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Hamara Sankalp Viksit Bharat

letters@hindustantimes.com

No immunity in bribery cases to MPs, MLAs: SC

Utkarsh Anand
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: A seven-judge bench of the Supreme Court on Monday reversed the court's 1998 ruling that let lawmakers escape punishment for accepting bribes in exchange for voting or giving speeches on the floor of the House, holding that such actions cannot be shielded under the doctrine of parliamentary privilege.

The bench, led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Dhananjaya Y Chandrachud, declared that MPs and MLAs will not have immunity from prosecution for taking a bribe to make a speech or vote in Parliament and state legislatures, adding the rule will equally apply to elections to the Rajya Sabha and to the offices of President and Vice-President.

"The Houses of Parliament or legislatures, and the committees are not islands which act as enclaves shielding those inside from the application of ordinary laws. The lawmakers are subject to the same law that the law-making body enacts for the people it governs and claims to represent," the court said.

Describing the top court's ruling as "great", Modi said:

A landmark judgment

WHAT THE APEX COURT RULED

- Seven-judge bench reversed 1998 5-judge bench ruling
- Ends immunity to MPs/MLAs for accepting bribes to vote, make speeches
- They will face criminal prosecution like public servants
- Criminal prosecution to be in addition to in-House disciplinary action
- Accepting bribes will attract criminal prosecution

CONTOURS OF PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE DEFINED

- Parliamentary privilege is must for ensuring free speech for legislators in House
- It is the collective right of the House
- Parliamentary privilege of individual lawmakers is subject to two-fold test
- Privileges are related to the House collectively and necessary for its functioning

WHAT NOW?

Prosecution to be launched against lawmakers in corruption and in bribery cases

Cases against MPs or MLAs may be revived as immunity ends

Polls to Rajya Sabha, for President, V-P to also come under purview

MPs/MLAs face arrest if caught accepting bribes

Verdict may impact ongoing probe against expelled TMC MP Mahua Moitra

Verdict for clean politics, says PM

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday hailed the Supreme Court verdict that legislators and lawmakers taking bribes to vote or make a speech in Parliament are not immune from prosecution.

Describing the top court's ruling as "great", Modi said: "SWAGATAM! A great judgment by the Hon'ble Supreme Court which will ensure clean politics and deepen people's faith in the system."

The Congress said that it was desirable to set right the law and should have been done earlier.

Monthly benefit to women in ₹76K-crore Delhi budget

Alok KN Mishra
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Women living in Delhi and earning below the income tax threshold will be entitled to ₹1,000 a month from the government, the Delhi government announced on Monday as part of its budget for the 2024-25 financial year — a policy that finance minister Atishi said was based on the concept of "Ram Rajya".

The announcement, part of a ₹76,000 crore outlay for the coming financial year, also marks a push to win over women voters in the run-up to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and the assembly elections in early 2025.

In remarks he delivered later, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said he was confident the party will retain power in the assembly polls on the back of its work. "The next five budgets of Delhi will also be presented by us," Kejriwal said, while commenting on the budget.

In addition to the cash scheme for women called Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana — the government estimates it will help five million women — the budget unveiled by Atishi had a large focus on education, health and transport, all areas that the party has focussed on in both its governance and its pitch to voters.

The government explained why it chose to centre the budget on the "Ram Rajya" theme. "Our opponents created obstacles in

AAP presents 10th budget

₹76,000 cr (TOTAL OUTLAY OF BUDGET)

Top sectors

- Education: ₹16,396 cr
- Housing and urban development: ₹9,800 cr
- Medical and public health: ₹8,685 cr
- Transport: ₹7,470 cr
- Water and sanitation: ₹7,195 cr

₹1,000 CASH SOP FOR WOMEN: A plan to give ₹1,000 to each woman resident earning below taxable income underscored AAP's focus on reaching out to women voters, especially in the run-up to the LS elections and a year ahead of state polls

TARGET 25% SOLAR GEN: Solar plants to be set up on rooftops of all govt buildings in 2024-25 to give green push with target of generating 25% of Delhi's power through solar by 2027

THEME OF 'RAM RAJYA': Common theme across budget was Ram Rajya, which Atishi said was to highlight that akin to how Ram did not stop even in the face of difficulties, Kejriwal won't stop and continue to work for people

— ATISHI, finance minister

continued on →19

BJP leaders change profile to 'Modi ka parivar' on Lalu jibe

Smriti Kak Ramchandran
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: A remark by Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) patriarch Lalu Prasad on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's family sparked a controversy on Monday with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders appending "Modi ka parivar" (Modi's family) to their social media handles and the PM hitting back at the Opposition.

Speaking in Telangana's Adilabad, Modi said every poor person in the country was his family and he, in turn, was family to those who have none.

"My life is an open book... 140 crore people of the country are

PM launches mega projects on visits to Telangana, Tamil Nadu

HYDERABAD/CHENNAI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday inaugurated multiple power, rail and road projects and laid the foundation stone for others, in Telangana, asserting the projects worth ₹56,000 crore will write a new chapter of development in several states.

Addressing a rally in Adilabad, Modi hit out at the opposition, saying they might have different faces, but their character of "hoot (lies) and loot" was common.

Later in the day, the PM witnessed the commencement of core loading at India's first indigenous Fast Breeder Reactor (500 MWe) at Tamil Nadu's Kalpakkam.

SANATANA ROW: SC PULLS UP DMK LEADER OVER HIS REMARK ON FAITH

Abraham Thomas
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Monday pulled up Tamil Nadu minister Udhayanidhi Stalin for "abusing" his right to freedom of speech through his "eradicate Sanatana Dharma" remark last year, and said that, being a minister, he should have been more careful with his statement. "You are not a layman, you are a minister. You should have realised the consequences of your remarks," the bench told Udhayanidhi, who is the son of DMK chief and Tamil Nadu chief minister MK Stalin.

STALKER THROWS ACID ON 3 GIRLS IN KARNATAKA

BENGALURU: Three girls, aged between 17 and 19, suffered burn injuries in an acid attack by a 23-year-old stalker at a government pre-university college in Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka on Monday, police said. Police said that the accused intended to target one of the victims after she rejected his advances, but the acid spilt over the two other victims next to her.

SC tells AAP to vacate Delhi office by June 15

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Monday gave the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) time till June 15 this year to vacate a building being used by the party as its political headquarters at Delhi's Rouse Avenue, noting that the plot of land was allotted and required for expanding judicial infrastructure for Delhi's district judiciary.

"In view of the impending general elections, we grant time until June 15, 2024, to vacate the premises so that land allotted to expand the district judiciary's footprint can be utilised on an expeditious basis," directed a bench. The bench observed that AAP has "no lawful right to continue on the land" after its allotment to the Delhi high court for upgrading the district judiciary's infrastructure.

BJP CANDIDATES WIN CHANDIGARH SENIOR DY MAYOR, DY MAYOR POSTS

CHANDIGARH: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Monday won the re-election for the posts of senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor of the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation, defeating the Congress-Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) joint candidates, weeks after the Supreme Court overturned the January 30 mayoral polls and declared AAP councillor Kuldeep Kumar Dhalor as the new mayor of the corporation.

{ APPLICATION IN TOP COURT } JUST BEFORE DEADLINE

SBI wants till June 30 to reveal details of electoral bond donors

Utkarsh Anand
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The State Bank of India (SBI) approached the Supreme Court on Monday seeking time till June 30 to submit details of electoral bonds (EBs) purchased since April 12, 2019, to the Election Commission of India (ECI), arguing that "decoding" the data and matching donors to the donations would be a "complex process".

The application, if allowed, will mean disclosure of donors and recipients of EBs will come

THE APPLICATION, IF ALLOWED, WILL MEAN THE DISCLOSURE WILL COME ONLY AFTER THE UPCOMING LOK SABHA POLLS

only after the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, which are expected to be conducted between April and May this year.

The bank highlighted that it needs to decode details of 22,217

AFTER 'RIGGING' DRAMA, SHEHBAZ SHARIF TAKES OATH AS PAK PM

ISLAMABAD: Shehbaz Sharif was sworn in as Pakistan's new Prime Minister on Monday after being elected a day earlier in a raucous parliamentary session.

His appointment is controversial because of parliamentary elections last month that his opponents claimed were rigged in his favour. President Arif Alvi administered the oath of office.

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DELHI
BUDGET 2024-25

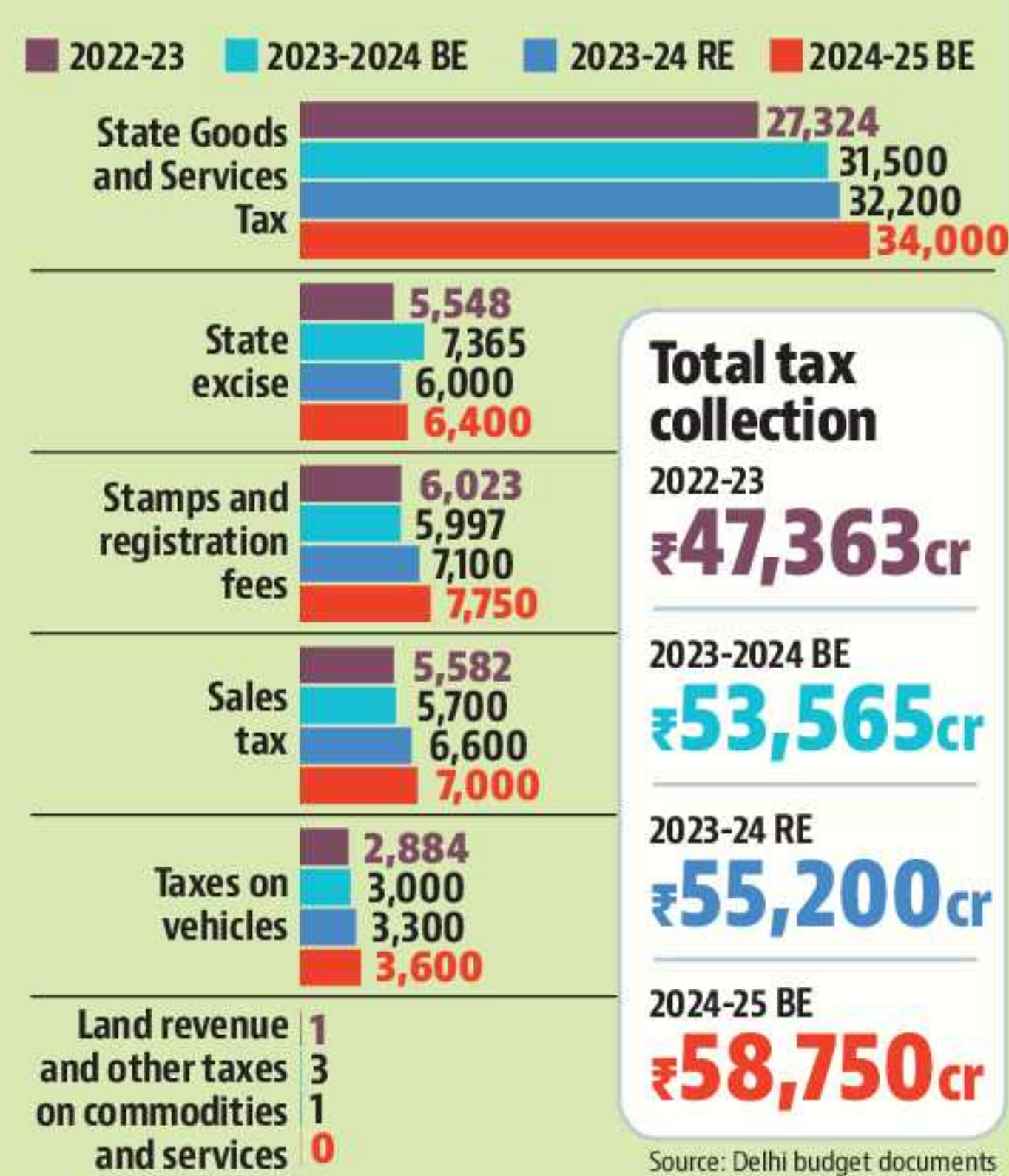
Delhi finance minister Atishi presented the state government's 31st annual budget in the assembly on Monday. **Abhishek Jha** explains the main takeaways in five charts.

WHAT THE BUDGET SAYS ABOUT...

Delhi's tax performance

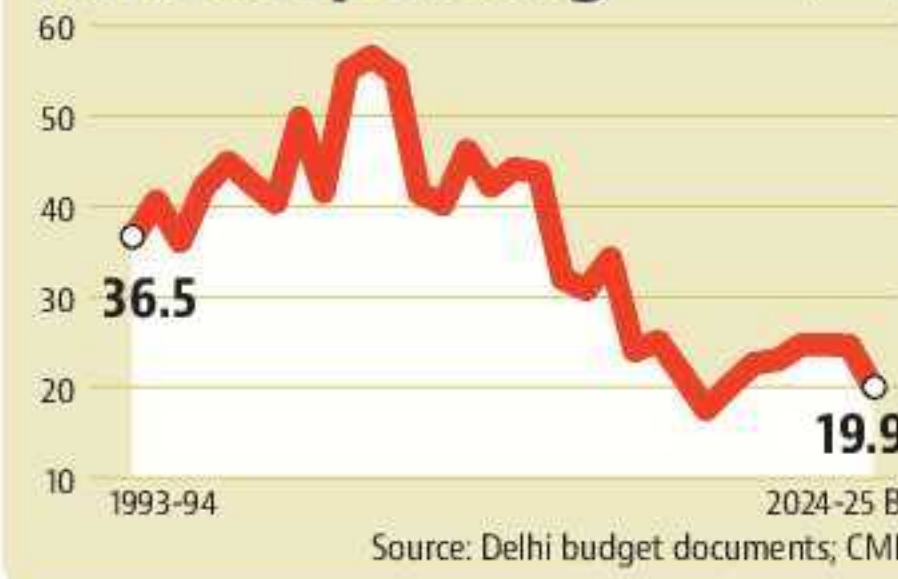
The Delhi government expects its own tax revenue (OTR) to be ₹58,750 crore in 2024-25. This is a growth of ₹5,185 crore (9.7%) compared to what the government budgeted for 2023-24, and a growth of ₹3,550 crore (6.4%) compared to the revised estimate for 2023-24. Around half of this growth is expected to come from state GST, which has over 50% share in Delhi's tax revenue. This holds true irrespective of whether one is making comparisons with Budget Estimates (BE) or Revised Estimates (RE) for 2023-24. This is because the government has surpassed its expectation of collecting GST in 2023-24 and expects to realise an even bigger amount in 2024-25. This trend is mirrored in all other big components of Delhi's tax revenue, except excise duties. Delhi could not realise its targets for excise duty collection for 2023-24. Revised estimates for 2023-24 show that the government expects to collect only ₹6,000 crore of excise duties in 2023-24 compared to ₹7,365 crore budgeted for the year. In 2024-25 the government expects to collect ₹6,400 crore of excise duties, more than the revised estimate for 2023-24 but less than it budgeted in 2023-24.

Delhi government's own tax collections



Capital expenditure

Share of capital spending in total spending



Unlike the Union Budget, which has been keeping its revenue expenditure in check in its path to fiscal consolidation, the Delhi government has taken the reduction in capex route to fiscal consolidation. The Delhi government's budgeted expenditure (BE) for 2024-25 is ₹2,800 crore less than the 2023-24 BE, although it is ₹1,100 crore more than the RE. This consolidation is budgeted entirely through the capex route. The government budgeted ₹21,817 crore of capex in 2023-24, but now expects to spend only ₹18,460 crore in the year. It will also decrease this further to ₹15,089 crore in 2024-25. This means that the government will spend only 19.9% of its budget on capital expenditure, the lowest share since 2017-18 (when it was 17.5%).

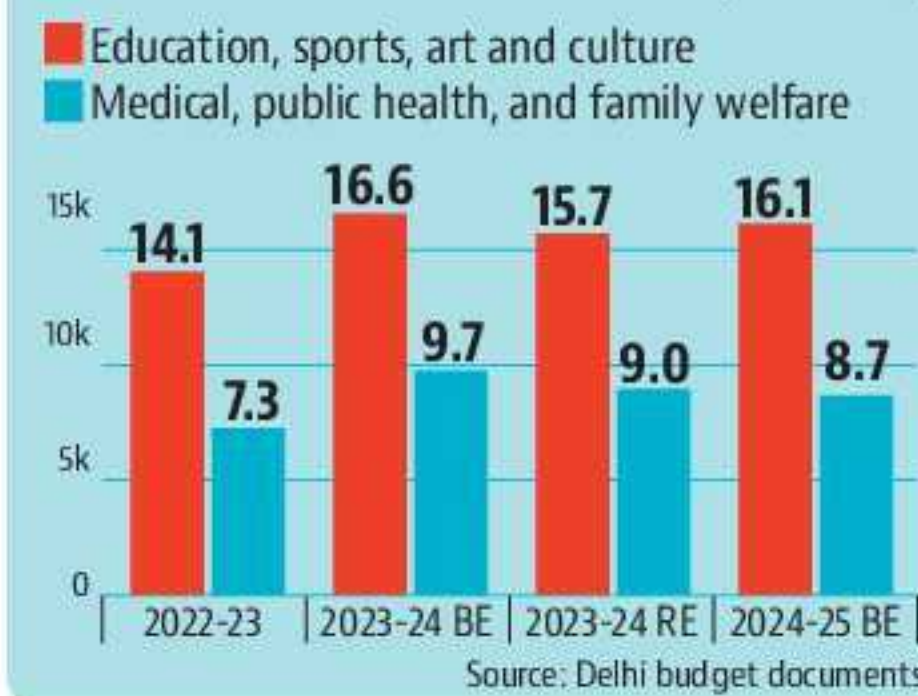
Central funding for Delhi

There are two main ways in which the Union government currently funds the Delhi government — through assistance for centrally sponsored schemes (CSS), and through grants-in-aid routed through the Union home ministry. The total central funding through these two routes has increased from ₹4,335 crore in 2023-24 BE to ₹4,392 crore in 2024-25. To be sure, the revised estimates for 2023-24 show that central funding in 2023-24 is only likely to be ₹3,346 crore, the entire decline in funding on account of CSS assistance. While Delhi finance minister Atishi said that tax devolution from the central government has decreased from ₹325 crore in 2022-23 to ₹0 thereafter, this tax devolution is part of a larger transfer from the Union home ministry. Total transfers from Union home ministry increased from ₹960 crore in 2022-23 to ₹1,168 crore in 2023-24 and have remained the same since. However, there is indeed a squeeze in central funding to Delhi if GST compensation cess — which was supposed to be for a five-year period ending in 2022-23 — is included as a regular feature of central funding to states. If GST compensation cess was included, the central funding to Delhi has decreased from ₹8,137 crore in 2023-24 BE, to ₹4,846 crore in 2023-24 RE, and again to ₹4,392 crore in 2024-25 BE.

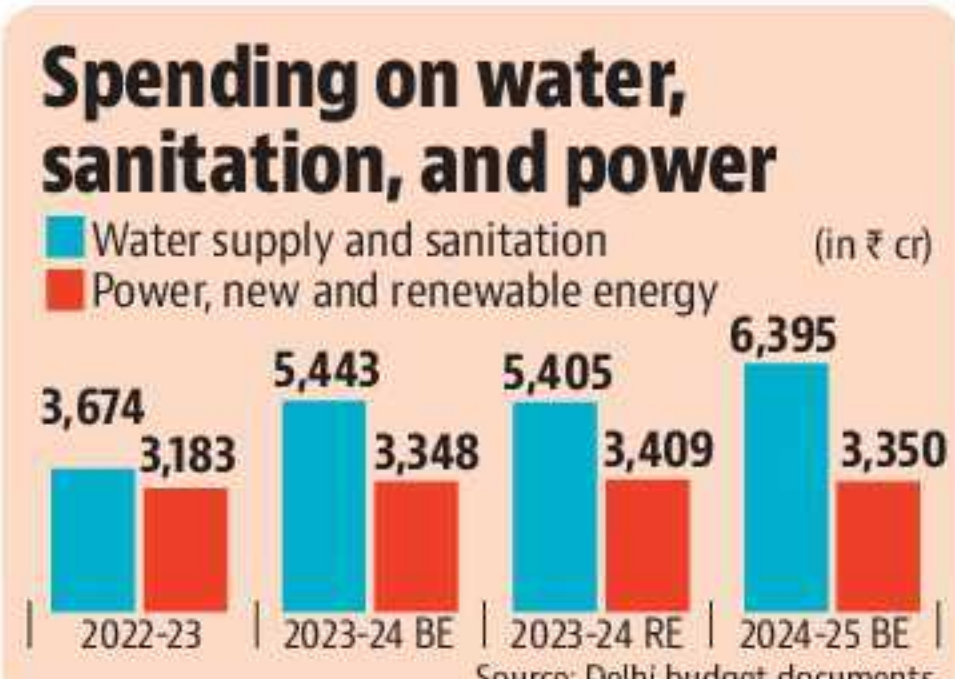
Health and education

While these two components of social services expenditure will remain a big part of Delhi government's budget in 2024-25, the total allocation to them has fallen somewhat in both absolute terms and as a share of total budget expenditure. The education, sports, art & culture head of social services was allocated ₹16,574 crore in 2023-24 and the health & family welfare ₹9,742 crore. Allocations under these two heads were revised to ₹15,727 crore and ₹8,969 crore in 2023-24 RE. While education, sports, art and culture services will see an increased allocation compared to the 2023-24 RE at ₹16,146 crore in the 2024-25 BE, the health budget will see a smaller allocation compared to RE at ₹8,685 crore. To be sure, the finance minister said in her speech that education has been allocated ₹16,396 crore, which could include components of education covered under other heads.

