanks to the efforts of numerous engineers and scientists, but in the 15th century it existed only in myths such as Daedalus and Icarus – which wasn't that encouraging, when you come to think of it.

One scientist and engineer at the time was fascinated by nature and blessed with a problem-solving mind able to combine the disciplines of art and science. He looked at flight from a different perspective and understood that it must be able to be described by mathematics. That, if understood correctly, could then be applied to make people fly. That scientist and engineer was Leonardo da Vinci.

Aside from his well-known exceptional breadth and depth of talent, Leonardo was notable in that he combined his knowledge across a range of disciplines in science with his imaginative problem-solving skills and applied it to design objects that were in some cases centuries ahead of his time.

These designs included sketches of designs such as a military tank, a parachute, underwater breathing equipment and a robotic knight. Few of these were built – or realistically, could be built in his time – but they offer a fascinating insight into science and engineering. In many cases, these designs were inspired by his observations of the natural world.

Leonardo seemed to have a particular interest in flying, with some of his work focused on measuring wind force and designing flying machines. Sadly the sum of knowledge of aerodynamics was rather limited until much later. Aristotle noted in the 4th century BC that heavier objects should fall much faster than light objects in a medium (although there is some debate about his description of velocity) and perhaps developed the view that air can be considered to behave as a very light fluid. Philoponus in the 6th century noted, in his Theory of Impetus, that an object moving in a fluid must have some resistance or force from the fluid, which moved around the object. But there appears to be little consensus on any theory of flight, other than it may involve the flapping of large wings attached to a person.

Leonardo drew detailed sketches around 1481 for a water lifting device, using an Archimedes screw. Perhaps noting the effect of the screw in moving fluids, and knowing that air itself behaved as a light fluid, in 1489 he presented what we may recognise today as a machine designed to perform like a helicopter. Using the principle of an Archime-

des screw in a vertical orientation, he developed the “aerial screw”. This was a rotor in the shape of a helix, approximately four metres in diameter. He proposed that the screw should be made with a frame of reeds supporting a starch-sealed linen covering, supported with wires. In his notes, he explains that the machine would operate as if it were a screw that penetrates the air, and so would cause lift when it rotated.

Leonardo recorded a lot of his work in notes,



put together into folios. The drawings in the folio for the aerial screw (known as Manuscript B, folio 83v) appear to show four levers, to be pushed to create rotation of the screw around a vertical axis. These levers suggest that four people would be needed to produce the power required – but it's impossible for four people to produce anywhere near enough power for flight in this manner.

It also neglected the problem of torque reaction – where once in flight the torque created by the people would act to rotate their platform as well as the screw itself. It is difficult to think that someone with as much understanding of the world around us as Leonardo missed this – perhaps he intended the people to be used to create energy to store in the device in a wound spring, possibly to see if the screw itself would fly without the weight of the human “engines”.

### BIRD BRAIN?

As with other engineers at that time, Leonardo also studied the flight of birds. In 1505 he published his Codex on the Flight of Birds, noting the shape of a bird's wing in flight and connecting the idea of air pressure to flight and weight distribution. He considered air as a fluid resisting flight and presented the idea that birds fly by beating their wings and “condensing” the air under the wings.

Using this concept of beating wings to pressurise air, he developed a design for an “ornitho-

pter” – a flying machine that achieves flight by flapping its wings. As with the aerial screw it would need to be human powered, and sadly we simply don't have enough muscle power to be able to fly like a bird with our arms.

Human-controlled flight itself would have to wait another 348 years, thanks to the work of Sir George Cayley. He also studied the flight of birds, conducted research to correctly determine aerodynamic forces and therefore remove the link between thrust and flapping wings, designing what we would recognise today as an aircraft. His glider successfully flew under controlled flight in 1853, with his work later acknowledged by the Wright brothers. In common with Leonardo, Cayley was a prolific inventor, and was responsible for tension-spoke wheels, self-righting lifeboats, caterpillar tracks for vehicles, seat belts and more.

### ART AND SCIENCE MEET

A modern aerodynamics engineer approaching a similar problem to Leonardo's aerial screw would have an impressive range of techniques, tools and theory at their disposal. The cumulative knowledge of aerodynamics research across the past few centuries – and the supporting mathematical techniques – of course give us far more information than that available to Leonardo.

Computational Fluid Dynamics software allows us to understand and investigate fluid flow and forces, while Finite Element Analysis methods allow us to optimise structures for minimum weight. This lets us minimise harmful drag while maximising useful lift, and create structures which are light and so require less power to move.

But our modern engineer and Leonardo do have a lot in common in the engineering process. Both have complex problems to solve. There are unknown values, which must be determined through either physical experiment or mathematical modelling.

The final design must be described in a technical drawing, to make it simple to understand and manufacture. It must also, if a commercial product, have an aesthetic appeal. This presents a real challenge to a modern specialist engineer, who may not necessarily have the same superb artistic talents that Leonardo had.

It is here that art and science mix, to create an artefact that must perform, but look attractive to customers. Here perhaps, Leonardo had an advantage over our modern specialist engineer.

*[the writer is Head of Engineering Warsash School of Maritime Science and Engineering, Solent University]*



# Curious Kids: Why is spider silk so easy to break when it's supposedly stronger than steel?

MARK LORCH  
*theconversation.com*

How is spider silk so easy to break when it's stronger than steel? - George, aged ten, Hethersett, UK.

Thanks for the question, George – the simple answer is that spider silk breaks easily because it's really, really, really thin. A thread in the web of a garden spider is just 0.003 millimetres across – that's more than 20 times thinner than a hair from your head.

But there are a few more matters we need to untangle, to see how strong spider silk is, compared with steel.

Steel is a material called an alloy, which means it is a mixture of metals. The main metal in steel is iron. Other metals are added to the iron, depending on what you want the steel to do.

For example, knives and forks are made from stainless steel that doesn't rust. To make this you'd mix iron and chromium.

But maybe you want a steel that

is really strong so you could make buildings and cranes from it. Then, you would need to mix iron with a load of different metals including titanium and vanadium.

But there are even stronger steels. Your bike might be built with something called maraging steel and it's made with iron, nickel, cobalt, molybdenum, titanium and aluminium.

**SPIDERS' DIFFERENT SILKS**  
Silk is a very different material from steel. It is actually protein – the same stuff that your hair and finger nails are made from.

We use steel for different jobs and spiders use silk for all sorts of things as well. And the just like our steel, spiders need different silks for the different jobs.

Let's look at the common European garden spider: this lovely creature spins the beautiful round webs, using two types of silk.

The spokes of the web are made from dragline silk. This is strong

and slightly stretchy, which means it's good for making the main supports for the web.

The rest of the web is made from flag silk, which is less strong but very elastic, so it is really good at absorbing the shock when a great big fly smashes into the web.

But the champion constructor of the spider world is the Darwin bark spider. It produces huge webs, about the size of a kitchen table.

These are sometimes hung from trees with silk threads that stretch right across rivers. To make sure these webs stay in place, the spider uses super strong threads of silk.

Now, I've done some calculations, based on what scientists know about the strength of these different materials, to compare steels with spider silks and see just how strong they are.

### THE WINNING WEB

Imagine we had a thread of each material, that was about one millimetre thick – that's roughly the width

of a pin head. Who could hang from them before they broke?

The weakest is the flag line silk: a ten-year-old girl could probably swing from a thread of this, but nothing much heavier.

Next comes the high strength steel which would just about be OK if a chimpanzee hung from it.

The dragline silk would support a small adult – like Spiderman.

The Darwin bark spider silk is next, it would break if anything much bigger than a panda tried to climb it.

And finally, a gorilla would be fine dangling from a one millimetre-thick thread of maraging steel.

Which means that some the strongest steel is actually tougher than the champion spider silks. That is a shame, but all is not lost for the spiders: remember, some of their silks are still stronger than some steels.

*[the writer is Professor of Science Communication and Chemistry, University of Hull]*



# Aunt versus nephew in Matua-dominated Bangaon

**SUDIPTO CHOWDHURY THAKURNAGAR (WB), MAY 5 (PTI):** That a family feud can turn into a subject of rivalry between two political parties can be witnessed if someone visits Thakurnagar town in West Bengal.

Located close to the India-Bangladesh border, the town, about 63 km from Kolkata, in North 24 Parganas district falls under the Bangaon Lok Sabha seat, which is among the six constituencies in the state that is dominated by the Matua community.

It is for quite some time that the Matuas, a Schedule Caste community founded by Harichand-Guruchand Thakur, have been divided into two sections.

One section of the family supports sitting Trinamool Congress MP Mamata Bala Thakur, the widow of Kapil Krishna Thakur who is the son of Matua matriarch Binapani Devi, popularly known as Boroma.

The other section stands besides Manjul Krishna Thakur, the second son of Boroma and the father of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate Shantanu Thakur.

The rift between them has widened after the death of Binapani Devi in March, says Barun Biswas, a resident of

Chikanpara panchayat.

“The rift was there, but it started deteriorating slowly and slowly,” Biswas says. “We never wanted that to happen. This is affecting the Matuas and the political parties are gaining on it.”

Describing his aunt as “nobody”, Shantanu Thakur claims the TMC parliamentary do not belong to the family.

“I do not know her and cannot recognise her. She is from Maharashtra not from Bengal,” he says. “She is nobody of the Thakur bari (Thakur family). She is here illegally, forcefully and is enjoying every benefits.”

Calling her a “outsider”, Shantanu Thakur, an alumni of an Australia educational institution, said Mamata Bala Thakur should not be deciding the fate of the Matuas.

Mamata Bala Thakur had won the Lok Sabha by-election in 2015 after her husband, who won the seat in the 2014 general election on a TMC ticket, passed away. She had defeated Manjul Krishna Thakur’s elder son, Subrata, who had fought on a BJP ticket, by a huge margin.

However, Matuas living in the area can sense a change in the air. That was quite prominent in the area starting from Thakurnagar railway

station, where BJP flags can be seen fluttering everywhere. Most of the walls were taken over and painted in saffron in support of its candidate. The TMC’s presence was seen far less.

Mamata Bala Thakur counters this by saying her development works for the community and Thakurnagar speaks for themselves.

“I do not need to go on painting the walls to show my presence. I am there in the minds of the people... in the minds of the Matuas,” she says. “Where was the BJP in the last five years?” the MP asks, asserting that the saffron party would not be able to weaken the TMC here.

“They (BJP) are living in a fool’s paradise. People want development, not big promises,” she says.

Shantanu Thakur alleged that the ruling TMC had done very little for the development for the Matuas. The BJP leader promised he would ensure that community gets proper recognition as the citizens of India, in an apparent reference to the controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Bill.

Describing it as a “lie”, Mamata Bala Thakur, however, says the community would be “cheated” if they fall

prey it. “When the BJP is saying that it will introduce the NRC in West Bengal, then it is surely a fake promise to cheat the voters,” she says.

Dilip Bagchi, a local shopkeeper, says the rift in the family widened after Boroma passed away and the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in February.

Mita Mondal, a general practitioner, accuses the TMC of disconnecting electricity, stopping water supply for almost two days when Modi had come here to meet Boroma.

“We had to suffer a lot in those two days. People have not liked this,” Mondal says. “After all, he is the PM of our country and you cannot do this,” the resident of Thakurnagar Main Road says.

Reiterating their words, Manjul Krishna Thakur accused TMC North 24-Parganas president Jyotipriya Mallick of driving a wedge in the family and at the cost of the development for the Matuas.

“Jyotipriya is enjoying the money of the Matua Trust... He is not a politician, but a goon under the the TMC party banner,” Manjul Krishna Thakur, who was the minister of state for refugee, relief and rehabilitation, and had resigned and joined

the BJP in 2015.

Mallick refuted the allegations and accused the BJP of trying to exploit the ‘namasudras’ here.

“BJP is trying to gain ground in West Bengal to compensate for their possible losses in other states,” the minister said. “Thakurnagar is a challenge for us but we are not tensed,” he says, adding that the party was thinking about its victory margin in Bangaon.

The CPI(M), meanwhile, has nominated former MP Alokesh Das, while the Congress has named Sourav Prasad from the seat.