Spending on health and education

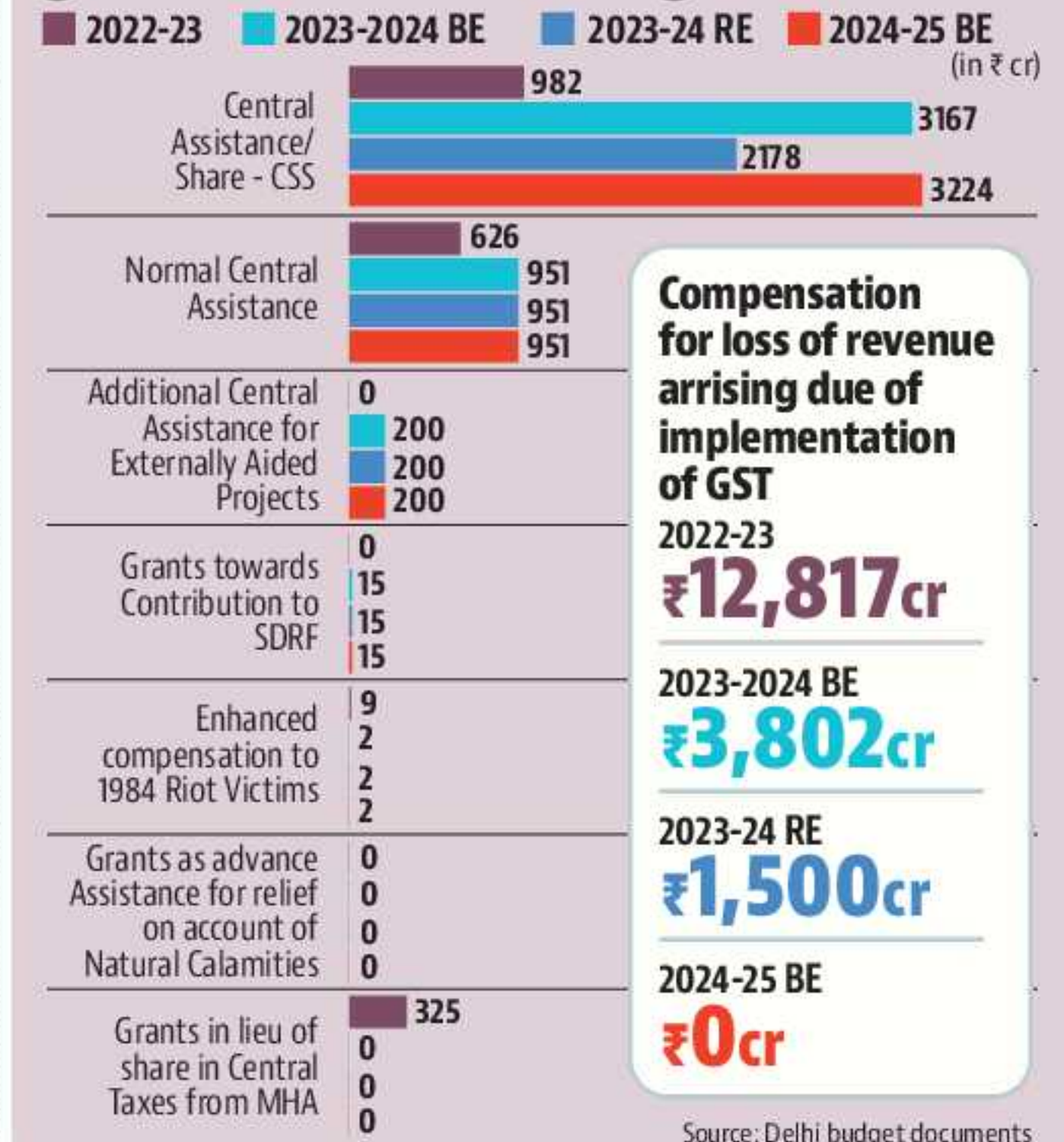


Water, sanitation, power



The spending on water and sanitation in 2023-24 appears to have been closer to budgeted estimates than was the case for 2022-23, when almost half (45%) of the budget allocation for it was not spent. The 2023-24 RE for water and sanitation is ₹5,405 crore, 99% of the ₹5,443 crore estimated in the previous budget. The Delhi government has increased this allocation to ₹6,395 crore for 2024-25. The spending on power and new and renewable energy in 2023-24, on the other hand, has increased compared to what the Delhi government estimated in the budget: from ₹3,348 crore to ₹3,409 crore. However, in 2024-25, this allocation will decrease to ₹3,350 crore.

Grants-in-aid from the Central government to Delhi government



Compensation for loss of revenue arising due of implementation of GST

Year	Amount (₹ cr)
2022-23	₹12,817cr
2023-2024 BE	₹3,802cr
2023-24 RE	₹1,500cr
2024-25 BE	₹0cr

Source: Delhi budget documents

AAP's pre-poll push: ₹1k monthly cash sop for women outside I-T net

Alok KN Mishra
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Delhi government's plan to provide ₹1,000 to each adult woman residing in the city and earning below taxable income thresholds underscores the Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) focus on reaching out to women voters, especially in the months before the general elections and a year ahead of the state elections, said experts and analysts, pointing to a string of women-centric policies the Arvind Kejriwal-led administration has floated during its nine years in power.

Delhi finance minister Atishi unveiled the Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojna while delivering her first budget speech and added that the government has allocated ₹2,000 crore for the scheme. Kejriwal separately said that the scheme will be rolled out after the general elections and will benefit around five million women.

Earlier, the governments of a slew of governments, including those of Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh, also launched similar schemes to benefit women in those states, and such programmes were part of the election manifesto of several parties over the last two years.

Senior spokespersons of the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) accused the AAP of propaganda and of failing to deliver on its promises.

Presenting the budget for the 2024-25 fiscal in the House, Atishi said, "The Arvind Kejriwal government will give ₹1,000 every month to every woman above 18 years of age under the Mukhya Mantri Samman Yojana, provided they are not an income tax payer, are not beneficiaries of any other government pension scheme, and are a resident of Delhi. It will help them meet many necessary small expenses."

The minister said that eligible women who wish to enrol for this scheme will have to fill a form and give a self-declara-



Delhi finance minister Atishi arrives at Vidhan Sabha to deliver the state Budget speech on Monday morning.

RAJ K RAI/HAI PHOTO

tion. "On the basis of the self-declaration, that woman will start getting the benefits of this scheme. Along with the form, every woman will have to provide her Aadhaar card and bank account information," Atishi said.

A Delhi government officer said the programme's nuts and bolts will be finalised by the state cabinet.

"The finer details of the scheme will be worked out when the scheme is prepared for submission to the cabinet," said the officer, who asked not to be identified.

The AAP has extensively relied on its flagship programmes, such as free power, water supply and bus ride ahead of the elections. These programmes are key cogs in the party's governance model,

which it has also extended to Punjab.

This is the second major government benefit aimed at women by the party. In October 2019, the AAP government made it free for women to travel in public buses, a scheme that is regarded as having played a part in the party's victory in the 2020 assembly polls. According to government figures presented in the assembly on Monday, 402 million pink tickets — the zero fare slips to women — were issued in the 2022-23 fiscal.

Speaking at a press conference after the presentation of the budget, Kejriwal said the Mukhya Mantri Mahila Samman Yojna will empower the women of Delhi.

"The biggest empowerment comes when there is money in

the pocket, it makes a person feel powerful. In our society, non-earning women live in a disadvantaged position and are dependent on their husbands and others even for their small needs. Now, we will send ₹1,000 every month to the accounts of women above 18 years," he said, appealing to women voters to elect INDIA bloc candidates from all seven seats of Delhi in the Lok Sabha polls.

Senior BJP leader and leader of Opposition in the Delhi assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said: "The government should explain why the AAP has stopped handing out old-age pensions. Not a single new-old age pension has been sanctioned since 2017."

Government surveys such as the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) show that women

have little financial autonomy in India, making the programme likely beneficial for them. The modalities of the scheme revealed so far also suggest that scheme will target the poorer section of women. However, it may lead to another round of debates on whether there is fiscal space for such schemes and whether they are prudent for long-term development.

Tanvir Aejaz, associate professor of political science at Ramjas College, called cash benefit transfers an alluring promise ahead of the elections. "This programme will lead to competition among other parties for such a move. But there is always a trade-off between what you get and what you lose through public policy," Tanvir said.

Transport outlay cut as govt sharpens EV focus

Snehil Sinha
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The budget allocated to the transport sector, including spends on public transport, for the next financial year is pegged at ₹5,702 crore, according to Delhi's finance minister Atishi who presented what will be the last full budget of the administration before the Lok Sabha elections due next month and the assembly polls likely to be held in early 2025.

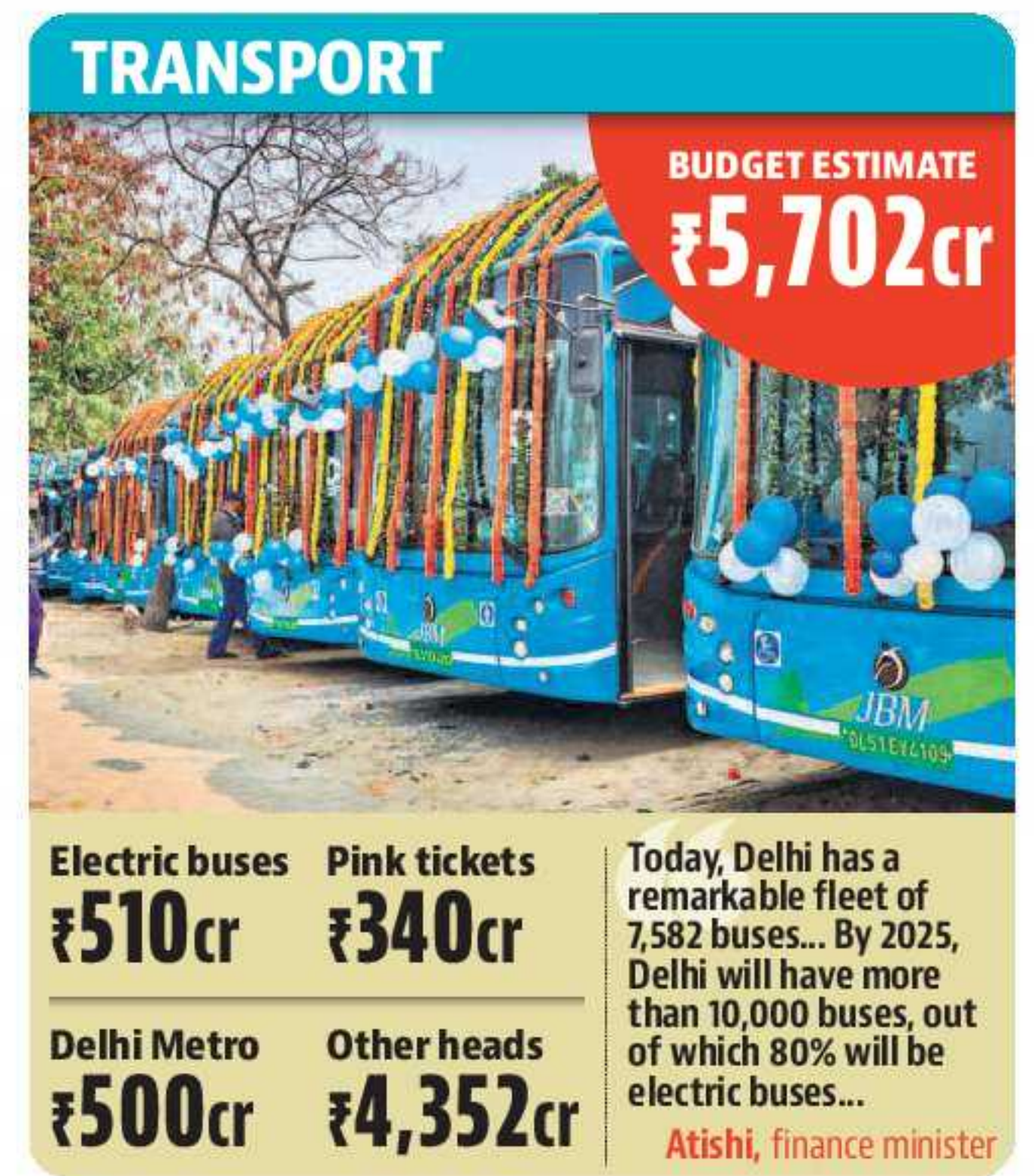
According to budget documents, the allocation is a considerable drop from the ₹8,309 crore set aside for the sector as per the revised estimates of the capital outlay for the 2023-24 financial year. The revised estimates in themselves are significantly higher than the BE of ₹5,903 crore that the government had set aside before the financial year when it announced the budget last year. But even accounting for the BE for the 2023-24 financial year, the allocation for the next fiscal is lower.

Presenting the budget on Monday, Atishi said that to expand the bus network, a concession agreement for 1,900 new electric buses has already been signed and proposed an outlay of ₹510 crore for electric buses.

The figures disclosed by the minister, however, vary from the calculations determined via the documents, since a small part of the spends on transportation may also be filed under different heads.

"I am pleased to share that with a fleet of 1,650 e-buses, Delhi is now ranked third among the world's cities. Today, Delhi has a remarkable fleet of 7,582 buses, the highest in the history of Delhi, which is being used by over 41 lakh (4.1 million) passengers daily. Additionally, we will procure 2,080 nine-metre e-buses, which will be used as Mohalla buses for last-mile connectivity... by 2025, Delhi will have more than 10,000 buses, out of which 80% will be electric buses," Atishi said.

The Mohalla bus scheme was first proposed last year as a last-mile connectivity option by the then transport minister Kailash Gahlot. It was proposed last year that starting with 100 fully electric



Mohalla buses in 2023-24, a total of 2,180 Mohalla buses will be operational in the next three years to "fix this critical gap in last-mile connectivity in Delhi".

However, the scheme is yet to be implemented. Officials from the transport department said that following the sacking of over 300 consultants last year, several new schemes including the Mohalla bus scheme and aggregator policy, were delayed and missed their initial targets.

The budget proposes ₹340 crore this financial year to continue the scheme of free bus travel for women in Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) and cluster buses through "pink tickets". The government is also planning to begin work on Phase 4 of the Delhi Metro soon. "An MoU will be signed for the construction of three corridors — namely Janakpuri West to RK Ashram; Delhi Aerocity to Tughlakabad; Majlis Park to Maujpur. There will be 45 stations on these three corridors totaling 65.20km," Atishi added.

In 2024-25, an outlay of ₹500 crore is proposed for Delhi Metro.

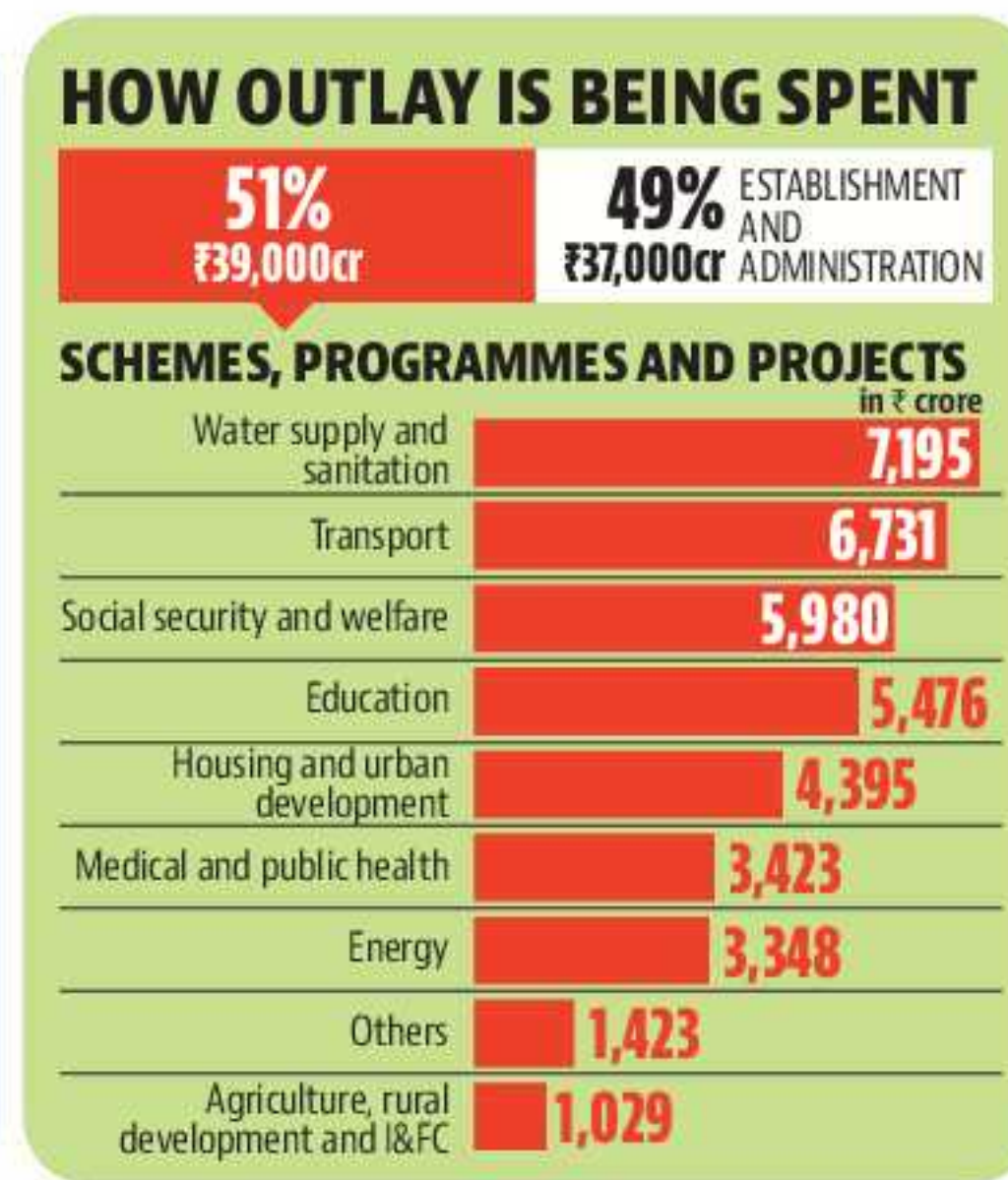
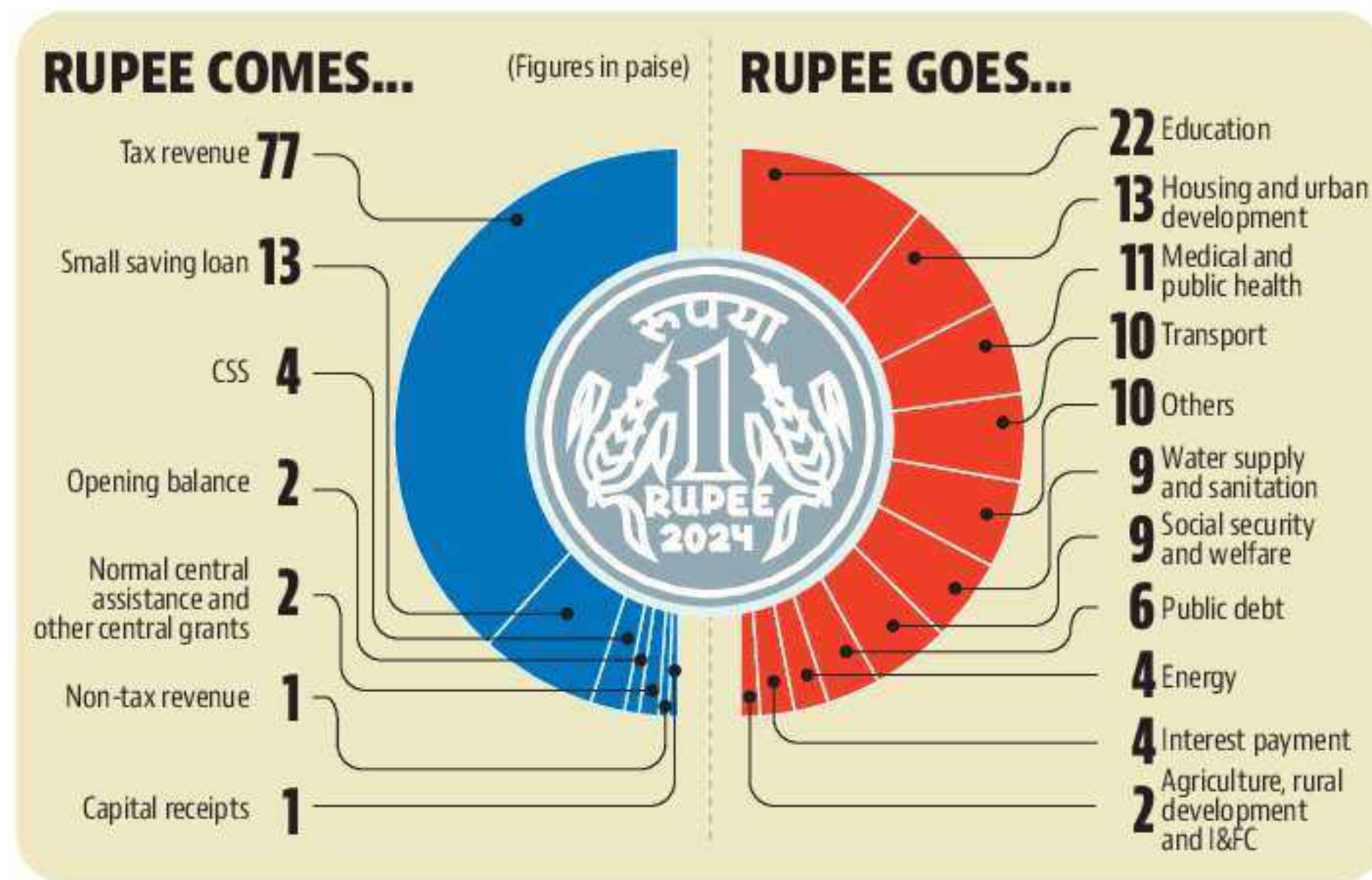
By March 2015, 193 kilometers of metro rail network and 143 metro stations were established in Delhi. However, in the past nine years, the Delhi Metro network has doubled in length, reaching 393km, and the number of stations has increased to 288.