Das claimed that the voters in the area were fed-up with the TMC and were looking for a change. “They (voters) want change and they will vote for that... We will have people’s mandate for that,” the CPI(M) candidate added.

With a total of 16,99,763 voters, the Bangaon (SC) constituency located in North 24 Parganas and Nadia district, has a total of seven assembly segments - Kalyani, Haringhata, Bagda, Bangaon Uttar, Bangaon Dakshin, Gaighata and Swarupnagar.

Bangaon goes to polls in the fifth phase of the Lok Sabha election on Monday.

## Over 65L J’khand voters to seal fate of 61 nominees on May 6

**RANCHI, MAY 5 (PTI):** Union Minister Jayant Sinha, former chief minister Arjun Munda and ex-MLA Kalicharan Munda are among the 61 candidates whose fate will be sealed in the second phase of elections in Jharkhand.

Polling will be held between 7 am and 4 pm Monday amid tight security in four Lok Sabha constituencies - Hazaribagh, Koderma, Ranchi and Khunti (ST) - where over 65 lakh electorate is set to exercise their franchise in 8,834 polling stations, an election official said.

While Union Minister Jayant Sinha is seeking a re-election from Hazaribagh, BJP candidate Arjun Munda is taking on Kalicharan Munda of the Congress in Khunti constituency.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Union Civil Aviation Minister Suresh Prabhu were among those who campaigned for Sinha in

Hazaribagh. Sinha is pitted against Congress leader and ‘Mahagathbandhan’ candidate Gopal Sahu.

Among others contesting Monday’s election from the seat is CPI’s state unit secretary and former MP B P Mehta.

In Khunti, apart from Kalicharan Munda of the Congress and Arjun Munda of the BJP, 11 candidates are contesting the polls, including Indumati Mundu of the BSP.

Congress president Rahul Gandhi had visited the constituency on May 2 to seek votes in favour of his party nominee from the seat.

Barring Sinha from Hazaribagh, the BJP has replaced all its sitting MPs in the second phase of polls.

The saffron party has fielded Sanjay Seth from Ranchi and Annapurna Devi from Koderma, replacing five-time MP Ramtahal Chaudhary and outgoing parliamentarian Ravindra Rai respectively. Chaudhary is contesting the polls as an

independent after being denied ticket by the BJP.

Annapurna Devi, who quit the RJD and joined the saffron party on March 25, is pitted against Jharkhand Vikas Morcha (Prajatantrik) president Babulal Marandi and CPI-ML (Liberation) legislator Raj Kumar Yadav.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had canvassed for Annapurna Devi in Koderma on April 29. Seth, on the other hand, is taking on former union minister and Congress candidate Subodh Kant Sahay in Ranchi parliamentary constituency. Of the 65,87,028 electorate, 31,44,679 are female and 83 belong to the third gender, the election official said.

At least 918 out of 8,834 polling stations will have webcasting facilities, he said.

The Election Commission has appointed 39,909 polling personnel and 1,191 micro observers for Monday’s election, the official added.

## 7 LS seats in West Bengal to go to polls in fifth phase

**KOLKATA, MAY 5 (PTI):** Seven Lok Sabha constituencies spread across three districts in West Bengal will go to polls in the fifth phase of elections on Monday.

The ruling Trinamool Congress, the BJP, the Congress and Left Front constituent CPI(M) are the main contenders in the seven seats where the fate of 83 candidates will be decided by a 1,16,91,889-strong electorate. To ensure free and fair polling in Bongaon (SC), Barrackpur, Howrah, Uluberia, Serampore, Hooghly and Arambagh (SC) seats, the Election Commission will deploy a total of 578 companies of central forces, which will cover almost 100 per cent polling booths, officials said.

The campaign for these constituencies have seen poll meetings by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP chief Amit Shah and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Banerjee also participated in a number of roadshows, including one in the last day.

The TMC has fielded Mamata Thakur against BJP nominee Shantanu

Thakur inviting a split in the Matua community in the Bangaon (SC) seat. The CPI(M) has nominated Alakesh Das, while the Congress has fielded Sourav Prosad.

Shantanu Thakur was injured in an accident Saturday.

Matua votes were considered a major factor in the Trinamool Congress’ win in the 2011 and 2016 Assembly polls.

With an estimated population of 30 lakh in the state, Matuas can influence results in at least five Lok Sabha seats in North and South 24 Parganas districts.

In Barrackpore, the TMC has fielded Dinesh Trivedi against BJP’s Arjun Singh who defected from the TMC ahead of the polls. The Congress has nominated Md Alam and the CPI(M)’s candidate is Gargi Chatterjee.

The Howrah Lok Sabha seat will see football-turned-politician Prasun Banerjee of the TMC locking horns with BJP’s Rantidev Sengupta. The Congress has nominated Suvra Ghosh and the CPI(M) has nominated Sumitro Adhikary.

In Uluberia, TMC’s Sajda Ahmed will contest

against Joy Banerjee of the BJP. The Congress has fielded Shoma Ranisree Roy and Maksuda Khan has been nominated by the CPI (M).

Kalyan Banerjee is the TMC candidate from Sreerampur against BJP’s Debjit Sarkar. The Congress has nominated Debabrata Biswas and the CPI(M) named Tirthankar Ray for the seat.

In Hooghly the seat, Dr Ratna De Nag of the TMC will contest against BJP’s celebrity candidate Locket Chatterjee.

The CPI(M) has nominated Pradip Saha and the Congress has fielded Pratul Chandra Saha for the seat. In the Arambagh (SC) seat, TMC’s Aparupa Poddar will contest against Tapan Kumar Ray of the BJP. The CPI(M) has fielded Sakti Mohan Malik and the Congress has nominated Jyoti Kumari Das.

Besides general election observers and expenditure observers, the poll panel has for the first time deployed a special police observer and a special observer. In another first, VVPATs will be used in all the polling booths along with the EVMS, EC sources said.

## ONGC gets green nod for Rs 240cr project in Assam

**NEW DELHI, MAY 5 (PTI):** State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) has received the green nod to drill six development wells in Assam at an estimated cost of Rs 240 crore. The Union Environment Ministry has given the environment clearance for six development wells in five mining lease blocks in Jorhat and Golghat districts, according to an official document.