Experts said that while the EV push is welcome, more effort is required to electrify the commercial fleet. "Electrification of transport is an urgent need for Delhi. It is great to see that commitment from the Delhi government. It will be important to also see how can Delhi start the electrification of trucks as well. This is an essential step towards reducing pollution levels in the Capital," said Amit Bhatt managing director (India), International Council of Clean Transport.

However, the Bharatiya Janata Party accused the AAP of not making any major transport-related announcement in the budget.

"Last year, Delhi government budget spoke of bringing Mohalla buses but a year later not a single Mohalla bus has come," Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva.

DELHI BUDGET 2024-25

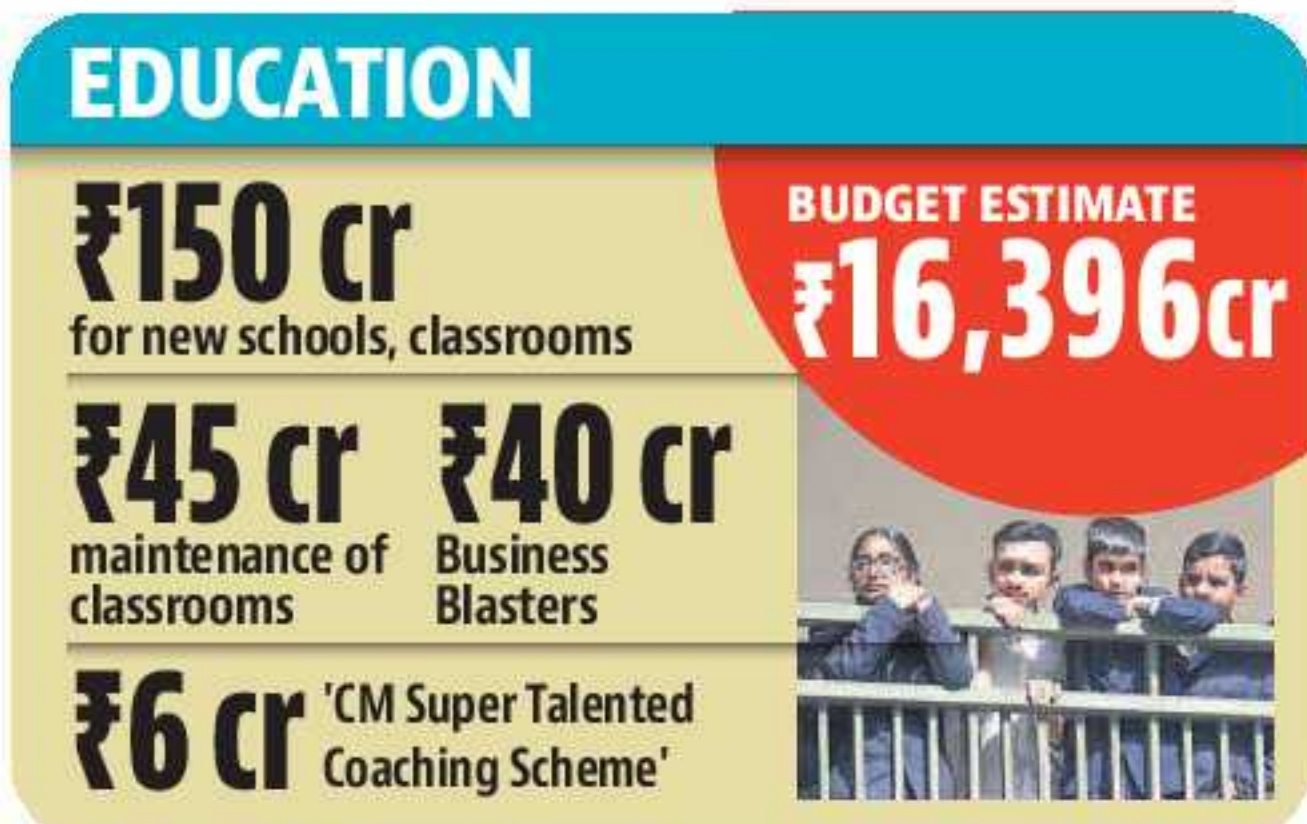


Education stays Budget's focus, gets max allocation

HT Correspondent
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Delhi government on Monday announced a budget allocation of ₹16,396 crore for education—the highest among all sectors for 2024-25.

According to budget documents, the allocation is a slight drop from the ₹16,575 crore for the sector as per the budget estimates for the 2023-24 financial year, although the revised estimates for the fiscal dropped to ₹15,727 crore.



Tabling the annual budget estimates in the Delhi assembly, state finance minister Atishi said the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government prioritises providing quality education to residents of the city.

"When the people of Delhi chose Arvind Kejriwal as their chief minister in 2015, he made education his Rajdhama. Over the past nine years, through his efforts, he has brought about significant changes in Delhi's education system," the minister said.

"The education revolution of the Kejriwal government has completely transformed Delhi government schools. It has changed everything. Today, a child from a poor family or an ordinary family can achieve anything by studying in Delhi government schools," she added.

To be sure, the figures disclosed by the minister, vary from calculations determined via budget documents, since some small funds may also be earmarked under different heads.

rooms available for the education of children. In just nine years, the government has built 22,711 new classrooms," she said.

The government has allocated ₹12 crore for the Delhi Model Virtual School, with a further ₹40 crore outlay for the entrepreneurship development programme Business Blasters—a scheme where students get seed money for creating a business model for their start-up ideas.

"Only entrepreneurship can alleviate unemployment in our country. In this direction, in 2019, we introduced an entrepreneurship mindset curriculum in our schools," Atishi said.

Under the Schools of Specialised Excellence programme launched by the government in 2021-22, 38 school campuses have been established across Delhi in 56 domains, including STEM, humanities, performing and visual arts, Atishi said.

"In 2014, sending children to a government school was a compulsion for families due to financial constraints. This year, there have been 140,000 applications for 6,000 seats in the Schools of Specialised Excellence," she said.

Atishi also highlighted that there are 47,914 regular teachers in Delhi government schools, as compared to 34,182 teachers before 2015, with the recruitment process for approximately 7,000 more teachers underway.

She said, "In 2023, for the first time, 324 principals were directly appointed from UPSC for Delhi government schools, setting a record. Additionally, 389 vice-principals were promoted to the position of principal, ensuring that almost all schools under the Delhi government now have regular principals who act as school leaders."

However, the Bharatiya Janata Party said that AAP budgets have repeatedly failed the people of Delhi. "The Delhi government should stop misleading the people and concentrate on development of the city," Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said.

Solar is govt's new mantra for cheaper, reliable power

Jasjeev Gandhi
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Delhi government will set up solar power plants on the rooftops of all government buildings in 2024-25 to give a targeted push towards green energy, finance minister Atishi said during the Delhi Budget address on Monday, adding that a target of generating 4500 MW or around 25% of Delhi's total power supply through solar energy by 2027 has been set.

Atishi added that the government's power subsidy scheme will continue in 2024-25, allowing a large population of Delhi's consumers to continue receiving zero electricity bills. The Delhi government has allocated ₹3,353 crore, the budget estimate to the power sector for the financial year 2024-25, a marginal increase from ₹3,348 crore allocated last year (BE). The revised estimate for last year was ₹3,446 crore.

Atishi said there were around 5.86 million domestic electricity consumers in Delhi, of which around 68.33% or 4.02 million domestic electricity consumers are receiving benefits of the subsidy from the Delhi government. Out of these, over 2.2 million con-

THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALLOCATED ₹3,353 CRORE, THE BUDGET ESTIMATE TO THE POWER SECTOR FOR '24-25, A MARGINAL INCREASE FROM LAST YEAR (BE)

sumers were also receiving zero bills, she said. "In 2023, around 3.41 crores (34.1 million) zero electricity bills were issued to consumers. We will continue this subsidy scheme this year also," Atishi said during her speech, adding that the government was inspired by the principles of "Ram Rajya", where the "government's responsibility was not just towards the people but also the environment".

Additionally, the government said it has planned a sustained push towards green energy and the Delhi Solar Policy 2024 will be notified soon. According to the policy, any consumer using more than 400 units of electricity can receive zero bills if they install adequate solar panels.

"The government will not only give subsidies for installation of

solar panels but also give money for per unit electricity production from solar panels. Today, about 30% of Delhi's power supply comes from green and renewable energy. At present, 255 MW of electricity in Delhi is produced from rooftop solar power plants and around 1,280 government buildings have solar rooftop plants installed on them. I am delighted to share that by 2024-25, every building under the Delhi government will have solar plants on its roof," she said, adding that an ambitious target of achieving 4,500 MW from solar rooftops by 2027—around 25% of Delhi's total power supply—has been set.

Experts said that the target of 4,500 MW by 2027 was ambitious—one that will require substantial support from citizens. "Even if all Delhi government buildings are covered, the target is not likely to be met and one would still require Delhiites to adopt solar rooftop panels, in line with the policy. We also have to ensure there is proper planning in terms of strengthening the distribution network as excess energy will be pumped back into the grid," said Binit Das, deputy programme manager, renewable energy, Centre for Science and Environment.

Civic infra in unauthorised colonies to get ₹902cr push

HT Correspondent
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Delhi finance minister Atishi on Monday said the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government has worked to significantly improve infrastructure in the city's 1,800 unauthorised colonies—which host an estimated 4 million people—and added that the work to expand roads and drains in such localities will continue on a war footing.

Tabling the annual budget estimates for 2024-25 in the Delhi assembly, Atishi compared the Delhi government's work in unauthorised colonies to the life of Lord Ram—keeping in line with the overall Ram Rajya theme of the budget.

"The life of Lord Ram has taught us that we must think first about those who are the

most neglected in society. There are 1,800 unauthorised colonies which host 30% of Delhi's population," she said.

The minister said that under previous governments, these illegal colonies had no drinking water, no roads, no sewerage, and no drains. "In 2015, we prioritised providing the residents of these colonies with all facilities. We have built 5,175 km of roads in 1,355 such colonies. In the coming year, a provision of ₹902 crore has been made in the budget for the upliftment of unauthorised colonies," she said.

The minister further stated that 99.6% of the city's unauthorised colonies have been connected with water pipelines. "After 2014, the government has laid 2,422km of new water pipelines and 3,100km of new sewer pipelines. To ensure the right to

water and sewerage facilities for every household in Delhi, a budget of ₹7,195 crore is proposed for the Delhi Jal Board in the fiscal year 2024-25," she added.

Atishi said that the AAP government has transformed the lives of the people of these areas. "Now, women don't have to stand in long queues for water tankers. People living in unauthorised colonies can now access basic amenities like roads, water, and sewerage. Women, who were confined to their homes for years, can now step out with the help of the pink ticket," she said, referring to the scheme launched in 2019 that allows women to travel for free on Delhi's public buses. "The elderly, who had been planning pilgrimages for decades, can now undertake free pilgrimages through the Chief Minister's

Tirth Yatra Yojana," she added.

Ranbir Singh Solanki, the president of the Madhu Vihar Colonies Welfare Association—covering over two dozen unauthorised colonies in southwest Delhi—said that there is no doubt that largescale construction work has taken place in these areas over the last five years, but the quality of the work remains questionable.

"In many cases the sewer lines and drains have been laid but there is no proper gradient or outfall which leads to choking of the entire network," he said.

Meanwhile, the BJP said that the budget outlay does not meet the ground reality. "The ground reality is that over 75% of unauthorised colonies still are dependent on water tankers and septic tanks," Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said.

myverdict



{ JIGNESH SHAH } PHARMA ENTREPRENEUR

The Delhi government's Budget provides for better primary health care facilities, but little has been done for tertiary care. In addition, no boost to the local business community is visible. Local issues such as ease of doing business and congestion have also not been addressed.

Data analytics to augment revenue

Alok KN Mishra
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Delhi government expects to rake in ₹58,750 crore in revenue from its own taxes in the 2024-25 financial year, according to the budget for the next financial year presented by finance minister Atishi on Monday.

The minister added in the first three quarters of the current financial year, the Capital recorded a 13.96% growth in collection from goods and services tax (GST) and value added tax (VAT) compared to the first three quarters of the fiscal before it, which was the result of the administration's efforts to improve the business atmosphere and ensure honest taxpayers are not harassed.

"The Kejriwal government has consistently worked for the improvement of businesses and traders of Delhi over the last nine years to ensure that an honest individual is not troubled, and government revenue continues to grow. In this direction, we have simplified regulations for

businesses. Now, without navigating through government offices, traders can seamlessly conduct all their work from the comfort of their offices through faceless services provided by the government. As a result, there has been a growth in both business and tax collection in Delhi in the past years," Atishi said.

The minister added the government will use artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics to bolster the income tax (IT) infrastructure of GST and make the entire GST tax administration faceless for better tracking, monitoring and simplifying the refund process with an aim to increase government revenue.

The budget of ₹76,000 crore during the year 2024-25 is proposed to be mainly financed from the government's own resources. The major components of the Delhi government's tax revenue includes the receipts under GST, VAT, stamps and registration fees, state excise and motor vehicle tax.

An official said the finer details of the plan are being worked out.

Yogi Adityanath
Chief Minister, U.P.

Nand Gopal Gupta 'Nandi'
Minister of Industrial Development, U.P.

A Smart Investment for the smarter Few

Noida Authority announces allotment of Petrol Pump, CNG Pumps and E-charging Point on rent basis through E-Auction Process in sectors 47, 108, 122, 143B, 155(2), 159 and 168

Scheme Code:- GA 2023-2024 (1) Area of Plots: 1485 Sq. Mtr. to 2000 sq. Mtr.

Date of Opening of Scheme: 05-03-2024 **Last Date of Closing & Registration / EMD Deposit: 26-03-2024**

ELIGIBILITY FOR PARTICIPATION

Government Oil companies, Private Oil Companies authorized by Government of India for Establishment of petrol Pumps, Individual LOI holders (Letter of Intent) will be eligible to participate in the E-Auction. Private Oil companies will be required to produce authorized certificate issued by Ministry of Petroleum and natural Gas Government of India/Authorize statutory Bodies of GOI attested copy of licence along with the E-Auction form.

LOI holders will be required to produce a valid attested copy of letter of Intent from Oils companies along with E-Auction form. Expired, invalid and LOI's applied (Which will be issued in future) will not be considered for participation in E-Auction process.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE :

Interested parties will need to register and obtain user ID and password on the portal <https://nda.tender.sbi> and thereafter deposit non-refundable and non-adjustable E-Brochure document fees of **Rs. 5,000/- +18% GST** and non-refundable and non-adjustable Processing Fees of **Rs. 20,000/- + 18% GST** and Earnest money (EMD) **Rs. 5,00,000/-** for Separately against each property for participation in the E-Auction through online payment till closing date **26.03.2024 6by 5.00 pm**. NOIDA will not be responsible for any payment after that and E-Auction Bid will not be considered.

It will be the sole responsibility of the E-Auction Bidder/ participant to obtain a compatible computer terminal with Internet connection to enable him/her to participate in E-bidding process any reason thereof. E-Auction Bidder is required to deposit a separate EMD for each advertised Property.

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority
Main Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida, Disst. Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P
Website: www.noidaauthorityonline.in
For any clarification or assistance, please contact: (General Administration)
Phone no. +91, 9810840454, 9205692530

CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE SECURE NOIDA

DELHI BUDGET 2024-25

BUDGET SIZE
₹76,000 CR
 Total Budget for 2024-25

₹60,911 CR
 Revenue Budget

₹15,089 CR
 Capital Budget

COMPARED TO PREVIOUS BUDGET
↑1.47%
 rise in outlay compared to RE for 2023-24

↑9.17%
 the growth in Delhi's GDP during 2023-24

Education gets lion's share again One of the major focus areas of the AAP, the education sector has been allocated more than a fifth of the budget again

Category	2015-16 (₹ cr)	2024-25 (₹ cr)	Change (%)
Education	4,570	16,396	↓1.1%
Health	3,138	8,685	↓10.8%
Transport	3,695	7,470	↓20%
Social security, welfare	2,348	6,694	↑41.1%

Access to water key to dignity of life: Minister

Paras Singh
 letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Finance minister Atishi announced in the budget speech on Monday that the Delhi government has allocated ₹7,195 crore to the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) to expand access to water and sewerage services in the Capital. This year's budget estimate for the water sector is ₹853 crore higher than the ₹6,342 crore allocated in 2023-24.

The additional allocation comes at a time when DJB has been facing a consistent drop in its revenue from water bills and the government is embroiled in a tussle over the one-time settlement (OTS) scheme for waiving inflated bills.

The economic survey of Delhi, which was tabled on Friday, said that DJB's revenue collection from water bills dropped from ₹1530.6 crore during 2021-22 to ₹1294.86 crore during 2022-23.

Linking the model of Delhi governance to the concept of "Ram Rajya", the minister said the government has worked towards liberating women from long queues behind water tankers. She also spoke at length about the changes brought about by the Aam Aadmi Party government in the water sector over the last nine years.

"In the Hindu religion, it is believed that there is no greater virtuous deed than offering water to a thirsty person. Water is not just a necessity but a foundation of a dignified life," she added.

The minister said that when AAP came to power in 2014, a quarter of Delhi's population used to grapple with a lack of



Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and finance minister Atishi interact with the media on Monday. RAJ K RAJ/HT PHOTO

water. "Whether in unauthorised colonies where water lines had not been laid or in slums where women and girls had to wake up at 4am to stand in long queues waiting for tankers... some fights and conflicts often turned fatal," she added.

Presently, of total 1,290 million gallons per day, the city sources 612.5 million gallons per day (MGD) of water from Yamuna and two canals, 254 MGD from Ganga via Upper Ganga Canal and rest from groundwater resources (tubewells and ranney wells). Based on current norm of 60 gallons per capita per day (GPCD), there is a demand supply gap of over 280 MGD for estimated population of 21.5 million.

The budgetary allocation for the water sector had gone down from ₹7,610 crore (10% of overall expenditure) to ₹6,342 crore 2022-23, which is 8% of the overall share.

The budget document for this year said the government started providing 20,000 liters of free

Delhi to get 7 new flyovers, 1,000km roads for villages

Snehil Sinha
 letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Delhi is set to get seven new flyovers in the financial year 2024-25, finance minister Atishi announced while presenting the state budget in the Delhi assembly on Monday.

In a bid to decongest the city, Atishi, who also holds the Public Works Department (PWD) portfolio, said that nearly 80% of the work on the integrated corridor between Punjabi Bagh and Raja Garden flyovers has been completed and may be the first to be opened for public this year.

Road and infrastructure projects under PWD have been allocated ₹1,786 crore this year, nearly half of the Budget Estimate (BE) allotted last year — which was largely down to a makeover of 1,400km of roads under PWD ahead of the G20 Summit. Last year's BE under the same head was ₹3,126 crore.

This year, the long-pending Barapullah Phase 3 flyover is expected to be ready after a delay of nearly seven years.

Additionally, the double-decker Metro flyover on Brijpuri junction via Karawal Nagar in north east Delhi's Gonda, the flyover from Nand Nagari to Gagan Cinema Junction, a double-decker Metro flyover on Rani Jhansi Road junction to Azadpur corridor, the flyover from Anand Vihar to Apsara border railway over-

PWD

BUDGET ESTIMATE
₹1,786 CR

7 new flyovers/underpasses to be readied:

- Integrated corridor between Punjabi Bagh and Raja Garden
- Barapullah phase III
- Double-decker Metro flyover on Brijpuri Junction
- Nand Nagari to Gagan Cinema
- Double-decker Metro flyover on Rani Jhansi Road Junction
- Anand Vihar to Apsara border
- Underpass near Mukarba Chowk

bridges, and the underpass on Outer Ring Road near Mukarba Chowk will also be ready for use, Atishi added.

"There is a detailed description of the beauty of Ayodhya in the Ramayana. The beauty of any modern city lies in its urban infrastructure. The construction of new roads and flyovers in cities not only enhances its beauty but also boosts the economy," Atishi said in her budget speech.

She added that in the last nine years, the Kejriwal government has constructed 30 new corridors, flyovers, bridges, and underpasses, including Bhalwa, Burari, Mukundpur and Jagatpur flyovers on the Ring Road, an elevated corridor between Madhuban Chowk and Mukarba Chowk, Signature Bridge in north east Delhi, Shastri Park-Seelampur flyover, Ashram Chowk underpass and flyover in south Delhi, Sarai Kale Khan flyover, RTR flyover on Outer Ring Road, and Benito Juarez underpass, among others.

ATISHI SAID THAT 80% OF THE WORK ON INTEGRATED CORRIDOR BETWEEN PUNJABI BAGH AND RAJA GARDEN FLYOVERS HAS BEEN COMPLETED

have been installed in the city. Experts said that apart from improving road infrastructure, it is also important to make roads safer and more integrated for all kinds of road users.

"A comprehensive integration of bus, Metro, and feeder services, along with the development of safe walking and cycling paths is also required. It is also important to make budget allocations for improving road safety. Regrettably, these crucial aspects do not appear to be receiving the necessary attention in the budget," said Sunil Dahiya, South Asia analyst, Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air.

Meanwhile, Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party president Virendra Sachdeva said: "Manish Sisodia as finance minister brought budget proposals for development of over 1,200km of Delhi roads, but three years later not even 20km roads have not been developed or landscaped."

TRAFFIC ADVISORY
WOMEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE
6 PM TO 12 PM
05 MARCH 2024 TO 13 MARCH, 15 MARCH 2024 AND 17 MARCH 2024

DELHI POLICE
 SHANTI SEWA NYAYA

ARUN JAITLEY STADIUM, FIROZESHAH KOTLA GROUND, NEW DELHI

DIVERSION / RESTRICTION (AS AND WHEN REQUIRED)

There will diversion of traffic for half and hour after conclusion of the match. No heavy vehicles and buses shall be allowed on Bahadurshah Zafar Marg, Delhi Gate to J.L.N. Marg, from Darya Ganj to Bahadurshah Zafar Marg and from Guru Nanak Chowk to Asaf Ali Road, People are requested to avoid following roads from 6 PM to 12 PM on the match day respectively when the spectators would be coming to the stadium and congestion is expected.

- Raj Ghat to JLN Marg.
- J.L.N. Marg from R/A Kamla Market to Raj Ghat.
- Asaf Ali Road from Turkman Gate to Delhi Gate.
- Bahadurshah Zafar Marg from Ram Charan Agarwal Chowk to Delhi Gate.

ENTRY TO THE STADIUM

- Gate No. 1, 3 & 6 are located on the southern side of the Stadium & entry to these enclosures are from Bahadurshah Zafar Marg.
- Gate No. 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 & 15 are located on the Eastern side of the Stadium on the road and entry is from J.L.N. Marg next to Ambedkar Stadium Bus Terminal.
- Gate No. 16, 17 & 18 are located on the Western side of the Stadium & entry is from Bahadurshah Zafar Marg Near Petrol Pump.

PARKING

Labeled Vehicles
 Limited parking is available for labeled vehicles in the proximity of the Stadium. Display of car parking label on windscreen is mandatory. Vehicle number must be written on the parking label. Those who do not display parking label with vehicle number will not be allowed in the proximity of the stadium. Car parking label holders are advised to take Ring Road, J.L.N. Marg, Asaf Ali Road or Bahadurshah Zafar Marg. 'U' turn at Delhi Gate is allowed. Entry to parking lots P1 P3 & P4 shall be from Bahadurshah Zafar Marg only from near the Petrol pump.

General Vehicles
 No vehicle shall be allowed to be parked on Bahadurshah Zafar Marg, Jawaharal Nehru Marg & Ring Road from Rajghat to I.P. Flyover (both the carriageways) on the match day. Vehicles parked on these roads shall be towed away and prosecuted as per law.

TAXI
 All buses will start their service 2 hours before the match and will continue till one hour after the start of match. The bus service from the stadium to their respected destinations will start as soon as the game ends and will continue for one hour after the match ends. Spectators using app based taxi and other taxis should use the service lane on Ring Road between I.P. flyover & Rajghat crossing for drop & pickup.

LEGENDS

- THOSE NOT HAVING PARKING LABEL TO FOLLOW RED
- THOSE HAVING PARKING LABEL MAY FOLLOW BLUE ARROWS.
- FREE PARK & RIDE (MATA SUNDARI, SHANTI VAN & UNDER VELODROME FLYOVER)
- PICK UP POINT SHUTTLE SERVICE
- DROP OFF POINT SHUTTLE SERVICE
- TAXI (DROP OFF / PICK UP LANE)

Nearest Metro Station:
 Delhi Gate, (Gate No. 4 & 5) ITO (Gate No. 3, 4 & 5)

RIDE METRO FOR HASSLE FREE JOURNEY
Parking : Mata Sundari Parking, Shanti Van Parking, Under Velodrome Road

SECURITY INSTRUCTIONS: Spectators visiting the stadium are requested not to bring the following prohibited items:

- Laptop
- Camera
- Helmet
- Bagpack
- Eatables
- Water Bottles
- Power Bank
- Lighter & Match Box
- Knives & Arms

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myverdict

{ PINKI YADAV } HOMEMAKER

All these decisions give more financial independence to women... Many of my friends use the free bus service scheme, and it has also helped my house help to travel longer distances free of cost. This new scheme of providing ₹1,000 per month will provide a supportive helping hand. In the end, all these schemes lead to more household savings for us.

₹80 crore allocated to pilgrimage scheme

NEW DELHI: The Delhi government on Monday presented a budgetary allocation of ₹80 crore for continuing the "Mukhyamantri Teerth Yatra Yojana" for the year 2024-25.

"About 87,000 elderly people and their families have gone on pilgrimages through 92 trains till date under the 'Mukhyamantri Teerth Yatra Yojana,'" minister Atishi said while presenting the budget.

The scheme was launched in 2019. Under this scheme, the Delhi government organises free pilgrimage travel for the elders to 15 places across religious faiths including Ayodhya, Dwarkadheesh, Puri, Varanasi, Maa Vaishno Devi Dham, Ajmer Sharif, Rameshwaram, Shirdi, Tirupati Balaji and Amritsar. PTI

DELHI BUDGET 2024-25

Understanding the Delhi budget — in three charts

Roshan Kishore and Sreedev Krishnakumar
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI: The Delhi government presented its 2024-25 budget on March 4. Coming just before the general elections, the budget promises a spending of ₹76,000 crore, more than three-fourths of which will be financed by Delhi's own tax revenues (OTR). This basic fact notwithstanding, here are four charts which put Delhi's budget in context.

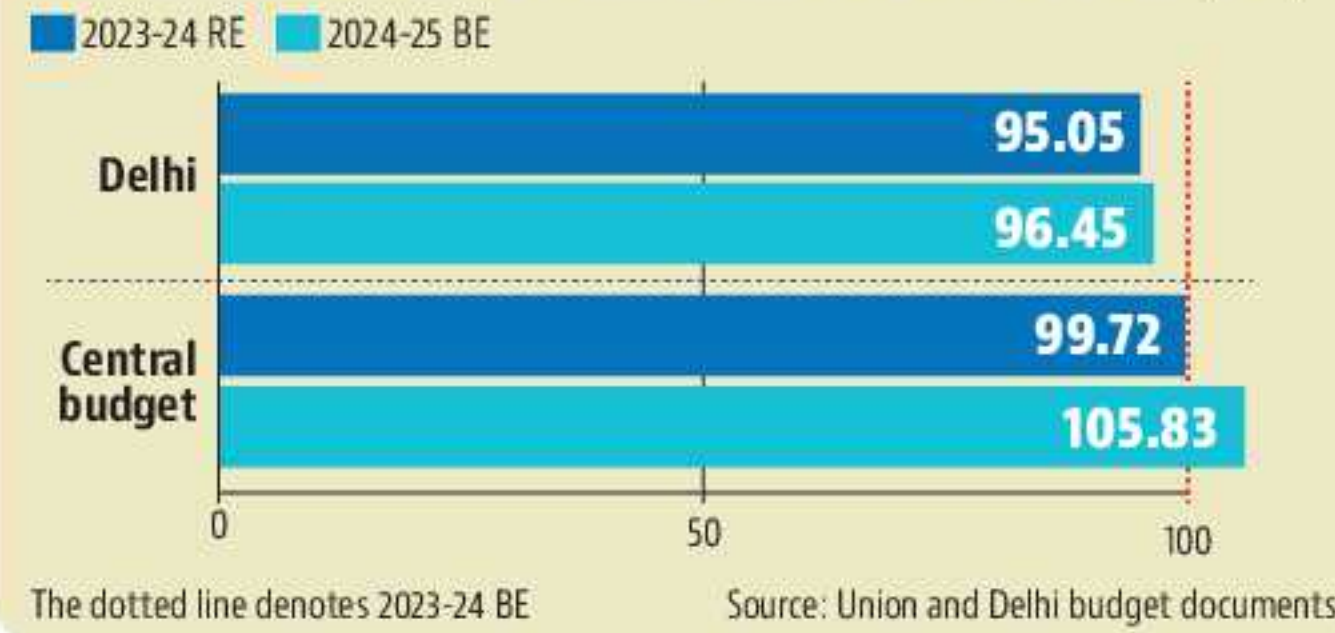
Compared to 2023-24, this is a contractionary budget

According to the 2024-25 Budget Estimates (BE), Delhi will spend ₹76,000 crore in the next fiscal with a rough break-up of ₹60,910.75 crore on revenue and ₹15,089.25 crore on capital spending. While the 2024-25 BE expenditure is 1.47% more than the ₹74,900 crore spent in 2023-24 as per the Revised Estimate (RE) numbers presented in the "Budget at a Glance" document, it's a reduction if one were to compare it to 2023-24 BE numbers which projected a total spending of ₹78,800 crore. To be sure, even the Union Budget (technically a vote-on-account) saw the 2023-24 RE number for total expenditure being lower than the 2023-24 BE number, but it did not project a lower 2024-25 BE expenditure compared to 2023-24 BE number, which is the case for the Delhi budget. This basically means that Delhi's budget has made a bigger pivot towards fiscal consolidation than what the vote-on-account has done at the all-India level. (Chart 1)

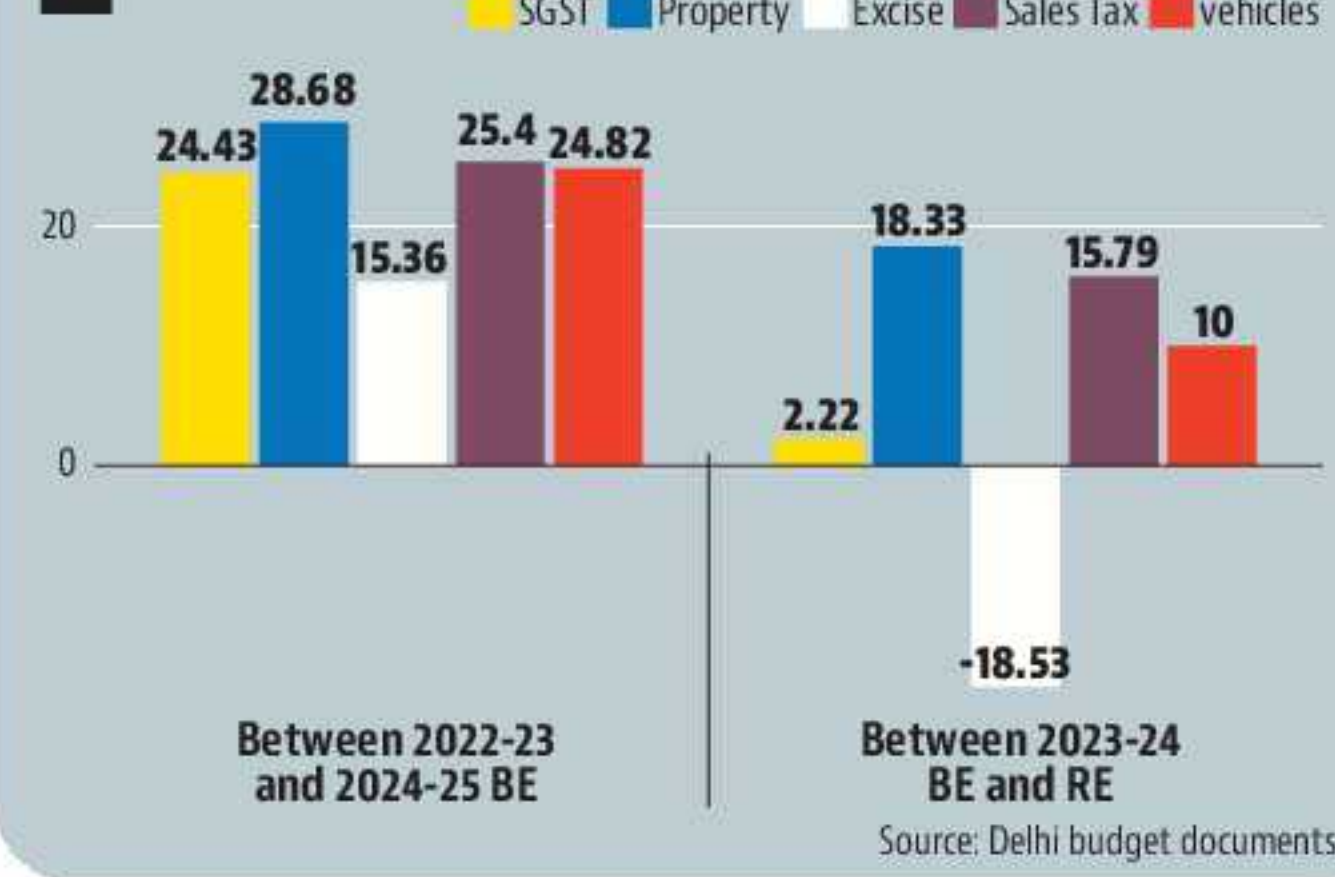
Excise continues to disappoint as a source of revenue

The controversy and now legal proceedings in the excise policy

1 Total spending in 2023-24 RE and 2024-25 BE as share of 2023-24 BE (in %)



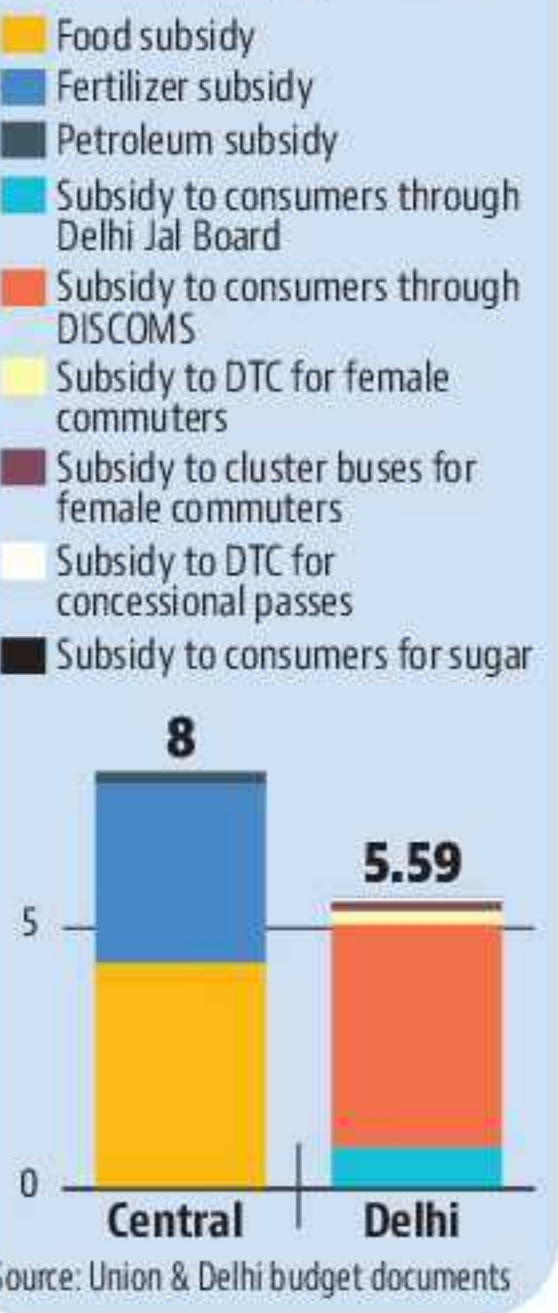
2 Growth in major tax heads (in %)



case continue to haunt the Aam Admi Party (AAP)-led Delhi government and its top leadership. This year's budget numbers show that Delhi's excise troubles are as much fiscal as they are political. A comparison of tax-head revenues for 2022-23 actual, 2023-24 BE, 2023-24 RE and 2024-25 BE shows that excise as a source of revenues has been the only lagging component in Delhi's revenue generation efforts. The AAP government in Delhi had to revert back to its old excise policy

in July 2022 after the new policy got mired in controversy. Its failure to move to the new policy seems to have left a big hole in excise revenues. Excise tax collections in 2023-24 RE are 18.54% less than what the 2023-24 BE numbers projected them to be. Excise is the only major tax head for which the 2023-24 RE number is lower than the BE number. In fact, even the 2024-25 BE numbers show the lowest growth in excise collections compared to 2022-23 actual collections among

3 Subsidy head of Delhi and Centre as share of total budgetary spending (in %)



major tax heads. 2022-23 is the year when the new excise policy was in place. (Chart 2)

Is Delhi really an outlier in terms of subsidy spending?
Promises such as subsidised power and water bills are what helped the AAP break political ground in Delhi and then win two back-to-back landslide victories in the 2015 and 2020 elections. This raises a question whether Delhi really outspends other governments in terms of subsidy spending. While this question is

WHILE THE 2024-25 B.E. EXPENDITURE IS 1.47% MORE THAN THE ₹74,900 CRORE SPENT IN 2023-24 AS PER R.E. NUMBERS, IT IS A REDUCTION IF ONE COMPARES IT TO 2023-24 B.E. NUMBERS

difficult to answer for all state governments because of haphazard nature of budget statements, one can make this comparison for Delhi and the Union government.

The 2024-25 "Budget at a Glance" released by the Delhi government lists six subsidy heads in four broad sectors: electricity, power, water, transport, and sugar. The sum total of these amounts comes to ₹4,247.75 crore for 2024-25 BE numbers with power subsidy being the biggest component of it at ₹3,250 crore. The total amount spent on subsidies which the Delhi government intends to spend in 2024-25 is 5.6% of the total spending of ₹76,000 crore in budget.