The company had sought permission for drilling 12 development wells but it received clearance for six wells at present. The clearance, which is subject to compliance of certain conditions, has been given after taking into consideration the recommendation of a green panel.

The total mining lease area of Jorhat and Golaghat districts is 32.116 sq km and 120.5 sq km, respectively. The total project cost is pegged at Rs 240 crore.

## Cyclone Fani: Telecom firms operationalise over 900 base stations in Odisha; restoration work on



**NEW DELHI, MAY 5 (PTI):** Telecom infrastructure restoration work is on in full swing in cyclone-hit Odisha, where mobile operators Bharti Airtel, Vodafone Idea and Reliance Jio have operationalised over 930 base transceiver stations (BTSs), official sources said.

State-owned Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd’s (BSNL) exchange at Puri has been made operational and mobile service BTS at the exchange building too is now working, they added.

Restoration work is underway in Odisha, which was battered by

cyclonic storm ‘Fani’ on Friday morning. Sources said that 932 BTSs (base stations for mobile communication) have been made operational by Airtel, Vodafone and Reliance Jio.

In neighbouring West Bengal, 206 BTSs are pending restoration, they added. The Telecom Department has been closely monitoring the situation and holding review meetings with operators to oversee restoration work.

On Friday, when the storm pounded coastal parts of Odisha, the facility for free SMS was activated,

and free interconnect between Airtel, Vodafone Idea, Reliance Jio and Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) was facilitated to ensure calls can be made on whichever network is available. Among other measures, helpline number 1938 was also activated. Cyclonic storm ‘Fani’ slammed into the Odisha coast on Friday morning, packing heavy rain and winds with speeds up to 175 kmph.

Telecom networks in some parts of Odisha, including Puri and Bhubaneswar, had suffered extensive network damage.

## Mamata urges people not to leave TMC for a few greedy leaders

**GOALTORE/BELPAHARI/DANTAN (WB) MAY 5 (PTI):** Admitting that a few local leaders of the party may be “greedy”, Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee Sunday urged people not to turn their anger against them into voting against the TMC, claiming that its central leadership is above such vices. The West Bengal chief minister said her government has showered the impoverished Jangalmahal area, which had once become a den of Maoists, with many benefits and schemes to lift their standard of life.

The Jangalmahal area comprises forested areas of West Midnapore, Purulia and Bankura districts. “I cannot say 100 per cent workers of my party are good, may

be two per cent are bad and we take action against them,” Banerjee said addressing public rallies in three places of Jangalmahal region.

She said a few local leaders in the region have become greedy but they have been identified and thrown out. Banerjee urged people not to leave the TMC and go to the BJP, the Congress or the CPI(M) for the fault of a few.

“Whatever happens, it is the TMC which will remain at your feet and be with you in all your needs and problems,” Banerjee said, in a bid to pacify anger among some sections of the people over the phenomenal rise of wealth of a few local TMC leaders. Banerjee said her nephew Abhishek Banerjee, who is the TMC youth wing president, is in

the party because of his concern for her. “Abhishek was a child when I was badly injured in an attack many years ago. Pained by my sufferings, he would roam about the house shouting slogans against the then chief minister Jyoti Basu seeking an answer on why I was attacked,” the TMC supremo said.

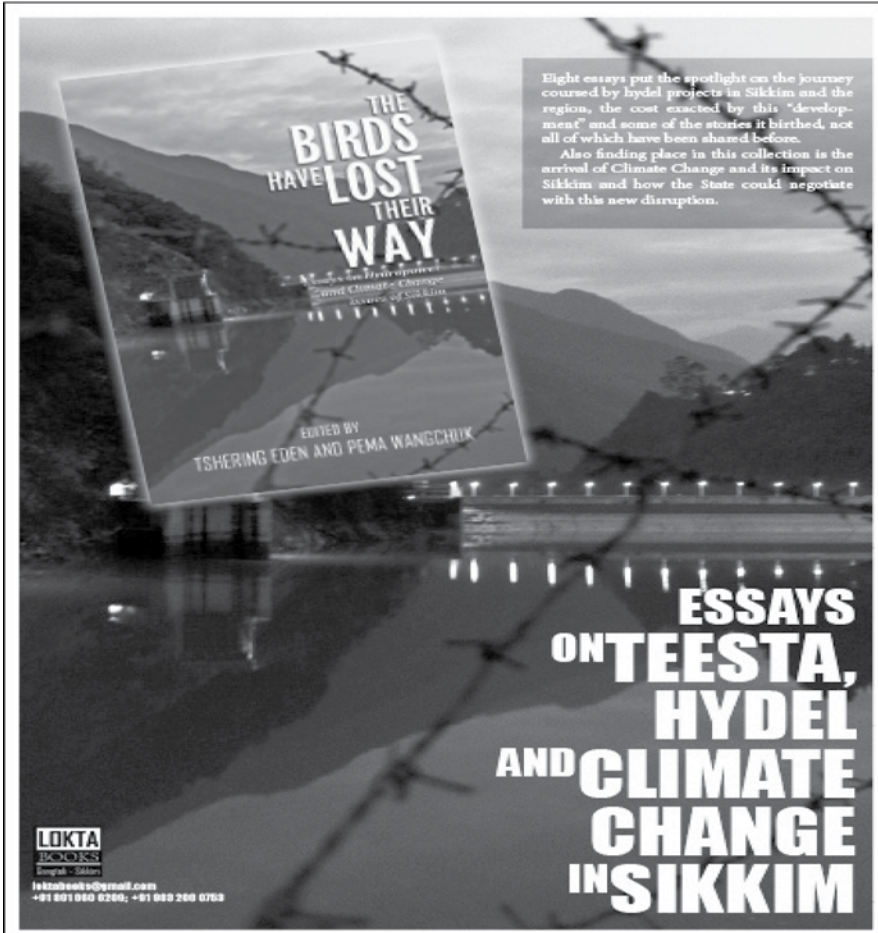
Defending Abhishek’s rise in the party, she said the new generation should come forward and join politics to give a cleaner political environment.