The 2024-25 vote-on-account of the Union government has budgeted a spending of ₹3.81 lakh crore on subsidies which are divided into the heads of food, fertiliser, and petroleum. This amount works out to around 8% of the total budget spending of ₹47.7 lakh crore in the vote-on-account. This means that proportionately speaking, the Centre actually spends more on subsidies than Delhi government. To be sure, such comparisons need to be read with the caveat that subsidies are not the only welfare or pro-poor spending made by either the central or state governments. (Chart 3)

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DELHI
BUDGET 2024-25

Mohalla clinics are not useful because there is no maintenance. There are no doctors available most of the times and no facility for treating patients. If you go there, they will give you two generic medicines every time.

MANOJ SHARMA, 38,
IT professional

It is great that the government is thinking about the welfare of women and giving them a fixed amount every month, but gender should not be the criteria for this. It should be need-based.

PUJA SINGH, 38,
data science professional

Better waste management system could give our city a facelift, and more greening of the city can help us breathe easy and fight pollution. These are much needed.

TINA BARUAH, 46,
publishing

Roads are not up to the mark in this city. New roads are being constructed but the quality of these roads is so bad that their condition deteriorates during the monsoons and potholes are formed.

VINESH SAXENA, 52,
investment advisor

Hospitals in the city need more attention. The doctor-patient ratio is out of balance, and the government needs to pay more attention to healthcare.

GANESH P SHAH, 50,
HR

It is impossible to travel in local buses because of the excessive crowding. If there are allocations for more buses every year, then why is the condition of transportation like this?

SALONI SHARMA, 25,
sales

₹1,108CR ALLOTTED TO BUILD COURTS, ₹100CR OUTLAY FOR HEARINGS IN HYBRID MODE

Jasjev Gandhiok
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Delhi government will spend ₹1,108 crore to build four new courts at Rohini, Karkardooma, Shastri Park and Rouse Avenue, finance minister Atishi said in her budget speech on Monday, adding that another ₹100 crore has been earmarked for hearings on hybrid mode at district courts in the 2024-25 financial year.

"The doors of Lord Ram's court were always open for everyone so that he could protect his people from injustice," Atishi said. "In today's modern era, lakhs of people go to the court in the hope of getting justice... due to lack of proper judicial infrastructure and shortage of judges, there are approximately five crore court cases pending across the country, making people wait for justice for years," she added.

To address the problem, the state government has increased budgetary allocations to the justice system from ₹760 crore in 2014-15 to ₹3,098 crore in the year starting April 1, she said. In December last year, the Delhi high court had criticised the Aam Aadmi Party government for failing to provide funds or adequate infrastructure to courts in the Capital. It had highlighted the constraints faced by courts both in terms of space and finance.

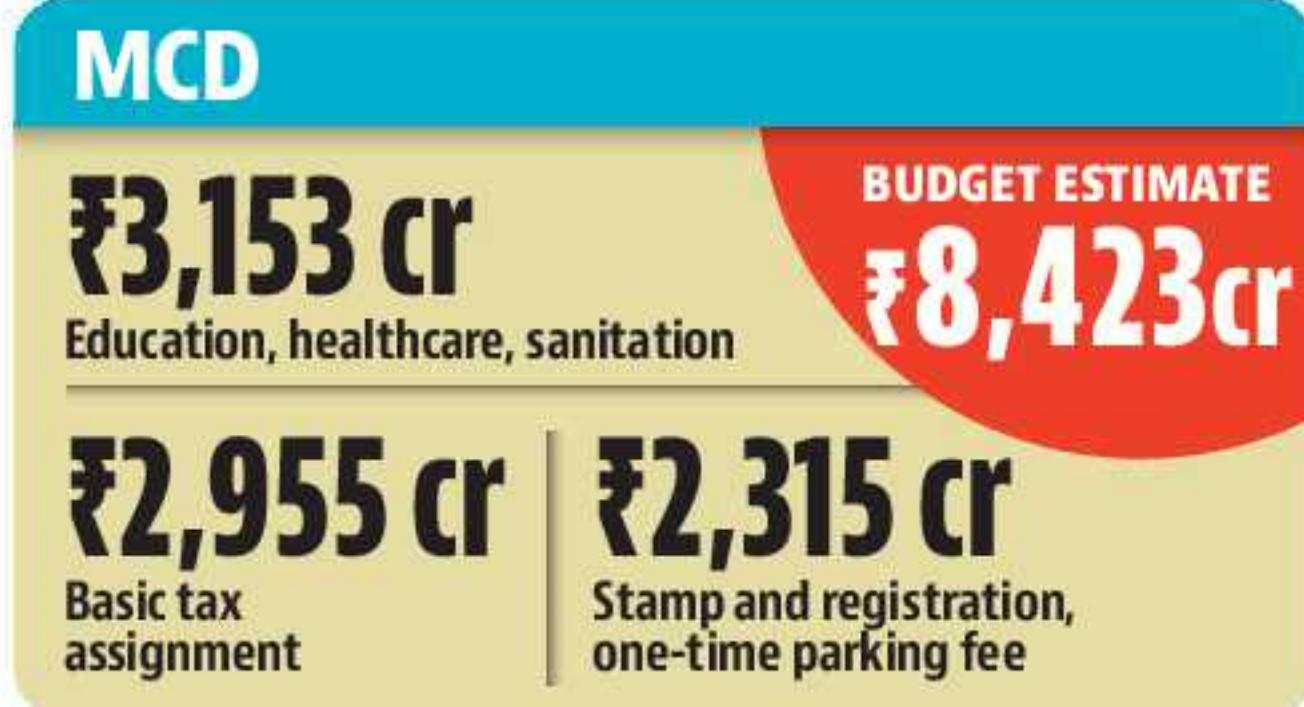
"The government has worked on the appointments of judges on a large scale," Atishi said.

Under AAP rule, MCD gets more money

Paras Singh
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Finance minister Atishi, while presenting the budget proposal for 2024-25 on Monday, said that the government has allocated ₹8,423 crore to the civic body — an increase of ₹182 crore over the allocation of ₹8,241 crore of budget estimate made last year. This is the second year in a row that the allocation for the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has received a jump in terms of the budget estimate, when comparing announcements made by in the two budget speeches.

Atishi said "no state can make progress unless its local body is



strong". "Of ₹8,423 crore, ₹3,153 crore will be for education, healthcare and sanitation... ₹2,955 crore will be given as Basic Tax Assignment and ₹2,315 crore for stamp

and registration charges and one-time parking fee," she said.

Last year, the allocation for MCD recorded a massive jump of over ₹2,000 crore in comparison

to 2022-23 — defying the trend of reduction in allocations for the three erstwhile municipal corporations over the last three years. The jump also took place following a restructuring of the civic agency — it was reunified as one — and the AAP's sweep of the House in December 2022. The erstwhile south, north and east MCDs were unified in 2022.

The civic agency announces its own budget in which it details its revenues and expenditure. HT reached out to mayor Shelly Oberoi who did not respond to queries seeking comments.

Leader of the Opposition in MCD and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Raja Iqbal Singh, who

is also the former North Delhi mayor, said a marginal increase of ₹180 crore will not help tide over the resulting financial crisis. "Salaries have not been paid, there are arrears of payments to contractor. The government needs to announce a large-scale package for MCD," said Singh.

A senior municipal official said that the allocation may help the civic body execute the long-pending projects but the non-formation of the standing committee has led to policy paralysis within the corporation. "Many projects are ready to be awarded for execution but due to the non-formation of the standing committee, we are unable to initiate," the official said.

Govt just trying to play to the gallery: BJP takes on AAP

HT Correspondent
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Monday said that the Delhi government's budgets have repeatedly failed the city's people, and the 2024-25 budget would also not meet the expectations of the people.

Reacting to the budget presented by finance minister Atishi, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said, "It is the last electoral budget of the Arvind Kejriwal government, and he has tried to play to the gallery by calling the budget a Ram Rajya Budget, though it has nothing new for the people and the budget does not mention developmental projects."

"The Delhi government has failed to present an outcome budget this year which speaks volumes about the failure of the government to provide budget funds and utility figures. Budget after budget, the government keeps pumping funds into Delhi Jal Board (DJB) with latest claims of laying water and sewerage pipelines in 98% of unauthorised colonies while ground reality is that over 75% of unauthorised colonies are still dependent on water tankers and septic tanks for toilet waste disposal. It is shocking to see the Kejriwal government pumping in ₹7200 crores into Delhi Jal Board which has become the centre of scams worth ₹78000 crore during the

last nine years," said Sachdeva.

The Delhi government on Monday presented a ₹76,000 crore Budget for the financial year 2024-25 in the legislative assembly, with finance minister Atishi saying that the 10th budget of the AAP-led Delhi government is themed on Ram Rajya and promised to provide financial assistance of ₹1000 per month to all women of Delhi above 18 years.

Leader of Opposition in the Delhi assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said: "The government has announced Mahila Samman Yojana, but it should explain why the old age pension already announced has been stopped by the AAP government. Not a single new old age pension has been sanctioned since 2017. He said that the achievements of ten years have been falsely presented in the budget because the people of Delhi consider the scams in education, health, transport, water board, and DTC as the achievements of the Kejriwal government. This government keeps patting itself on the back only based on false propaganda and the same has been done in the budget this time too."

The major sources of revenue for the government are markets and traders and two years ago the Delhi government announced that it will invest ₹200 crore for the development of 5 markets but till date nothing has been done.

Govt allocates ₹8.6kcr to health, says saving each life 'Ram Rajya'

HT Correspondent
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Delhi government has allocated ₹8,685 crore for the health sector in its 2024-25 budget with finance minister Atishi on Monday asserting that the Capital's healthcare system has moved from "helplessness to strength" in nine years under the Arvind Kejriwal dispensation.

The allocation was lower than the ₹8,969 crore allocated for health sector schemes and spends for the current (2023-24) financial year, according to the revised estimates (RE) released in the budget documents on Monday. The RE was in itself lower than the ₹9,742

crore the administration initially set aside for the health sector in the 2023-24 budget.

Atishi presented the 2024-25 budget with an outlay of ₹76,000 crore and said the government is trying to realise the dream of "Ram Rajya". She said the second principle of "Ram Rajya" is curing every ailing person. "It is a matter of misfortune for our country that we are far away from this vision. Till 2014, even Delhi government-run hospitals were in a bad state. The filth at these hospitals would belie that even treatment could be offered there. It used to appear that if one went there with one disease, they would return with four diseases," Atishi said.

Sharing details, Atishi said, "For the financial year 2024-25, I propose a budgetary outlay of ₹8,685 crore for the health sector." She also highlighted how Delhi has changed under the AAP government.

Before the Kejriwal government assumed power, a family's hard-earned money would get exhausted on treatment at private hospitals, Atishi said.

But the health sector has been beset by the feud the government has had with LG VK Saxena and the Centre. Payments for several allied purposes, such as rents for mohalla clinics and salaries of data operators employed at these clinics, were halted.

Nutrition schemes allocated ₹664 crore

HT Correspondent
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Delhi government has allocated ₹664 crore for nutrition-related schemes in its 2024-25 annual budget which was tabled by finance minister Atishi on Monday.

"To turn the vision of 'Ram Rajya' into a reality, our effort is to ensure that no person in Delhi goes hungry... 10,897 Anganwadi centres cater to the nutritional needs of 800,000 women and children," she said. This involves serving daily hot meals to 180,000 children aged three to six years, providing nutritional supplements to 340,000 children up to three

years, and supplying nutritional supplements to 120,000 pregnant women and lactating mothers, the minister added.

She said nearly 200,000 children in Delhi were affected by moderate to severe malnutrition in 2014. "This number has shrunk by up to 91.5% to just 16,814 children... The Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board also offers nutritious meals twice a day to around 17,000 individuals in 198 shelter homes. During winters, this number rises to over 20,000," she added. "We have established 11 state-of-the-art, clean and world-class kitchens in Delhi... The menu has been prepared by top nutritionists," she added.

Ready to appear before ED on video: Kejriwal

Alok KN Mishra
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday skipped the eighth summons to appear before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for questioning in connection with alleged irregularities in now-scrapped 2021-22 Delhi excise policy case even as he wrote to the federal agency expressing his willingness to appear before it via video conferencing after March 12.

"...Kejriwal replied to ED. Although the summons are illegal, Kejriwal is still ready to answer ED's questions through video conferencing. He has sought a date after March 12," said an AAP functionary.

In a press conference in the Delhi assembly, Kejriwal said: "The ED summons are legally invalid. I have written to them explaining how the summons are invalid. They should have responded to my arguments,

but they did not give replies. In different cases, the high courts have quashed ED summons on similar arguments that I have made. ED knowingly sends summons when I am busy," Kejriwal said.

The AAP argued a Delhi court will determine if Kejriwal appears before the agency when he skipped the seventh summons on February 26. It linked the summons to alleged pressure from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led Union government's pressure on AAP to quit the Opposition Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA).

BJP leader Harish Khurana said Kejriwal is trying to avoid investigation and questioning. "If he is ready to appear before ED through video conferencing, why he cannot appear before it today [Monday]? He is just trying to avoid investigation which is a clear reflection of his involvement in the case," said Khurana.

SC gives AAP till June 15 to vacate HQ, says land to expand HC infra

Utkarsh Anand
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Monday gave the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) time till June 15 this year to vacate a building being used by the party as its political headquarters at Delhi's Rouse Avenue, noting that the plot of land was allotted and required for expanding judicial infrastructure for Delhi's district judiciary.

"In view of impending general elections, we grant time until June 15 to vacate the premises so that land allotted to expand the district judiciary's footprint can be utilised on an expeditious basis," directed a bench, headed by the Chief Justice of India Dhananjaya Y Chandrachud.

The bench, also comprising justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, said the AAP has "no lawful right to continue on the land" after its allotment to the Delhi high court for upgrading the district judiciary's infrastructure. At the same time, the bench acknowledged the AAP's concerns regarding allotment of an



The AAP headquarters on Rouse Avenue in the city.

alternative plot in Delhi to run its political affairs. It allowed the party to approach the Centre's Land & Development Office (L&DO) for allotment of a different land for its offices.

"We would request the L&DO to process the application in accordance with the law and communicate its decision within a period of four weeks," the bench said in its order.

does not want courts to be used for securing an allotment of land even as it granted the party permission to approach the L&DO for a new land allotment on the stipulation that the request be processed within four weeks.

Earlier, solicitor general Tuskar Mehta, representing the central government, had objected to AAP putting a condition that the party would vacate the land after getting an alternative plot.

Responding to the court's order, AAP's chief spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar said the party respects the Supreme Court's order. "We respect the order of the Supreme Court. The court has also directed the L&DO to allot land to AAP. We hope BJP does not do any regressive and negative politics and allot us the land in the same location as other national parties," Kakkar told the media.

On February 13, the top court voiced disapproval of the fact that AAP's political headquarters was reportedly constructed on "encroached land" that was first allotted to the Delhi high court.

Feeding street dogs has made them too territorial, says HC

Shruti Kakkar
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Feeding community dogs has led to them becoming too territorial and takes away their capacity to forage for their own food, the Delhi high court said on Monday, seeking replies from the Delhi government, New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC), and the Delhi Police.

The court made the remarks while hearing a plea filed by Rahul Kanojija, the father of a 15-year-old girl who was allegedly mauled to death by a pack of dogs at Tughlak Lane on February 24.

"The problem that is happening in these areas people are coming in the van in the evening and feeding the dogs... Due to this, dogs have become too territorial and that is why they attack anybody. They are becoming a menace for the pedestrians and therefore feeding stray dogs is something people need to look at... Feeding a stray might be good but you are taking away their capacity to go and find its food... They (dogs) have nothing else to do and they have just become territorial," a bench of justice Subramonium Prasad remarked.

Posting the plea for March 13, the high court also directed police to preserve CCTV footage of the relevant period in and around the locality, and asked the Delhi government to file a status report indicating the steps taken to prevent such incidents in future.

The court's remarks come at a time when the Supreme Court is yet to decide on whether the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules, 2023, which aim to control the street dog population without cruelty, are in direct conflict with local laws of panchayats.

To be sure, strict laws govern what action authorities can take to control street dogs. These dogs can't be exterminated or simply shipped out; there are legal restrictions against both. But

THE COURT WAS HEARING A PLEA FILED BY THE FATHER OF TODDLER WHO WAS ALLEGEDLY MAULED TO DEATH BY A PACK OF DOGS AT TUGHLAK LANE

some turn violent — often because some residents abuse them, or because they are illegally picked up from their territory and dumped in unfamiliar surroundings — and can bite passersby and young children.

Animal activists, however, said that dogs were territorial in nature whether they are fed or not. "Feeding them only makes them friendlier and easy to catch for veterinary procedures. Keeping dogs feral will only exacerbate conflict. The remarks of the bench are not based on hard science and are more reflective of their personal opinions. Notably, such observations may also be contrary to the statutory scheme, constitutional principles and cultural values of India," she Gauri Maulekhi, an activist.

The incident in question took place on February 24, when the toddler, who was sitting outside her home in the Dhoobi ghat area of Tughlak Lane, was allegedly attacked by four to five dogs.

Subsequently, Delhi mayor Shelly Oberoi met the toddler's family last week and said that the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) will discuss controlling the Capital's street animal population with NDMC. "We have directed MCD officials to hold talks with their NDMC counterparts and the NDMC chairperson and rid Delhi of the problem of stray animals. We will focus on the safety of children as well as the interests of animal lovers," she had said.

5 hospitalised after eatery serves 'dry ice' instead of mouth freshener

Debashish Karmakar
letters@hindustantimes.com

GURUGRAM: Five people were hospitalised with severe internal injuries after they were served unidentified chemical crystals, suspected to be "dry ice", instead of mouth sweeteners at a restaurant in Gurugram's Sector 90, police officers aware of the matter said on Monday.

The incident occurred on Saturday when Gurugram resident Manik Goenka was celebrating his birthday at the Laforesta

Café with his wife Pritika Rustagi, their friends Deepak Arora and his wife Himani, and Ankit Kumar and his wife Neha Sabharwal, all aged between 25 and 30. Kumar and Neha's one-year-old daughter was also present.

Kumar told investigators that after they had dinner, a waitress approached them with a bowl of crystals resembling "mishri" or sweeteners. Everyone except Kumar and his daughter consumed the crystals. "Within seconds, their mouths were burnt from some of chemical reaction

and all of them started spitting blood. The restaurant employees fled the scene," Kumar said.

Deepak Kumar Jewaria, deputy commissioner of police (Manesar), said, "We will scrutinise the restaurant's licences."

Café manager Shridhar, who goes by a single name, said the incident may be a plot to harm the restaurant's reputation. "I don't know what was actually in the bowl that was served to the guests by the waitress," he said. The management was cooperating with the police, he added.

Vasant Kunj mall shut for the day, mgmt denies roof collapse claims

HT Correspondent
htreporters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Ambience Mall at Vasant Kunj in south Delhi was shut on Monday, amid claims of a portion of the structure's roof collapsing. However, the management denied any structural collapse, and alleged that people were spreading "false rumours" about the mall.

According to the police, nobody was reported hurt in the incident that took place in the central hall of the mall, and an

investigation has been initiated. The incident came to light when a purported video circulated on social media, which appears to show debris lying on the second and third floors of the mall. HT could not independently verify the authenticity of the video.

Deputy commissioner of police (southwest) Rohit Meena said a side-pop elevation fell in the central hall. "The incident took place around 12:47am. No one has been reported injured," he said.

Delhi Fire Services chief Atul Garg said the department didn't

receive a call about the incident. Raj Singh Gehlot, promoter of the Ambience Group, said that no part of the roof had collapsed.

"It was the POP on the wall in which cracks were observed and we decided to replace it. For the purpose of scaffolding in the atrium, the mall was kept closed on Monday. It will be open for public tomorrow (Tuesday). No person is injured," he told HT.

Meanwhile, Ambience Mall, in a social media post, said the mall was shut on Monday due to "essential maintenance work".

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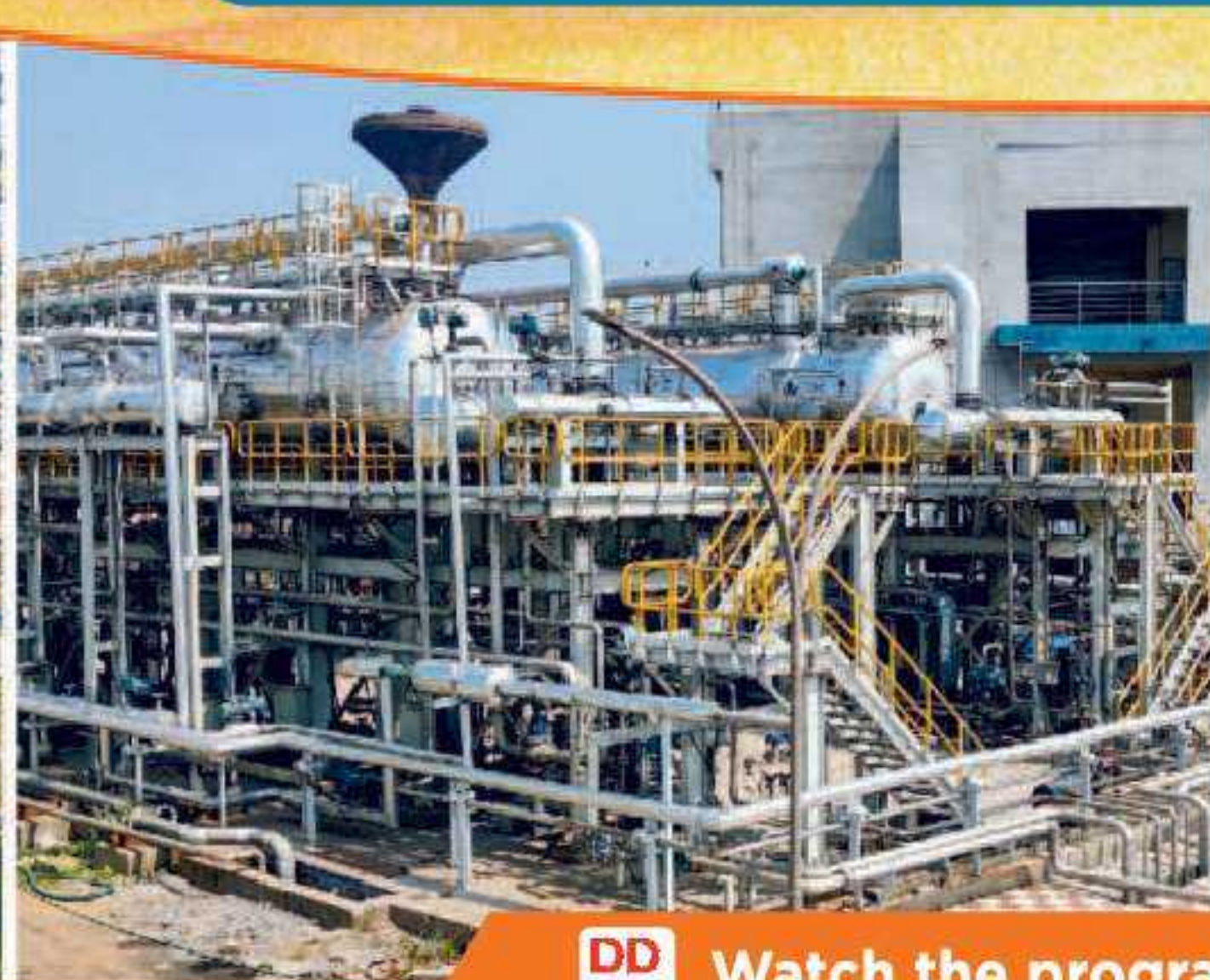
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Chandikhol, Odisha, Tuesday | 5th March, 2024, 3:15 PM



FROM PAGE 1

NO IMMUNITY

resent," said the court. The unanimous verdict by the bench, which also comprised justices AS Bopanna, MM Sundresh, PS Narasimha, JB Pardiwala, Sanjay Kumar and Manoj Misra, said that bribery is not protected by parliamentary privilege because these privileges are essentially related to the House collectively, and are necessary for its functioning.

"Corruption and bribery of members of the legislature erode the foundation of Indian parliamentary democracy. It is destructive of the aspiration and deliberative ideals of the Constitution and creates a polity which deprives citizens of a responsible, responsive and representative democracy," held the court, overturning a five-judge bench decision by the top court in the 1998 PV Narasimha Rao case. CJI Chandrachud authored the 135-page judgment on behalf of the bench.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed the ruling. "SWAG-ATAM! A great judgment by the Supreme Court which will ensure clean politics and deepen people's faith in the system," he said in a post on X, formerly Twitter.

The verdict was also welcomed by the Congress, which said it was desirable to set right the law and should have been done earlier.

"It is a salutary, desirable, welcome judgement. It is something which sets right the law and it should have been done earlier," Congress spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi said, adding that there is no need to go into the facts of the case, because this is not a judgment about the merits of whether anybody did receive a bribe or not.

Outlining the contours of the scope of parliamentary privilege under Articles 105 and 194, the Constitution bench held that the privileges and immunities enshrined in the Constitutional with respect to members of the Houses of Parliament and state legislatures belong to the House collectively. Article 105(2) lays down that no member of Parliament shall be liable to any proceedings in any court "in respect of" anything said, or any vote given by him in Parliament or any committee thereof. A corresponding provision giving immunity to members of state legislatures is contained under Article 194(2).

"The exercise of the privileges individually by members must be tested on the envelope of whether it is tethered to the healthy and essential functioning of the House... To give any privilege

unconnected to the functioning of the Parliament or legislature by necessity is to create a class of citizens which enjoys unchecked exemption. From ordinary application of the law. This was neither the intention of the Constitution nor the goal of vesting Parliament and legislatures with powers privileges immunities," said the bench.

The court underlined that a claim to immunity by a lawmaker accused of taking a bribe fails to fulfil the two-fold test: "That, the claim is tethered to the collective functioning of the House and that it is necessary to the discharge of the essential duties of a legislator... corruption and bribery have wide ramifications on public interest, probity in public life and parliamentary democracy."

The bench added that bribery is "not rendered immune under Articles 105(2) and the corresponding provision of Article 194(2) because a member engaging in bribery commits a crime which is not essential to the casting of the vote or the ability to decide on how the vote should be cast". The same principles that apply to bribery in connection with the speech in the House or a committee, it said.

According to the court, the jurisdiction exercised by a competent court to prosecute a criminal offence and the authority of the House to take action for a breach of discipline in relation to the acceptance of a bribe by member of the legislature exist in distinct spheres.

The bench pointed out that the 1998 judgment had resulted in "a paradoxical outcome" where a legislator was conferred with immunity if they accepted a bribe and followed through by voting in the agreed direction. "On the other hand, the legislator who agrees to accept the bribe but eventually decides to vote independently will be prosecuted. Such an interpretation is contrary to the text and purposes of Articles 105 and 194," said the bench, adding letting the 1998 ruling stay would pose a "grave danger of this court allowing an error to be perpetuated".

By inserting the immunity provisions, the court said, the Constitution sought to create a fearless atmosphere in which debate, deliberations and exchange of ideas can take place within the Houses of Parliament and the state legislatures and lawmakers, who have a right to speak before the House or any committee, must remain free from fear or

favour induced into them by a third party.

"This is exactly what is taken away when a member is induced to vote in a certain way, not because of their belief opposition on an issue, but because of a bribe taken by the member," emphasised the bench.

It also held that the elections for the President, Vice-President and to Rajya Sabha are also integral parts of the powers and responsibilities of elected members of the parliament and the state legislative assemblies and therefore, such elections cannot be pushed outside of the protection and principles of parliamentary privilege, as enunciated in the judgment.

"Further, the purpose of parliamentary privilege is to provide legislators with a platform to speak and vote without fear, which is equally applicable to elections to the Rajya Sabha and elections for the President and the Vice-President as well," it said. In ruling so, the court rejected the Centre's argument that polling to the Rajya Sabha is not protected by Article 194(2) since such an election does not form part of the legislative proceedings of the House.

On September 20, the top court had decided to have a relook at the 1998 judgment in the PV Narasimha Rao vs State (CBI) case after this judgment was relied upon by a former member of the Jharkhand assembly, Sita Soren of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), who allegedly accepted a bribe from an independent candidate for voting in the Rajya Sabha elections of 2012.

The judgment on Monday is set to revive the criminal case against Soren, a serving MLA in Jharkhand, as the top court disposed of her plea. The verdict may also impact the fate of Trinamool Congress (TMC) lawmaker Mahua Moitra, a first-time member who rose to prominence with her combative speeches in the House and was disqualified from the Lok Sabha in December over her "direct involvement" in cash-for-query charges and "unethical" conduct. Moitra was accused of having received cash and gifts from industrialist Darshan Hirmandani in exchange for parliamentary login credentials and asking certain questions as a "quid pro quo". She has denied any such quid pro quo decision.

The 1998 decision by a five-judge bench, by 3-2 majority, held that MPs and MLAs accepting bribes and voting or asking ques-

tions in the House would enjoy immunity under the Constitution. This judgment, curiously, protected those lawmakers who vote or ask questions after receiving bribes, but it did not protect those who received bribes but did not keep their end of the bargain. This judgment came in the backdrop of the JMM bribery scandal that rocked the Congress government, headed by PV Narasimha Rao in 1993. The Narasimha Rao government allegedly bribed several parliamentarians across parties to defeat a no-confidence motion.

The seven-judge bench on October 5 last year reserved its verdict on the correctness of the 1998 ruling even as the Union government implored the bench to nullify the precedential value of the 1998 judgment while emphasising that any act of bribery outside legislative Houses are prosecutable under the Prevention of Corruption (PC) Act.

While making the request to declare the 25-year-old judgment "per incuriam" (rendered in ignorance of a statute), the Centre, represented through attorney general R Venkataramani and solicitor general Tushar Mehta, also proposed that an in-house committee, to be coined as "speech and vote watch", could be a worthwhile alternative to the judicially mandated guidelines that the seven-judge Constitution bench may consider.

However, the bench, in its judgment on Monday, refrained from commenting on the proposed committee, pointing out that the purpose, consequences, and effect of the jurisdictions of the House and criminal law are separate. "A criminal trial differs from contempt of the House as it is fully dressed with procedural safeguards, rules of evidence and the principles of natural justice," it said.

When the case was being argued in October, the Centre had also emphasised that the bench should limit its ruling to stating that the 1998 judgment should not be regarded as precedent, adding there was no need to delve into the larger issue of immunity granted to the lawmakers under Articles 105(2) and 194(2) of the Constitution.

But the bench on Monday held that the issue of bribery is not one of exclusivity of jurisdiction by the House over its bribe-taking members. "The purpose of a House acting against contempt by a member for receiving a bribe serves a purpose distinct from a criminal prosecution," it maintained.

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Midnight's graves

Visiting a qabristan during a special night

PUBLIC INTEREST The midnight moon is shining upon the land beneath, but the land has its own lights.

On this night of Shab-e-Barat, a special occasion in the Islamic calendar (commemorated about a week ago), the dead in the city's graveyards are being visited by their living relatives, as is the tradition. The Panj Peeran Qabristan—graveyard of the five gurus—in central Delhi, beside Lodhi Crematorium, is also packed with hundreds of citizens pacing up and down the ubar-khabar mud tracks. The sights are surreal, dream-like, truly unforgettable. Some graves are crowded with people, but some have only a single visitor. Some graves are lit with a dozen candles, but others have just one. A few have none.

On a grassy wedge of land free of graves, a cluster of silent people are sitting patiently as food is served from a giant deg. Steps away, a family has settled down around the rose-strewn grave of a loved one, taking out home-made meethi rotis from a knotted cloth bundle. Elsewhere, a man is standing alone, the shadows of surrounding keekar trees intersect-

ing on his silhouetted figure. Three teenagers are sitting around a mound of fresh earth, not caring that their denim pants are covered in the graveyard dust.

The inscription on some of the gravestones suggest they might not receive any visitor during the long night, for they belong to people who might not have family or friends in Delhi. Such as the four-year-old grave of Amina Abdurahman Maow, described on the gravestone as a native of Mogadishu in Somalia. The grave of Storai Mohebzada Fazole Rahman too is without light or flowers—the inscription describes him as a dweller of Kabul in Afghanistan.

Three years ago, the elderly Suhana Begum, a homeless woman living near this graveyard, was discovered dead on the street where she would usually sit. She lies buried somewhere amid these graves. Since Suhana Begum used to say that she had no one in the world, it is possible that her unmarked resting place might not be visited this special night.

PS: A few nights later, the Panj Peeran graveyard is immersed in customary darkness, with barely anyone around, evoking a familiar feel of melancholy, mystery and fear that cemeteries exude at night.



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INVITED TENDERS

Online Tenders are invited against TR-03/2024 for procurement of 132KV ratio 1200/1-1-1-1 Amp. Current Transformers with Polymer Insulators, TR-04/2024 for supply of complete material (without Power Transformers) and Construction of 132KV Substation at Atoothkas, Nahli, Shahgarh and Gadla alongwith associated Transmission Line & Feeder Bay on Turnkey Basis, TR-05/2024 for 33KV ratio 1200/1-1-1-1 Amp Current transformer, TR-06/2024 for 120KV Lightning Arrester with Polymer Insulator, TR-07 for 30KV Lightning Arrester with Polymer Insulator, TR-08 for all materials and complete construction of 132KV DCDS Lines required for conversion of 132KV S/C lines on DP/FP to 132KV DCDS line on towers alongwith associated feeder bays on total turnkey basis, TR-09/2024 for 200MVA 220/132/33KV Power Transformers with Oil and Erection, Testing & Commissioning of Transformers, TR-10/2024 for 500MVA 400/200/33KV Power Transformers with oil and Erection, Testing & Commissioning of Transformers, TR-11/2024 for 132KV Solid Core Insulators, TR-12/2024 for construction of new 132KV Substation at Billowa with SAS Works on Turnkey Basis & TR-13/2024 for 220KV Solid Core Insulators. For further details please visit our website. Website : mptransco.nic.in
M.P. Madhyam/114095/2024 CHIEF ENGINEER (PROCUREMENT)

// SAVE ENERGY //

In Loving Memory of

Sh. Gian Chand Khurana
(BAUJI)

15.05.1933 - 05.03.2005
A noble soul who exhibited a rare example of Love, Duty & Selfless Devotion. Your Affection & Vision will always remain a Guiding Force for us.

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Shanti Gyan International Boarding School, Dwarka
Shanti Gyan Vidyapeeth Secondary School, Dwarka
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CIN: U74900UP2014PLC063430

NOTICE INVITING PROPOSAL

Proposals are invited from registered Planning/Architectural Firms for providing support staff in planning department in DMIC IITGNL at Greater Noida. The detailed document containing eligibility criteria and selection process shall be available on the company website www.iitgnl.com w.e.f. 05/03/2024. Last date of submission of proposal is 12/03/2024.

आईआरईएल (इंडिया) लिमिटेड
IREL (India) Limited
(A Govt. of India Undertaking - Department of Atomic Energy)
Manavalakurichi, Tamil Nadu, E-mail: purchase-mk@irel.co.in
An ISO 9001, 14001 & 45001 Unit. Phone: 04651-200402
CIN: U15100MH1950G01008187

Ref: MK/P. ADVT/2023-24/04 Date: 19.02.2024

Tender No.	Description
GEM/2024/B/4652755	High Tension Roll Separator - 2 Stage (Q3)

IREL Manavalakurichi Unit invites "Request For Proposal" for the following tender
Bidder may download tender document from <https://gem.gov.in>, <https://www.irel.co.in> and CPPP website. Any corrigendum/extension to above tender shall be hosted in above websites only.
Sd/-
CBC 48129/12/0077/2324 CGM & Head, MK निरूपण कार्यकर्ता एवं प्रधान, एएके

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited
Regd. Office:- PSEB H.O. Building, The Mall, Patiala
Corporate Identification Number (CIN): U40109PB2010SGC033813
Contact No. 96461-18773

TENDER ENQUIRY No.: QQ-2349/PO-P

Chief Purchase Officer/MM, Central Purchase Organization, PSPCL, 2nd floor, Multistory Building, The Mall, Patiala, invites E-Tender for Procurement of 1584 MT (Metric Ton) of 4mm Dia Indented HT Steel Wire with IS/PQM marked conforming to IS 6003-1983. (Reaffirmed 2010) (with latest amendments, if any) and PSPCL Specification no. QQ-2349/PO-P. For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to <https://proc.punjab.gov.in> from 04.03.2024 onwards.
NOTE: Corrigendum and Addendum, if any will be published online at <https://proc.punjab.gov.in>
C19424 33198

Jamner Municipal Council Jamner
E-TENDER NOTICE No. 21/2023-24
(Short Tender Notice)

Jamner Municipal Council inviting e tenders in B-1 FORM for the following works Under Maharashtra Suvarna Jayanti Nagrothan Mahabhiyan (State Level) Under Ground Drainage Project from reputed and registered Govt. Contractors in appropriate class. The Detailed Tender Notice is available on <https://mahatenders.gov.in> Tender publishing date 04.03.2024 @ 5.00 pm, Pre-bid meeting at Municipal Council Jamner date 07.03.2024 @ 12.00 pm and Bid submission closing date 12.03.2024 @ 5.00 pm.
Sd/-
(Nitin Bagul)
Administrator And Chief Officer
Jamner Municipal Council
जा.क्र.नमज/सा/RR/2800/2024
दिनांक:- 04/03/2024

NORTHERN RAILWAY NOTIFICATION

Re-engagement of Retired Railway Staff on monthly remuneration basis in exigencies of services in Delhi Division, Northern Railway.

Applications are invited from Retired Railway Staff for Re-Engagement on monthly remuneration basis in Delhi Division, Northern Railway for various categories (Total 06 vacancies) on or before 20.03.2024. Maximum upper age limit for re-engagement on 20.03.2024 is 64th years. The employee Removed/Dismissed/Compulsory retired as a result of disciplinary action or pending vigilance cases or in review and Retired employees being re-engaged, covered under the Safety Related Retirement Scheme/Liberalized Active Retirement Scheme for Guaranteed Employment for Safety Staff (LARSSESS) are not eligible for re-engagement.

For more details & to download application visit our website www.indianrailways.gov.in about us > Division > Delhi > Personnel > Re-engagement of Retired Railway Staff on Delhi Division (Total 06 Nos Vacancies) and www.indianrailways.gov.in > News & Recruitment > Recruitment > Notification. 684/2024

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(A Government of Tamil Nadu Undertaking)
Head Office: 759 Anna Salai, Chennai-2

No. 0047/M/123-24 E-TENDER NOTICE Dated: 05.03.2024
Isted in text with or without.

Sealed tenders are invited from Artisans / Sole Proprietors / Firms / Trusts / NGOs / Societies for allotment of handicrafts sales counters in selected Poompalar Sales Showrooms of the Tamil Nadu Handicrafts Development Corporation Limited (as in Annexures I, II, III and IV) for the period from 01.04.2024 to 31.03.2027 (Three Years).

The broad categories of handicrafts are:

1. Paintings (other than Thanjavur paintings)
2. White wood Products
3. Incense & Perfumery Products
4. Rose wood Products
5. Millation Jewellery which includes stones, silver and gold-plated, wooden, etc.
6. Textiles (handcrafted sarees, handcrafted textiles, Varanasi silk sarees and Kashmir woolen shawls).
7. Black metal Products
8. All Handicrafts / Jewellery & Handcrafted Textiles (Except Bronze Icons, Brass lamps, Thanjavur Painting, Thanjavur Art plates & Sandal wood) interested parties shall download the tender documents from the following websites between 05.03.2024 and 04.04.2024 <http://www.tenders.tn.gov.in> and <http://www.tnhdcdcl.com> free of cost.

Last date & time for downloading of tender document 04.04.2024 upto 1.00 PM
Last date & time for receipt of tender document at Head Office 04.04.2024 upto 3.00 PM
Date & time of opening of tender document 04.04.2024 at 4.00 PM
DIPR/1345/TENDER/2024 Managing Director

उत्तरखण्ड पावर कॉर्पोरेशन लिमिटेड
(उत्तरखण्ड सरकार का उपक्रम)
कार्यालय अमीकन अडियन्स, विद्युत विद्युत मण्डल (राजीव) 18 ईस्टी रोड, देहरादून
दूरभाष: +91-135-2653601

"ई-निविदा तिथि विस्तार सूचना"

अधोहस्ताक्षरकर्ता द्वारा निम्नलिखित ई-निविदा आमंत्रित की गई थी जिनको खोलने की तिथि 04.03.2024 थी जो कोई भी निविदा प्राप्त न होने के कारण विस्तारित की जाती है। निविदा अब दिनांक 11.03.2024 को 1200 बजे तक ऑफलाइन/ऑनलाइन प्रस्तुत की जा सकती है जो उसी दिन 1500 बजे खोली जाएगी। निविदाओं की शेष नियम व शर्तें पूर्ववत् रहेंगी।

1. ई-निविदा संख्या 84/EDCRDUN/2023-24
2. ई-निविदा संख्या 85/EDCRDUN/2023-24

उपरोक्त निविदाओं की अधिक जानकारी हेतु वेबसाइट www.uktenders.gov.in पर देखें।

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Website: www.uttarakhand sugars.com GST No. 05AABF7173KZ21

Letter No.1984/PUR/01/E-Tender/2023-24 Date: 04 March, 2024

E-Tender Notice for Rate Contract Items

Online E-Tenders are invited from Manufacturers/Authorized distributors (as per details given in the tender documents) for BOILER TUBE AND ROLLER SHAFT to our Co-operative and Corporation sugar mills season 2024-25.