She said the TMC has ushered in a better life for the impoverished people of Jangalmahal, many of whom could not afford one square meal a day and would eat ants to quell their hunger. Banerjee said her gov-

ernment is running many welfare schemes - from rice for Rs two per kg to ‘Kanyashree’ for girl students and ‘Utkarsha Bangla’ for skill development for the benefit of the people.

The chief minister said her government has succeeded in driving out the Maoists from Jangalmahal and established peace in the region. Claiming that Narendra Modi is the biggest “calamity for the country”, she said the country will be saved if he goes.

“The BJP can get a maximum 150 to 160 seats out of 543 in the Lok Sabha,” the TMC supremo predicted, while asserting that in Bengal, the saffron party will not be able to open its account and all the 42 Lok Sabha seats in the state will go to her party.





# Under-strength Barca beaten by Celta

**MADRID, MAY 5 (AFP):** Barcelona rested all 11 players that started against Liverpool in the Champions League but paid the price on Saturday as they were beaten 2-0 by struggling Celta Vigo in La Liga.

Lionel Messi, Luis Suarez and Philippe Coutinho were all among those left out ahead of the return at Anfield on Tuesday but Barca were not unscathed, after Ousmane Dembele hobbled off early in the first half.

The club later confirmed Dembele sustained a hamstring injury and will undergo tests on Sunday but it seems unlikely the Frenchman will be fit to face Liverpool in the semi-final second leg.

Dembele missed almost four months with a hamstring strain last season and suffered from problems in the same area in January and March, sitting out for another month each time.

“We think it’s a muscle tear,” said Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde. “It is not from fatigue - he didn’t play much against Liverpool - and it is not the same leg as last time. It’s just one of those things.”

Defeat will hardly trouble Barcelona, who wrapped up their 26th La Liga title last weekend, but victory comes as a major boost for Celta, who move five points clear of the bottom three with two games



left to play. Maxi Gomez’s smart finish gave them the lead before Iago Aspas made it two with a late penalty. Real Valladolid and Girona, both just beneath them, may feel disappointed by Ernesto Valverde’s team selection, particularly given his side took six and four points off them respectively this season.

The result also means Rayo Vallecano are virtually relegated

after they were thrashed 4-1 by Levante earlier on Saturday. Rayo needed Celta, the only team they could catch, to lose all three of their remaining matches, although a highly unlikely four-way tie involving Huesca and Real Valladolid could, theoretically, still save them.

Barcelona will now quickly turn their attention back to Liverpool, who at the same time on Sat-

urday were playing Newcastle in the Premier League, making only four changes to their own line-up from the side that lost 3-0 at Camp Nou on Wednesday.

Liverpool won 3-2 but Mohamed Salah was stretchered off in the second half.

**- IMPRESSIVE PUIG -**

Barca’s changes created the strange spectacle of Celta giving

a guard of honour to youngsters like Jean-Clair Todibo, Carles Aleña, Moussa Wague and Riqui Puig before kick-off. Dembele lasted only six minutes and was replaced by Alex Collado, the 20-year-old midfielder thrown on for his first-team debut. Celta came on strong in the second half and thought they had taken the lead when Gustavo Cabral’s header was palmed out by

Jasper Cillessen to Nesto Araujo, who finished. Araujo was shown by VAR to have been a fraction offside.

But they did not have long to wait. In the 67th minute, with Todibo off injured, Barca were briefly down to 10 and Maxi capitalised, brilliantly volleying in Ryad Boudebouz’s cross in at the near post. There was still time for one more in the 88th minute as VAR spotted a handball by Wague in the area and Aspas converted to confirm a crucial win.

Atletico Madrid had earlier missed the chance to ensure they finish above Real Madrid for a second consecutive year after they slipped to a surprise 3-0 defeat by Espanyol. Atletico needed only a point to guarantee second place in La Liga, with two games left to play, but Espanyol were deserving winners at the RCDE Stadium thanks to Diego Godin’s own-goal and two strikes from Borja Iglesias, the second a penalty.

“The first goal changed the game, the second one made us worse,” said Atleti coach Diego Simeone. Real Madrid face Villarreal on Sunday but a third-place finish seems inevitable.

To overtake their city rivals, Real will need to win all three of their remaining games and hope Atletico lose both of their last two.

## ‘Miracle’ as passengers safe after plane skids into Florida river

Miami, May 4 (AFP): Dozens of shocked passengers were evacuated to safety from the wings of a stricken Boeing 737 on Saturday in Florida after the jet made a rough landing in a lightning storm and skidded off the runway into a river.

The plane carrying 143 people including crew from Guantanamo Bay in Cuba slammed into shallow water next to a naval air station in Jacksonville after a hard landing that saw the plane bounce and swerve down the runway, passengers said.

No fatalities or critical injuries were reported. “As we went down... the plane bounced and screeched and bounced more and lifted to the right and then it lifted to the left,” Cheryl Bormann, a defense attorney who was on board the flight, told CNN.

“And then it sort of swerved and then it came to a complete crash stop.”

Some oxygen masks deployed and overhead lockers flew open during the landing, she added.

Twenty-one adults were taken to local hospitals, but none were critically injured, the Jacksonville sheriff’s office said on Twitter. Others were treated for minor injuries at the scene.

Captain Michael Connor, commanding officer at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, told reporters it was a “miracle” no more serious injuries or fatalities had occurred.

“We could be talking about a different story this evening, so I think there’s a lot to say about, you know, the professionalism of the folks that helped the passengers off the airplane... it very well could be worse,” he said.

All 136 passengers and seven air crew on board had been accounted for, NAS Jacksonville said in a statement.

However, there were fears for a number of pet animals travelling in the plane’s luggage compart-

ment. The pets had “not been retrieved yet due to safety issues with the aircraft,” NAS Jacksonville said in an update on Facebook.

The National Transportation Safety Board said a 16-member team had arrived on site to investigate the incident, and would brief the media later in the day.

Boeing said it was aware of the incident and was providing technical assistance to the agency as it conducts its probe.

Images showed the Miami Air International plane lying partially submerged in water after the rough landing, with its nose cone missing. Passengers in life vests were instructed to clamber onto the wings of the jet before being transported to shore aboard inflatable life rafts, Bormann said.