The details for submission of the E-Bids is available on the E-tender portals as per Table No. 01 www.uktenders.gov.in & www.uttarakhand sugars.com. The bidders will have to deposit Per Tender fees (Non Refundable) of Rs. 2,360/- (GST INCLUSIVE) & earnest money in the form of Demand Draft / RTGS / NEFT / NET BANKING in favor of Uttarakhand Sahakari Chini Mills Sangh Limited, Payable at Dehradun. Tenders without Tender Fees & Earnest money will not be accepted. The bank details are available inside the tender document.

The Federation reserves the right to cancel any or all bids/annual e-bidding process, without assigning and reason to & decision of Federation will be final & binding.

Sl. No.	Name of the Item	Starting date of loading of E-Tender at 06:00 PM	Last Date & Time for Submission of e-bids at 06:00 PM	Technical & Financial bid opening at 10:30 AM & 03:00 PM	E.M.D. (in Rs.)
1-	Boiler Tubes	04-03-2024	13-03-2024	14-03-2024	1,00,000.00
2-	Rollers Shaft	04-03-2024	13-03-2024	14-03-2024	70,000.00

RATE CONTRACT FOR THE SUPPLY OF DIFFERENT ITEMS TO OUR SUGAR FACTORIES IN UTTARAKHAND STATE

इस निविदा के सम्बन्ध में सभी संशोधन, स्पष्टीकरण, सुद्धिपत्र, परिशिष्ट, सम्बंध वृद्धि आदि को केवल www.uktenders.gov.in & www.uttarakhand sugars.com पर ही दिया जायेगा। निविदादाता अवगत जानकारी के लिए विनियमित रूप से इन वेबसाइटों को पढ़ते रहें।

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BJP wins dy mayor posts in Chandigarh civic body

Mandeep Kaur Narula
mandeep.kour@hindustantimes.com

CHANDIGARH: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Monday won the re-election for the posts of senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor of the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation, defeating the Congress-Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) joint candidates, weeks after the Supreme Court overturned the January 30 mayoral polls and declared AAP councillor Kuldeep Kumar Dhalor as the new mayor of the corporation.

On Monday, Dhalor presided over the polls for the senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor posts. For the post of senior deputy mayor, BJP's Kuljeet Sandhu defeated Gurpreet Gabi of the Congress. While Sandhu polled 19 out of the 36 votes polled, Gabi got 16 while one vote was declared invalid by the mayor.

For the deputy mayor's post, Rajinder Sharma of the BJP defeated Congress's Nirmala Devi. While Sharma got 19 of the total 36 votes, Devi could only manage 17 votes.

The Chandigarh municipal corporation has 35 members



(From left) Senior deputy mayor Kuljeet Singh, BJP Chandigarh president Jatinder Pal Malhotra, deputy mayor Rajinder Sharma celebrate after victory at mayor office on Monday. HT PHOTO

and the lone Lok Sabha MP from the Union territory, currently BJP's Kirron Kher, also has a voting right as an ex-officio member of the corporation. The BJP's strength in the 35-member civic body increased from 14 to 17 after three AAP councillors — Punam Devi, Neha Musawat and Gurcharan Kala — switched over to it on February 19. The AAP's strength after the three defections went down from 13 to 10 while the Congress has seven councillors in the House.

Besides the 18 party votes, including that of Kirron Kher,

the two BJP candidates also got the support of the lone councillor of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD).

After the polls, BJP leaders and councillors in the UT celebrated the victory, terming it "crucial" ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. Leaders from the opposition Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc, who blamed the "horse-trading" by the BJP for the results, praised mayor Kuldeep Kumar for conducting "free and fair" elections.

"Our victory was crucial and

we are committed for development in the city," Chandigarh BJP chief Jatinder Pal Malhotra said. "Mayor Kuldeep Kumar should ethically resign as the AAP is left with only 10 councillors."

Chandigarh Congress president HS Lucky said, "We thank the mayor for conducting a free and fair election, in contrary to what BJP had done earlier. BJP's returning officer Anil Masih's role was shameful. INDIA bloc's all votes remained intact in today's elections."

In the January 30 mayoral polls, BJP's Manoj Sonkar had defeated the AAP-Congress alliance candidate Kuldeep Kumar after the returning officer, Anil Masih, declared as invalid eight votes of the coalition partners. Alleging tampering with ballots, AAP and Congress councillors boycotted the elections.

After the matter reached the top court, it declared AAP's Kumar as the mayor on February 20.

The court also ordered prosecution of the Anil Masih, a BJP leader, for his "misdemeanour", after finding serious faults in the conduct of the election.



Pushkar Singh Dhama
letters@hindustantimes.com

ORDINANCE FOR RECOVERY OF DAMAGES FROM RIOTERS CLEARED

Amit Bathla
letters@hindustantimes.com

DEHRADUN: The Uttarakhand cabinet on Monday approved an ordinance for the recovery of damage to public or private property incurred in riots and unrests in the state from the rioters themselves, in a move that comes close on the heels of large-scale violence at Haldwani in Nainital district last month.

The Uttarakhand Public and Private Property Damage Recovery Ordinance, 2024 was approved at the cabinet meeting chaired by chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama.

The ordinance proposes to set up a claims tribunal to assess the damages to the public and private properties in riots and violent protests in the state and award compensation, officials familiar with the development said.

A provision of up to ₹8 lakh fine and recovery of expenses incurred by the government during the riot control has also been made in the ordinance. Rioters will also be made to pay the expenses for the treatment of those injured in the violence, officials aware of the developments in the meeting said.

"The cabinet has approved the constitution of a special tribunal during the cabinet meeting today with the aim of strictly curbing cases of riots and unrests. The damage caused to public property during the riots will be recovered from the rioters themselves," Dhama posted in Hindi on X after chairing the cabinet meeting.

The ordinance will now be sent to the governor for approval, state's home secretary Shailesh Bagauli said.

3 girls injured in K'taka acid attack by stalker

Coovercolly Indresh
letters@hindustantimes.com

BENGALURU: Three girls, aged between 17 and 19, suffered burn injuries in an acid attack by a 23-year-old stalker at a government pre-university college in Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka on Monday, police said.

While the accused, who hails from Kerala, was arrested, state health minister Dinesh Gundu Rao directed authorities to ensure that the victims received all essential medical care as well as compensation from the government.

According to the police, a preliminary investigation into the attack revealed that the accused intended to target one of the victims, who suffered third degree facial burn injuries, after she spurned his advances, but the acid spilt over the two other victims next to her.

The incident took place at a government pre-university college in Kadaba near Mangaluru.

"The girls were preparing for the Pre-University Course (PUC) exams while sitting in the corridors of the college when the accused, Abin Shibi, arrived and threw a bottle of acid at the girl who rejected his advances. While the girl suffered third degree facial burn injuries, two others sustained minor injuries after some amounts of acid spilt on them. All the three are under-

THE ACCUSED AND THE MAIN VICTIM OF THE ACID ATTACK USED TO LIVE CLOSE TO ONE ANOTHER IN KERALA

going treatment," a police officer at Kadaba police station said, seeking anonymity. "The stalker was nabbed by college staff immediately after the incident and handed over to the police. He has been arrested. He wore a school uniform and gained entry into the school premises as a student to carry out the crime. We are investigating who gave him the uniform," the officer added.

Police said Shibi belongs to Nilambur in Malappuram district of Kerala. He is pursuing an MBA course in his hometown. The main victim also hails from Kerala and had come to Karnataka for her studies, police added. Dakshina Kannada district superintendent of police (SP) CB Rishyanth said the main victim is out of danger. "All the girls were initially taken to Kadaba government hospital but later shifted to AJ hospital in Mangaluru," he said. "The main target and the accused belong to the same community and used to live close to one another in Kerala," he added.

It looks like an act of desperation due to rejection of love,

Rishyanth said. Kadaba police inspector Abhinandan said that on the basis of a complaint by a college lecturer, a case under section 326(A) of the Indian Penal Code that deals with acid attack was registered against the accused. "If the parents of any of the girls file a complaint, we will also invoke provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act against the accused," he said.

As the acid attack triggered a political row, the health minister assured that stringent legal action would be taken against the perpetrator.

"I strongly condemn the heinous crime of acid attack on three female students. It's saddening to hear that the three students have suffered serious burn injuries and require extensive medical treatment," Rao said in a post on X.

His remarks came as the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) targeted the ruling Congress over the alleged deteriorating law and order in the state. In a post on X, BJP leader and Udipi Lok Sabha MP Shobha Karandlaje said: "The recent acid attack on female students at Kadaba Govt Junior College, carried out by an accused from Kerala, highlights a dire law & order situation. The victims' future hangs by a thread."

(With PTI inputs)

3 held over 'pro-Pak' slogans in K'taka House

Naheed Ataula
letters@hindustantimes.com

BENGALURU: Three people have been arrested for allegedly raising pro-Pakistan slogans in the Karnataka Vidhana Soudha premises following the victory of Congress's Syed Naseer Hussain in the Rajya Sabha poll on February 27, Bengaluru police said on Monday.

"Based on the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) report, circumstantial evidence, witness statements and available proof, three persons have been arrested," the Bengaluru City police said in a statement late in the evening.

ROW INTENSIFIED AFTER BJP SHARED A PRIVATE REPORT CLAIMING THAT SUCH SLOGANS WERE MADE

According to the police, one of the accused is a resident of Delhi, the second hails from RT Nagar in Bengaluru, and the third one is from Byadagi in Haveri district.

Chief minister Siddaramaiah had earlier ordered the government-run FSL to probe into the video clippings to check the veracity of allegations that "Paki-

stan Zindabad" slogans were raised by supporters of Hussain, who was among the three Congress candidates to win the Rajya Sabha polls. A fourth seat had gone to the BJP.

Meanwhile, the political row intensified on Monday after the BJP posted on its social media handle an investigation report claiming that "pro-Pakistan" slogans were made. The Congress filed a police complaint against state BJP chief BN Vijayendra and others for sharing "baseless and fabricated" report.

The report prepared by Clue4 Evidence Forensic Investigations and signed by audio forensic

examiner Phaneendar BN claimed "Pakistan Zindabad" slogan was highly probable in the 30-second video. The report was prepared on behalf of city-based 'Samvada Foundation', a non-profit allegedly linked to RSS.

State home minister G Parameshwara said, "If the report says that such a slogan was raised, then we will take action immediately. There is no question of hiding it, as alleged by the BJP."

However, leader of opposition in the assembly R Ashoka alleged the government has received the official FSL report and it was trying to keep it under wraps to shield some persons.

J'khand HC takes note of foreign national's gang rape, seeks report

HT Correspondent
letters@hindustantimes.com

RANCHI: The Jharkhand high court on Monday took note of the gang rape of a foreign tourist and asked the Dumka superintendent of police (SP) Pitambar Singh Kherwar to file a report status report on the investigation into the case by Thursday.

Taking suo motu (on its own) cognizance of media reports, a division bench of acting chief justice S Chandrashekhar and justice Navneet Kumar made chief secretary L Khiangete, director general of police Ajay Kr Singh and home secretary Amitabh Kaushal respondents in the matter. "The matter has been listed next for March 7 by when

the Dumka SP has been directed to file the report. The bench also appointed advocate Ritu Kumar as amicus in the matter," an advocate aware of the matter said. A 30-year-old Spanish national was allegedly gang-raped by seven men, who also beat up her husband in Dumka on Friday. Three of the accused have been arrested.

Shri Umesh Modi
Chairman & Managing Director
Modi Industries Ltd. - Modinagar

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On the occasion of 73rd Birthday (Modinagar Development Day) of Shri Umesh Modi, Modi Industries Limited commences construction of its 1st Real Estate Project named as **UMESH PARK PHASE-1 at Modinagar**

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For details contact - Mr. Avinash Modi +91 9810287505

SPOTLIGHT | IMMUNITY TO LAWMAKERS

SC strikes balance between graft charges, parliamentary privilege

Utkarsh Anand and
Abraham Thomas

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The seven-judge bench verdict on Monday that said bribe-taking lawmakers have no immunity strikes a much-needed balance between parliamentary privilege and corruption charges.

The verdict defines parliamentary privilege and its boundaries, especially in relation to freedom of speech, the right to participate in proceedings of the House, and immunity from legal proceedings. Understanding the landmark judgment by the Constitution bench on Monday requires navigating the intriguing journey of the case and the contentious judgment that led the top court establish a judicial precedent that served as guidelines for future cases involving lawmakers.

The Narasimha Rao judgment in 1998 and the reference:

This was the ruling overturned on Monday by the larger bench. The tenth Lok Sabha election, which took place in 1991, provided the case's context. PV Narasimha Rao was appointed prime minister and the Congress emerged as the single largest party. In July 1993, a no-confidence motion was brought against the government.

In a house of 528 MPs, the Congress was short by 14 from a simple majority. On July 26, 1993, the motion was put to vote, and the Narasimha Rao government sailed through by garnering 265 votes. Several MPs that voted against the motion of no-confidence were those who belonged to the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and the Janata Dal (Ajit) (A). Interestingly, Ajit Singh, a JD (A) MP, chose not to cast a vote.

A complaint was filed before the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) alleging that the Narasimha Rao government distributed over ₹3 crore as bribe to MPs of different political parties.

CBI took up the investigation under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 against JMM chief Shibu Soren and three other party MPs for receiving bribes and voting against the no confidence motion. The investigating agency



The seven-judge constitution bench headed by CJI DY Chandrachud while pronouncing its verdict.

PTI

also filed a separate case against Rao and others for hatching a criminal conspiracy and paying bribes to MPs. Charge sheets were filed before a CBI court in Delhi where the accused MPs took the defence that the action by the court is barred by Article 105(2).

Article 105(2) states: "No member of Parliament shall be liable to any proceedings in any court in respect of anything said or any vote given by him in Parliament or any committee thereof and no person shall be so liable in respect of the publication by or under the authority of either House of Parliament of any report, paper, votes or proceedings." The identical provison in respect of members of state legislatures is provided in Article 194(2). The CBI judge rejected the argument and even the Delhi HC put a stamp of approval on it by saying that the illegal acts of demanding and accepting bribe took place outside Parliament.

The appeal was brought to the Supreme Court where a Constitution bench of five judges determined two issues: One, does Article 105 confer any immunity on an MP from being prosecuted in an offence involving offer or acceptance of bribe and two, can MPs be regarded as "public servant" to bring them within the ambit of the 1988 Act because there is no authority competent to grant sanction for their prosecution?

The verdict that came on July 17, 1998, was not unanimous. While the judges agreed on the second issue that MPs are public

servants, there was difference of opinion on whether Article 105 immunity is to be a shield for members of Parliament against criminal proceedings for bribery. The majority decision was given by justices SP Bharucha and S Rajendra Babu, and supported by a separate view by justice GN Ray. They held that the alleged bribe takers are entitled to immunity conferred by Article 105(2), holding that the words "in respect of the publication by or under the authority of either House of Parliament of any report, paper, votes or proceedings." The identical provison in respect of members of state legislatures is provided in Article 194(2). The CBI judge rejected the argument and even the Delhi HC put a stamp of approval on it by saying that the illegal acts of demanding and accepting bribe took place outside Parliament.

The majority said: "Protection under Article 105(2) is available only to those accused, who as members of Parliament cast their votes in Parliament." The minority view comprised justices SC Agrawal and AS Anand.

Years later, in March 2012, the Election Commission of India (ECI) notified election to two vacant seats of the Rajya Sabha from Jharkhand. Sita Soren, the daughter-in-law of JMM patriarch Shibu Soren, was then a member of the Jharkhand legislative assembly. She was accused of accepting a bribe from an independent candidate in exchange for

supporting him. However, it was clear from the open voting for the Rajya Sabha seat that she voted for a candidate from her own party rather than the alleged bribe-giver.

A PIL came to be filed before the Jharkhand HC, which directed the CBI to probe into the alleged exchange of money.

Before the trial court and the HC, Sita Soren claimed immunity against prosecution under Article 194(2), but to no avail. On being denied the protection, she approached the SC in 2014, banking on the 1998 ruling in Narasimha Rao case. In March 2019, a three-judge bench referred the matter to a five-judge bench, which in turn referred the issue to a seven-judge bench in September last year.

The seven-judge bench ruling:

Noting precedents, historical development and international jurisprudence on parliamentary privileges, the top court on Monday declared that legislators cannot claim immunity in cases of corruption and bribery since they are not fundamentally related to their ability to perform their duties.

The court highlighted that the freedom of speech and the right to vote as an extension of it is a privilege essential to every legislative body because such privi-

leges are not only essential to the ability of Parliament and its members to carry out their duties, but it is also at the core of the function of a democratic legislative institution.

"Freedom of speech in Parliament and the legislatures is an arm of the same aspiration so that members may express the grievances of their constituents, express diverse perspectives and ventilate the perspectives of their constituents. Freedom of speech in Parliament ensures that the government is held accountable by the House," it said. At the same time, the court was categorical that the privileges to MPs and MLAs are not absolute or unqualified. "The privilege of an individual member only extends insofar as it aids the House to function and without which the House may not be able to carry out its functions collectively... We may understand parliamentary privileges as those rights and immunities which allow the orderly, democratic, and smooth functioning of Parliament and without which the essential functioning of the House would be violated," it noted.

According to the court, parliamentary privileges are not a mark of status which makes legislators stand on an unequal pedestal but are guaranteed freedoms necessary to be in furtherance of fertilising a deliberative, critical, and responsive democracy, adding it is for the legislator claiming a privilege against an

action to satisfy that the privilege exists. The bench then said that an act of bribery cannot be immune under the doctrine of parliamentary privilege because a member engaging in bribery commits a crime which is not essential to the casting of the vote or the ability to decide on how the vote should be cast. Holding that courts and the House exercise parallel jurisdiction over allegations of bribery, the Constitution bench said that a member engaging in bribery commits a crime which is unrelated to their ability to vote or to make a decision on their vote. "This action may bring indignity to the House of Parliament or Legislature and may also attract prosecution. What it does not attract is the immunity given to the essential and necessary functions of a member of Parliament or legislature," it added.

The bench further clarified that the offence of bribery is complete on the acceptance of the money or on the agreement to accept money being concluded, adding it is not contingent on the performance of the promise for which money is given or is agreed to be given.

Notably, the seven-judge bench ruling on Monday also dispensed observations by another five-judge bench in the Kuldip Nayyar case (2006), which said that elections to fill seats in the Rajya Sabha are not proceedings of the legislature but a mere exercise of franchise, which falls outside the net of parliamentary privilege under Article 194. In the 2006 judgment, the court was dealing with the use of open ballots in elections to the Rajya Sabha. The larger bench held that parliamentary privilege cannot be restricted to only law-making on the floor of the House but extends to other powers and responsibilities of elected members, which take place in the legislature or Parliament, even when the House is not sitting.

"The court should adopt a construction which strengthens the foundational features and the basic structure of the Constitution... it is clarified that voting for elections to the Rajya Sabha falls within the ambit of Article 194(2). On all other counts, the decision of the Constitution bench in Kuldip Nayyar (supra) remains good law," it said.



Order will help ensure clean politics: Modi

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday hailed the Supreme Court verdict that legislators and lawmakers taking bribes to vote or make a speech in Parliament are not immune from prosecution, saying it would ensure "clean politics" and "deepen people's faith in the system".

Describing the top court's ruling as "great", Modi, in a post on X, said: "SWAGATAM! A great judgment by the Hon'ble Supreme Court which will ensure clean politics and deepen people's faith in the system."

In a landmark and unanimous verdict, a seven-judge Constitution Bench ruled that an MP or MLA cannot claim immunity from prosecution in bribery cases related to casting votes or giving speech in Parliament or Legislative Assembly, as it overruled the 1998 PV Narasimha Rao judgment case, which granted immunity to such members.

"Bribery is not protected by parliamentary privileges," the bench led by Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud said.

The top court's ruling was welcomed by Union ministers and political leaders across party lines.

"Satyameva Jayate. A landmark verdict by the Hon'ble Supreme Court to reinforce clean politics and enhance public trust in our democratic system," Union commerce minister Piyush Goyal said in a post on X.

Former Union law and justice minister Ashwani Kumar also hailed the "historic decision". "I believe that this is a historic decision, a meaningful decision, a decision that strengthens the dignity of the Constitution and the dignity of democracy," he said.

Minister of earth sciences Kiren Rijiju said: "Very vital decision by Supreme Court for a clean & transparent politics!"

Bharatiya Janata Party spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said the "landmark" ruling "aligns with the commitment of Hon'ble Prime Minister Naren-

dra Modi to uphold the rule of law and serves as a significant step towards ensuring accountability and transparency in our democratic system."