“We couldn’t tell where we were, a river or an ocean. There was rain coming down. There was lightning and thunder. We stood on that wing for a significant period of time,” she told CNN.

Navy security and emergency response personnel including some 90 firefighters were on the scene. Jacksonville Mayor Lenny Curry tweeted that the White House had called to offer assistance as the situation was developing. “All alive and accounted for. Our Fire and Rescue teams are family to all,” said Curry.

Teams were working to control jet fuel spilling into the St Johns River, he added. The “Rotator” flight from the US military base in Cuba carries passengers including military personnel and family members.

The plane involved was a Boeing 737-800, in operation for 18 years, according to the FlightRadar24 website.

US aerospace giant Boeing is under scrutiny following two crashes that killed a total of 346 passengers and crew and grounded its newer 737 MAX planes worldwide.

## After the second half we have had, it doesn’t feel like a bad season: Kohli

**BENGALURU, MAY 5 (PTI):** Perennial underachievers Royal Challengers Bangalore endured another disappointing IPL campaign but their performance in the second half of the season has given them something to be proud of, skipper Virat Kohli has said.

After losing their first six games, RCB won five out of their eight games with one not producing a result to end with 11 points. “If we focus on the second half, it is exactly what we wanted in the first half. After losing your first six matches, it is very difficult to come back in a tournament like IPL. We have a lot to learn from this season,” said Kohli at the post-match presentation after RCB beat Sunrisers Hyderabad by four wickets here on Saturday. “The first couple of things



matters a lot in setting the intensity. We are happy with the way guys have turned things around and the kind of cricket that we have played in the second half. A lot of credit goes to the team management for getting us back in the right frame of mind.”

RCB, who have never won the IPL, failed to make the play-offs for the third year in a row but Kohli said he was proud of his team for putting up a much improved performance in the second half of the season.

“We haven’t finished in the position that we wanted to. But because the second half has been so good it doesn’t feel like a bad season. We won last 5 off our 7 matches and with one no-result, it is something that we can be proud of. It is such a short format that often 5 or 7 minutes decide the outcome,” he said. Taking about the game against Sunrisers, Kohli praised the efforts of Shimron Hetmyer and Gurkeerat Singh Mann,

who both smashed blistering half-centuries.

“We know Hetmyer can play like that. We would like Hetty to play like he did today next year. And Gurkeerat played a really mature innings. He has a keen eye for the game.”

Kohli also thanked the RCB fans for their unwavering support. “I just want to tell all the people in the stadium that it has been such a long time playing in this stadium and every year we come, the support is better. Hats-off to you guys for turning up in numbers.

“We are so thankful and so grateful to have fans like you all. I can certainly feel your pain. I am emotionally attached to this team like all of you. And next year we will definitely improve our performance and give you guys what you deserve in return.

## Politics-shy Tiger Woods to be honored by Trump at White House

**WASHINGTON, MAY 5 (AFP):** During his illustrious career, Tiger Woods has treated politics as he would a menacing sandtrap -- avoiding it if at all possible.

He has hit the links in bipartisan fashion, teeing off with Democrats Bill Clinton and Barack Obama and Republicans George H.W. Bush and Donald Trump. A black superstar in a white-dominated sport, Woods has also generally avoided commenting about race relations in the United States.

But on Monday, Woods will find himself on the biggest political stage there is -- the White House. And he will be the guest of honor of a president seen by many Americans as racially polarizing.

Trump, an avid golfer and the owner of several golf courses, is to present the 43-year-old Woods with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian honor.

Though the outspoken Republican has been engaged in a bitter feud with black NBA stars and American football players, he has never expressed anything but unbridled admiration for Woods. He spoke to Woods, whose father was black and whose mother is of Thai origin, following his epic Masters victory last month and extended his congratulations. Trump tweeted that he was honoring Woods “because of his incredible Success & Comeback in Sports (Golf) and more importantly, LIFE.”

Once upon a time, White House visits by title-winning sports teams were routine, but several franchises -- including the NBA champion Golden State Warriors -- have opted out under



Trump to protest his policies. Woods is not expected to make any such waves.

**- 'UNFAIR' -**

Rather than endorsing politicians or decrying racial injustice, Woods has always just let his golf game do the talking. “People wanted to imagine that Tiger was a social activist, a fighter for racial justice,” said Orin Starn, a professor of history and cultural anthropology at Duke University.

“In fact, he’s never wanted to be an activist,” said Starn, author of “The Passion of Tiger Woods: An Anthropologist Reports on Golf, Race, and Celebrity Scandal.” “He’s been pretty apolitical throughout his career.” Like NBA legend Michael Jordan, a fellow Nike endorser who famously shied away from any political statements, Woods also has com-

mercial interests to protect. “Whenever he says something about race or America he tends to get all kinds of criticism from all kinds of people,” Starn said of Woods.

“I think he also thinks it’s not very good for his brand to be identified as a supporter of this person or a supporter of that person,” he said.

Starn also said he believed it was “unfair” to expect that Woods is obliged to use his global celebrity as a platform for social activism. “He’s dedicated his whole life to the craft of golf,” Starn said. “He gives millions of people great pleasure with his brilliance on the golf course. “He’s done racial pioneering work by virtue of his excellence on the golf course,” he said. “I don’t think that he owes us anything more than that.” - ‘Respect’ - Woods has played golf with

## Klopp to ‘wait and see’ on Salah head Firmino to injury, miss Barca clash

**NEWCASTLE (UNITED KINGDOM), MAY 5 (AFP):** Liverpool’s Mohamed Salah was stretchered off with a head knock during the 3-2 win at Newcastle on Saturday leaving manager Jurgen Klopp sweating on the Egyptian’s fitness ahead of Tuesday’s Champions League clash with Barcelona. And Klopp will definitely be without another of his prolific attacking trident with Roberto Firmino ruled out due to a groin injury. Liverpool face a monumental task to overturn a 3-0 first leg deficit against Barca if they are to reach the Champions League final for the second consecutive season.

Salah was caught by Newcastle goalkeeper Martin Dubravka as they challenged for an aerial ball 20 minutes from time at St. James’ Park.

“We’ll have to see. He took a blow to the head. He watched the game in the locker room, he was OK, but we have to do more tests,” Klopp told Sky Sports. Firmino was not involved on Saturday and Klopp confirmed he will miss Barca’s visit.

“He will not be ready for Tuesday and the rest we will see,” said the German on the possibility Firmino could be fit for Liverpool’s final league game of the season against Wolves on May 12. Salah had earlier scored his 26th goal of the season to put Liverpool 2-1 in front, before Salomon Rondon levelled early in the second-half to make it 2-2. Divock Origi then headed Liverpool’s late winner as the Reds went back to the top of the Premier League.



# Deadly escalation sees fresh rocket fire from Gaza, Israeli retaliation



**GAZA CITY (PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES), MAY 5 (AFP):** Gaza militants fired fresh rocket barrages at Israel early Sunday in a deadly escalation that has seen Israel respond with waves of strikes as a fragile truce again faltered and a further escalation was feared.

Gazan authorities reported four Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes in the escalation that began Saturday, but Israel disputed their account of the deaths of a pregnant mother and her baby.

One 58-year-old Israeli man was killed by a rocket strike on the city of Ashkelon near the Gaza border, Israeli police and the hospital said.

The latest flare-up came with Hamas, the Islamist movement that rules the blockaded Gaza Strip, seeking further concessions from Israel under the ceasefire.

Israel said 430 rockets had been fired from the Palestinian enclave since Saturday and its air defences intercepted many of them.

Beyond the man killed, an 80-year-old woman was serious-

ly injured in a rocket strike on the Israeli city of Kiryat Gat, police and medics said.

A man was also hospitalised in Ashkelon, said police, which spoke of other injuries without providing details.

A house near Ashkelon was damaged while other rockets hit open areas.

The Israeli army said its tanks and planes hit some 200 militant targets in Gaza in response.

They included an Islamic Jihad attack tunnel that stretched from southern Gaza into Israeli territory, it said. Two multi-storey buildings in Gaza City were destroyed. Israel said one of the buildings included Hamas military intelligence and security offices.

Turkey said an office for its state news agency Anadolu was located in the building and strongly denounced the strike.

Israel said the other building housed Hamas and Islamic Jihad offices.

The Gaza health ministry said Israeli strikes killed a 14-month-old baby and her pregnant mother, 37, in addition

to two Palestinian men, while 40 were wounded.

Israeli army spokesman Avichay Adraee on Twitter challenged the account of the mother and her baby being killed in an Israeli strike, suggesting they died from Palestinian fire.

Adraee did not provide more details and the army refused to comment further. Israel's military said it was targeting only military-related sites.

As the exchange of fire continued, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held consultations with security chiefs on Saturday but had not commented publicly. A statement from Hamas ally Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for at least some of the rocket fire and said it was prepared for more.

Its armed wing distributed a video showing militants handling rockets and threatening key Israeli sites, including Ben-Gurion international airport near Tel Aviv.

Israel closed its people and goods crossings with Gaza as well as the zone it allows for fishermen off the enclave until

further notice due to the rocket fire.

Egyptian and UN officials were engaged in discussions to calm the situation, as they have done repeatedly in the past, while the European Union called for an immediate halt to rocket fire from Gaza.

The UN envoy for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Nickolay Mladenov, called on "all parties to immediately de-escalate and return to the understandings of the past few months." The United States condemned the rocket attacks on Israel and said it fully supported its "right to self-defence against these abhorrent attacks." The escalation follows what had been the most violent clashes along the Gaza border in weeks on Friday. Four Palestinians, including two Hamas militants, were killed after two Israeli soldiers were wounded in a shooting during weekly protests there.

Israel and Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip have fought three wars since 2008 and fears remain of a fourth. A ceasefire between

Israel and Hamas brokered by Egypt and the United Nations had led to relative calm around Israel's April 9 general election. But the past week saw a gradual uptick in violence.

With the ceasefire at risk, a Hamas delegation led by its Gaza head Yahya Sinwar went to Cairo on Thursday for talks with Egyptian officials.

The ceasefire has seen Israel allow Qatar to provide millions of dollars in aid to Gaza to pay salaries and to finance fuel purchases to ease a severe electricity shortage. Several factors may lead Israel to seek to calm the situation.

Netanyahu is engaged in tough negotiations to form a new government following last month's election, while Israel is due to host the Eurovision song contest in Tel Aviv from May 14-18.

The country also celebrates its Independence Day on Thursday.

On the Gazan side, the Muslim holy month of Ramadan begins in the week ahead.

Palestinians have participated in regular demonstrations and clashes along the Gaza border for more than a year, calling on Israel to ease its crippling blockade of the enclave.

At least 271 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire since the protests began in March 2018, the majority along the border.

Two Israeli soldiers have been killed in that period. Israel accuses Hamas of using the protests as cover to carry out attacks and says its actions are necessary to defend the border and stop infiltrations.

## N Korea tested rocket launchers and "tactical guided weapons"

**SEOUL, MAY 5 (AFP):** North Korea's state media said Sunday that leader Kim Jong Un had overseen a rocket and tactical guided weapons test, after the drill Saturday had raised concerns Pyongyang was escalating provocations with US nuclear negotiations deadlocked. The North last carried out a missile test in November 2017, before a rapid diplomatic rapprochement saw tensions ease on the peninsula and a series of summits. A return to missile launches would be likely to infuriate US President Donald Trump, but the North's official KCNA news agency shied away from the term in its report, saying Kim had ordered a "strike drill" involving "long-range multiple rocket launchers" -- which are not targeted by UN sanctions resolutions -- and unspecified "tactical guided weapons".

Seoul's military described the weapons as "projectiles" after it detected Saturday's firing.

The United States and North Korea have been at loggerheads since the collapse of a Trump-Kim summit in February, when the two sides clashed over sanctions and the extent of Pyongyang's concessions on its atomic arsenal.

But despite the latest sabre-rattling from Pyongyang, Trump insisted that a breakthrough was possible.

"Kim Jong Un fully realizes the great economic potential of North Korea, & will do nothing to interfere or end it," Trump tweeted.

"He also knows that I am with him & does not want to break his promise to me. Deal will happen!" The US leader did not elaborate on Kim's promise.

During Saturday's drill Kim urged his troops to remember "the iron truth that genuine peace and security are ensured and guaranteed only by powerful strength", KCNA said.

The state-run Rodong Sinmun newspaper on Sunday carried 16 photos



of the weapons test on its front page, including a picture of a grim-looking Kim clutching his binoculars in an observation post as well as several images of projectiles shooting skywards. Trump proclaimed that the North Korean nuclear threat was over after the two sides' historic first summit in Singapore in June, when Kim pledged to work towards "complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula".

The two have since disagreed over what that means, but Trump has insisted the leaders remain close even after their follow-up meeting in Vietnam broke up without a deal or even a joint statement, and that Kim would maintain his moratorium on long-range missile and nuclear tests.

But with negotiations lagging, the North appears to be testing the US while staying below that threshold. The Saturday drill followed last month's test-firing of very short-range tactical weapons, and came days after a senior North Korean diplomat chastised US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for making "foolish and dangerous" comments during nuclear talks. Analysts said Pyongyang appears intent on raising pressure on Washington.

"Kim wants to ensure the world knows it is upset with the US hardline stance on denuclearisation and will not bow to external pressure," said Scott Seaman of the Eurasia Group. But

Ankit Panda of the Federation of American Scientists stressed that the projectile launch "does not violate Kim Jong Un's self-imposed missile-testing moratorium", which "only applied to intercontinental-range ballistic missiles".

Even so, a statement from Seoul's presidential Blue House said it was "greatly concerned," calling it a violation of a military agreement signed by both Koreas last year.

On Friday, South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha said Pyongyang should show "visible, concrete and substantial" denuclearisation action if it wants sanctions relief -- the issue at the centre of the Hanoi debacle. Earlier this week, North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui warned Washington of an "unwanted outcome" if it did not adjust its stance on economic sanctions.

Since the collapse of the Hanoi summit, South Korean president Moon Jae-in -- who brokered the first meeting between the mercurial US and North Korean leaders -- has tried to salvage diplomacy, but Pyongyang has remained largely unresponsive.

Last week, on the anniversary of the first Panmunjom summit between Moon and Kim, KCNA said Washington and Seoul "keep pushing the situation of the Korean peninsula and the region to an undesirable phase", criticising their joint military exercises.

## Netanyahu vows more 'massive strikes' in response to Gaza rockets



**JERUSALEM, MAY 5 (AFP):** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday he had ordered the military to launch further strikes on Gaza Strip militants in response to rocket fire from the territory, as an escalation entered its second day.

"I instructed the (military) this morning to continue its massive strikes on terror elements in the Gaza Strip and ordered (it) to reinforce the troops around the Gaza Strip with tanks, artillery and infantry forces," Netanyahu said at the start of a cabinet meeting. Israel said around 450 rockets or mortars had been fired from the Palestinian enclave run by Hamas since Saturday, and it responded with waves of air and tank strikes.

Gazan authorities reported six Palestinians killed in the Israeli strikes, including at least

two militants. But Israel disputed their account of the deaths of a pregnant mother and her baby, blaming errant Hamas fire.

One 58-year-old Israeli man was killed overnight by a rocket strike on the city of Ashkelon near the Gaza border, Israeli police and the hospital said.

Netanyahu is currently engaged in tough negotiations to form a new government following his victory in April 9 elections.

A ceasefire brokered by UN and Egyptian officials between Israel and Hamas had led to calm surrounding the elections.

But the past week saw a gradual uptick in violence as Hamas seeks further concessions from Israel.

Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza have fought three wars since 2008.

## Pak's quest for IMF bailout costs fin min, central bank governor and top revenue officer their jobs

**ISLAMABAD, MAY 5 (PTI):** Cash-strapped Pakistan's efforts to secure a financial bailout from the IMF has cost the country's finance minister, central bank governor and top revenue officer their jobs as the global lender pressed Islamabad to take more steps to ensure fiscal discipline.

The government on Saturday night appointed Dr Reza Baqir a Pakistani economist working for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as the governor of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). His appointment came a day after Tariq Bajwa resigned from the post of governor of Pakistan's central bank.

The government also appointed Ahmed Mujtaba Memon to the key post of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) chairman, which also fell vacant on Friday after the removal of Jahanzeb Khan, the chairman of the tax collection body.

The key appointments come only weeks after Finance Minister Asad Umar was asked to step down amid vital bailout negotiations with the IMF, suggesting the government wants to overhaul its financial team amid weakening

growth rates and soaring inflation. Last month, Prime Minister Imran Khan appointed Dr Abdul Hafeez Sheikh as Adviser on Finance in place of Umar, as inflation rose to its highest in six years.

Head of IMF Mission to Pakistan Ernesto Rigo is currently in Islamabad as the country hopes to strike a deal with the global lender for a three-year bailout package totalling around USD 6.5 billion, the Express Tribune reported.

The IMF officials are in the town for the last five days and there is still no convergence on the macroeconomic framework, it quoted sources in the Ministry of Finance as saying. The projections made by the finance ministry and the IMF team on every main economic indicator varied, they said.

The IMF is pushing Pakistan to embrace a more flexible rupee policy to end repeated boom-and-bust cycles, with many analysts arguing that the local currency is overvalued. The government has also been frustrated by the low tax collection rates during its first year in office, with the disappointing figures threatening the prime

minister's promises to build a welfare state for the poor, Geo News reported. The SBP in March cut its economic growth estimates, forecasting the economy would expand 3.5 to 4 per cent in the 12 months to the end of June, well short of a government target of 6.2 per cent. The IMF paints a gloomier picture, predicting growth of 2.9 per cent in 2019 and 2.8 per cent next year, the report noted.

Meanwhile, Bajwa, the outgoing governor of the SBP, has said that he has resigned to avoid confrontation with the government.

Replying to a question on a private news channel on Saturday on why he quit before completing his three-year term, Bajwa said a confrontation between the government and the central bank was not in the interest of the country.

"So, I preferred to tender my resignation instead of approaching courts," he was quoted as saying by Dawn newspaper. Bajwa said that the country's interests were more important than his job. On Friday, Bajwa was asked to resign while he was in Islamabad for talks with the IMF.