It also "reinforces the government's commitment to rooting out corruption and promoting a system that truly serves the people," he said.

The Congress said that it was desirable to set right the law and should have been done earlier.

"The judgment was overdue and is rightly decided. I think it's a salutary, desirable, welcome judgment. It is something which sets right the law and it should've been done earlier," Congress spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi said in a video message.

"It is a legal issue decided on the assumption that some people did not vote and some people did vote on the allegation of bribery and whether they can at all be prosecuted, not whether they are convictable or not, on the merits," he added.

Singhvi also said that "provisions of protection to MPs or MLAs are made for the discharge of their duties and only for those things without which they cannot carry out their responsibilities, and not to give them additional benefits like, for example, receiving bribes."

In a post on X, Communist Party of India (Marxist) general secretary Sitaram Yechury also said that the Supreme Court had delivered a "historic" verdict.

"Mega horse trading allegedly through bribery indulged by the BJP has toppled many democratically elected govts replaced by BJP govts! Likewise, some BJP RS (Rajya Sabha) MPs have been elected in this manner. This judgment must be followed up by action," he said.

Reacting to the SC verdict, the Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) leader K Kavitha said: "Very welcoming judgment. Now The Prevention of Corruption Act will be applied to public representatives. This will strongly help in de-criminalising politics. The probe should start with Telangana chief minister Revanth Reddy."

Trouble mounts for JMM first family, Sita Soren to face trial

Vishal Kant

letters@hindustantimes.com

RANCHI: The Supreme Court verdict overruling its majority judgment in the 1998 Jharkhand Mukti Morcha bribery case that lawmakers have immunity from prosecution for accepting bribes to cast a vote or make a speech in legislative bodies has multiplied the problems of former state chief minister Shibu Soren and his family, which is facing a slew

of corruption charges.

In the immediate aftermath of the verdict, Sita Soren, eldest daughter-in-law of the JMM president, will now face trial before a special Central Bureau of Investigation court, which is examining witnesses in the 2012 horse-trading case, people aware of the development said on Monday, declining to be named.

Sita, widow of Durga Soren, eldest son of Shibu Soren, represents Jama seat in the Jhark-

hand assembly and is into her third term as legislator.

The fresh trouble for the Soren family came close on the heels of action against former CM Hemant Soren, who was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate on January 31 on money laundering charges related to an alleged land scam in the state capital being probed by the federal agency.

Shibu Soren, currently a member of the Rajya Sabha, is

facing a disproportionate assets case before the Lokayukta on a complaint filed by BJP MP Nishikant Dubey.

Hemant Soren, who is in judicial custody, stepped down as chief minister on the day he was arrested and party vice-president Champai Soren took over the reins of the JMM-Congress-Rashtriya Janata Dal alliance government last month.

JMM leaders remained tight lipped over the apex court ver-

dict. "We would comment on possible implications after we see the complete order," spokesperson Manoj Pandey said.

The CBI in 2013 registered the horse-trading case on direction from the Jharkhand HC after the Election Commission rescinded the original notification for the 2012 Rajya Sabha polls for the state.

Reacting to the SC judgment, Congress spokesperson Sonal Shanti said, "It is legal issue

related to the JMM. So only they can respond."

Meanwhile, Jharkhand BJP chief Babul Marandi said that the Soren family was in politics "only to make money."

"We welcome the Supreme Court verdict. The Soren family has created history in this aspect. They are in politics only to make money. They first loot money, land and mines and then cry foul when they are caught," said Marandi.

Won't contest till name cleared in 'fake' obscene video case, says BJP MP

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

LUCKNOW: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Upendra Rawat, who was recently fielded again from Uttar Pradesh's Barabanki district for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, on Monday said he won't contest any polls till he is proven innocent in a case involving a viral "deepfake" obscene video of him.

Deepfake videos are synthetic media created using Artificial Intelligence (AI), which generate convincing looking fake images, videos or audios not usually discernible to someone not trained in spotting them.

A video, which surfaced on social media on Sunday, allegedly shows Rawat in an objectionable position with a woman. HT could not independently verify the authenticity of the video.

In a post on X in Hindi on Monday, Rawat said the video clip was "edited". "An edited video of mine has been put up on social media. The video has been created using deepfake AI technique. I have requested my party's national chief to order an inquiry. I have also decided that until proven innocent, I will not contest any election," he wrote



Upendra Rawat

on the micro-blogging platform. On Saturday, Rawat was fielded again from Barabanki, which he has represented since 2019, as the BJP released its first list of 195 candidates from 16 states and two Union territories for the general elections.

As the purported video surfaced on Sunday, the BJP leader's secretary Dinesh Chandra Rawat filed a complaint against unidentified accused, according to Barabanki Kotwali police station-in-charge Aditya Tripathi. The complaint, which was later converted into the FIR, alleged that some people made public a doctored objectionable video of the MP to tarnish his image after he was declared a BJP candidate, Tripathi said.

A senior BJP functionary, speaking on condition of anonymity, said "the party high command will decide on the matter".

Start-ups to get aid to pursue defence innovation

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

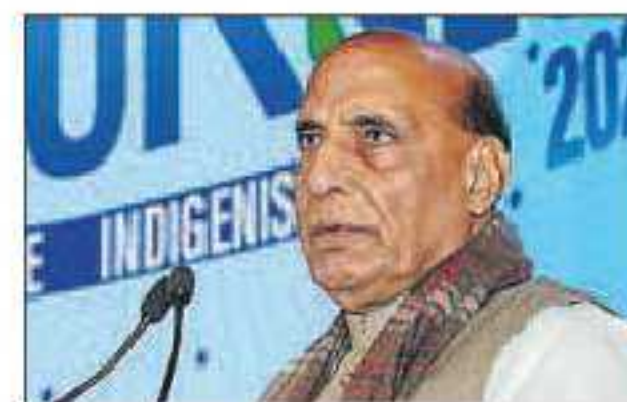
NEW DELHI: Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Monday launched a new scheme to push innovation in critical and strategic defence technologies, under which start-ups will be eligible for financial aid of up to ₹25 crore for research and development in military technology.

"The ADITI scheme will nurture innovation and help the country leap forward in the field of technology," Singh said at Def-Connect 2024, a defence con-

clave. ADITI stands for Acing Development of Innovative Technologies with iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence).

The scheme, which will disburse aid worth ₹750 crore during 2023-26, aims to develop around "30 deep-tech critical and strategic technologies in the proposed timeframe," the defence ministry said in a statement. It also seeks to create a 'technology watch tool' to bridge the gap between the expectations and requirements of the armed forces, and the capabilities of the defence innovation

ecosystem, the statement said. "As times are changing, new technologies are coming into existence. To become a developed country, it is necessary for us to achieve a technological edge. We must transform our



Rajnath Singh

country into a knowledge society," Singh said. He described "getting a hold on state-of-the-art defence technology" as the most crucial aspect of achieving self-reliance due to the increasing role of cutting-edge technology in modern warfare. "Technology can be mastered either by adopting the latest innovation from other countries or by developing our own. The government is working on both methods."

Talking about the government's vision of attaining self-reliance in the defence manufacturing sector, Singh said the

country cannot remain dependent on imported weapons and platforms as it can be fatal for strategic autonomy. Without self-reliance, India cannot take independent decisions on global issues in line with its national interests, he said. "Strategic autonomy can be maintained only when arms and equipment are made in India by our own people. We are working towards this... While in 2014 our domestic defence production was around ₹44,000 crore, today it has crossed the record figure of ₹1 lakh crore and is growing..."

The new system comes with several advancements over the M3 variant, including a new sighting system, ballistic computer, improved optics and provision for night vision clip-ons, Johansson said. At 7 kg, the M4 is three kgs lighter than the M3.

A few Carl-Gustaf M4 rocket launchers have already been inducted by the Indian Army.

The M4 weapon system is capable of firing a variety of ammunition, including anti armour and illumination rounds, with the maximum range being 1,500 metre.

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A few Carl-Gustaf M4 rocket launchers have already been inducted by the Indian Army.

NEED AN INDO-US COLLABORATIVE LAW PLATFORM: ATTORNEY GENERAL

Deepankar Malviya

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: There is a need for a bilateral platform between India and the US for vibrant exchanges in the domain of law and justice, attorney general R Venkataramani said on Monday, addressing legal luminaries at the first India-US Legal Services Summit on Indo-US Cooperation On Corporate And Legal Issues.

The summit organised by the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce was also attended by solicitor general Tushar Mehta and Manoj Kumar, additional secretary at the law ministry, as well as personalities of the legal field from the US.

"The US is a mini-India and people from virtually all parts of India can be seen in almost all parts of US. We are a good limb of GDP of US as also the GDP, that is, Gross Exchange Product, with exchanges in social, cultural, economic and political," Venkataramani said. "Indians occupying important positions in the legal field is a great story. Alongside, we must create more enduring and vibrant exchange platforms in the domains of law and justice. An Indo-US comparative and collaborative law platform can be visualised."



Tapas Roy

TMC LEADER TAPAS QUILTS PARTY; BUZZ OVER MOVE TO BJP

KOLKATA: Trinamool Congress leader and former planning and statistics minister Tapas Roy resigned from the legislative assembly on Monday amid indications that he may soon join the Bharatiya Janata Party and contest against the ruling party in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

"I resigned from TMC's primary membership and all government offices on March 1," Roy told the media after stepping down as legislator. He was the TMC's deputy chief whip in the West Bengal assembly.

Claiming that back-to-back corruption cases against ruling party leaders and the recent Sandeshkhali incident has made him uncomfortable, Roy said he was shocked to see the chief minister defending Sandeshkhali's TMC leader Sheikh Shahjahan on the floor of the assembly on February 15, but not condemning the January 12 Enforcement Directorate raid at his home in Kolkata.

Shahjahan was arrested on February 28 over several allegations of sexual assault and land grabbing in the area.

"On January 12, people from my own party sent the ED team to raid my home. Some MPs and MLAs were overjoyed. I still don't know why the ED came. The chief minister defended Sheikh Shahjahan at the assembly but did not utter a word to condemn the ED raid at my place," Roy told the media.

"I will not comment on what I plan to do next," Roy said after submitting his resignation.

"I will announce my decision tomorrow. Many people join other parties. He did the right thing by resigning from the assembly first," the speaker said.

Reacting to the development, BJP state president Sukanta Majumdar said: "Politics is a game of possibilities. I cannot say anything right now, but can assure that TMC's political equations will change drastically across Bengal very soon." HT

21-year-old beaten up and killed by students in T'gana hostel, say police

Press Trust of India
letters@hindustantimes.com

HYDERABAD: A 21-year-old degree student was allegedly beaten up and strangled to death by seven students, including a minor, inside his room at a state-run hostel in Nizamabad district of Telangana, police said on Monday.

All seven students have been detained by the police.

The incident took place in Bodhan town of the district on Sunday night, where Venkat, who is studying in the Govern-

SEVEN STUDENTS, INCLUDING A MINOR, HAVE BEEN DETAINED FOR ALLEGEDLY BEATING UP AND STRANGULATING VENKAT TO DEATH

ment College in Nizamabad district, was killed by the seven students who also stay at the hostel and are studying for intermediate and degree

courses, police said.

Based on a preliminary investigation, the police said that Venkat had told an intermediate first-year student at the hostel to focus on his studies when he allegedly discussed committing malpractice in the ongoing exams.

After this, the intermediate first-year student, who is a minor, informed his elder brother, who is also a student staying at the hostel. The brother, along with other students, argued with Venkat, the official said.

They allegedly beat him up and strangled him, police said, adding that some others students at the hostel informed the hostel authorities, who took Venkat to a hospital. However, doctors declared him dead on arrival.

A relative of the deceased student alleged that Venkat was confined in a room by some students, who "tortured and killed" him.

A murder case has been registered. Meanwhile, members of some students organisations held a protest over the incident.

5 killed as car rams into tree: Police

WANAPARTHY: Five people were killed and six injured after a car rammed into a tree under the Kothkota police station area in Wanaparthy district in the early hours of Monday, said the police.

According to the police, the victims were travelling from Bellary (Karnataka) to Hyderabad. "At around 10 p.m. on Sunday, they started travelling from Bellary. By the time they reached Kothagudem at around

2 a.m., the driver was over-speeding, after which, the car rammed into a tree, leading to five casualties, leaving six injured," said Manjunath Reddy, Sub-Inspector, Kothakota police station. AGENCIES

LEADER'S SPEAK HINDUSTAN TIMES MEDIA MARKETING INITIATIVE

"Starting from just 80 Kendras in 2014, the network has expanded to almost 11,000 Kendras"

Chief Executive Officer of Pharmaceuticals & Medical Devices Bureau of India (PMBI) **Ravi Dadhich** sheds light on the PMBJP's success and plans to expand its scale in the country.

Q: What are the future prospects of Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) in generic medicines in the country?

A: The PMBJP scheme had already achieved its target of opening 10,000 Kendras much before the time when the PM launched the 10,000th Janaushadhi Kendra at Deoghar in 2023. With a vision to increase the number of Jan Aushadhi Kendras in the country from 10,000 to 25,000 by March 31, 2026, PMBI has already invited online applications for opening of Kendras to extend the benefits of affordable medicines for all parts of the country. This will ensure better accessibility of generic medicines to people in both urban and rural areas. For extensive rural coverage, the scheme has tied up with Cooperative sector (PACS) to maximize benefits of PMBJP Kendras. More than 2,500 PACS have got initial approval letter to open Janaushadhi Kendras. The PMBJP will continue to focus on accessibility, affordability,



Ravi Dadhich
CEO, PMBI

expedite the establishment of Jan Aushadhi Kendras at a very fast pace by reaching the new targets within two years of time frame. Some of the challenges in fulfilling this goal are to overcome the increased demand while ensuring efficient supply chain, sufficient procurement and its timely distribution to the large population.

Q: How PMBJP impacts the lives of citizens of the country in terms of savings?

A: The medicines are 50-90 per cent cheaper than their branded counterparts so every citizen saves on his monthly expenditure on medicines. During the past 10 years, citizens have saved approximately Rs 28,000 crores. Due to these savings, large quantum of out-of-the-pocket expenditure on health is being utilised better for other essential purposes such as education, nutrition and overall well-being. The affordability of the medicines also ensures that patients follow the medication on regular basis without worrying for high costs.

and WHO-GMP certified quality of generic medicines, thereby assuring healthcare for the citizens.

Q: The government aims to have 25,000 Janaushadhi Kendras nationwide by March 31, 2026. What is the plan of action to achieve the same? Any challenges that need to be addressed?

A: As Jan Aushadhi Kendras are being planned nationwide we have relaxed the norms and now, a minimum distance of 1 km will be eligible to submit online applications through PMBI's website, www.janaushadhi.gov.in. This streamlined process will

Growing strides of AYUSH in Uttarakhand

Investment Centric UTTARAKHAND AYUSH POLICY 2023 Launched

Focus on AYUSH Cultivation, Education, Healthcare, Wellness and Manufacturing

NAAC Accreditation now mandatory for AYUSH Education Institutes in Uttarakhand

Government AYUSH hospitals being NABH accredited

Upto 55% subsidy to promote investment in AYUSH Manufacturing and Wellness sector

Branding of exclusive Himalayan herbs being planned

AYUSH Expanding in Uttarakhand with Government of India Support

- India's first Yoga Policy being formulated under the guidance of yoga experts.
- Wellness norms and rating system formulated to support Wellness sector in Uttarakhand.
- Plan to establish All India Institute of Ayurveda in the state.
- Homeopathy and Unani medical colleges being established in the state.
- 240+ AYUSH doctors posted in remote areas.
- District level 50-bed and Block level 10-bed AYUSH hospitals being established.
- Implementation of "AYURVIDYA" program to provide AYUSH education to children and "SUPRAJA" program to provide Ayurvedic anti-natal care to pregnant women under National AYUSH Mission across the state.



Pushkar Singh Dhama
Chief Minister, Uttarakhand



MOUs of more than
₹ 17,000 Crore

signed for investment in AYUSH Education, Wellness, Healthcare, Manufacturing and Cultivation sectors in the state.

Issued in Public Interest by AYUSH & AYUSH Education Department, Uttarakhand

Punjab becomes first choice for investors

Punjab starts 'sikhiya kranti'

Senior citizens' well-being is top priority

20 month of Free Electricity for 3 Crore Punjabis

The new tourism endeavor in Punjab is poised to elevate the region to new heights

Green Stamp Paper to promote doing business

From Ground to Sky: Punjab Government's



PUNJAB BECOMES FIRST CHOICE FOR INVESTORS

RS. 64,114 CR PROPOSED INVESTMENT

The commitment of Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann's government in Punjab to elevate the state as an industrial leader is evident through its robust efforts. In a span of just 22 months, the Bhagwant Singh Mann government has successfully attracted an investment of Rs 64,114 crore in Punjab, promising to generate more than 3 lakh jobs for the youth. The proposed investments are strategically distributed across various sectors, with Rs 19,464 crore allocated for real estate, housing, and infrastructure, Rs 5,004 crore for the

manufacturing sector, Rs 5,632 crore for the alloy steel and steel sector, Rs 4,715 crore for the textile, technical textile, and apparel sector, and Rs 6,132 crore for the agriculture, food processing, and beverages sector. Notable investments include Tata Steel's Rs 2,600 crore in the secondary steel sector in Ludhiana, Sanatan Polycot's Rs 1,600 crore in the man-made fiber sector in Fatehgarh Sahib, Nabha Power (L&T)'s investment of Rs 641 crore in the power sector in Patiala, Toppan (Japan) investing Rs 548 crore in the packaging sector.



Green Stamp Paper- A revolutionary step to promote ease of doing business

Green colored stamp papers to facilitate the entrepreneurs for setting up their units thereby giving much needed fillip to industrial growth of the state. This is the revolutionary step aimed at promoting ease of doing business for the entrepreneurs desirous of setting up their units in the state. Industrialists who are keen on setting his industrial unit in the state can get this unique colour coded stamp paper from Invest Punjab Portal. Industrialists will have to just pay various fees required for getting clearances in form of CLU, forest, Pollution, Fire and other to set up his unit while purchasing this single stamp paper only.



19,123 government schools in the state and each one of them will see improvement under the Mann regime in terms of better infrastructure and other facilities.

Rs. 358 cr to be used for construction of boundary walls in over 7,000 schools

'SARKAR SANATKAR MILNI' PROGRAM IS HISTORIC

Punjab government led by Bhagwant Singh Mann launched 'Sarkar Sanatkar Milni' program, which has become historic and solving all kinds of problems of the businessmen and traders in Punjab. For the first time in Punjab, a government has actively lent an ear to the problems of the traders and businessmen of the state and is taking positive steps to solve their

problems. Since the formation of the Bhagwant Singh Mann government, this dispensation has been continuously solving the problems of industrialists to encourage industry and generate employment in the state. For the convenience of industrialists, Punjab Pollution Control Board and Punjab State Power Corporation Limited are going to start a help desk.



Punjab's Players Shine Bright: A Beacon of National Prestige

With the objective of ushering Punjab into a new era, the government, led by Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, has conferred prestigious appointments to 11 players, including PCS and P.P.S., who have brought laurels to the nation, notably clinching a bronze medal in hockey after a hiatus of 40 years, alongside making notable strides in cricket and shot put.

Punjab not only holds the distinction of being the nation's breadbasket but also serves as the cradle of renowned athletes. Over time, players from the state have adorned the national stage with their stellar performances across various competitions. This initiative marks a resurgence in Punjab's sporting glory, signifying a departure from its association with drug-related



challenges. Recently, 11 players, comprising 9 hockey players, a cricket player, and a shot put player, were conferred with prestigious PCS and P.P.S. appointments. Notable among them are Harmanpreet Singh, Mandeep Singh, Varun Kumar, Shamsheer Singh, and Dilpreet Singh from hockey, along with Harmanpreet Kaur in cricket and Tejinder Toor in shot put.

Furthermore, four hockey players—Rupinderpal Singh, Simranjit Singh, Hardik Singh, and Gurjant Singh—have been bestowed with PCS appointments. This initiative has sparked a reverse migration trend in the state, as youth who had settled abroad are now returning to Punjab in pursuit of government jobs. This momentum is expected to extend to the realm

of sports, with players from other states seeking opportunities within the Punjab government's purview. Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann envisions a future where Punjab emerges as a frontrunner in all fields on the national stage. Expressing gratitude, player Rupinderpal Singh conveyed heartfelt appreciation to the Chief Minister for this significant step, emphasizing that it is the first time players have been directly appointed to PCS positions by a state government. This move is anticipated to serve as a catalyst, motivating players to excel in sports and bring further glory to the nation. Hockey player Harmanpreet Singh hailed the momentous occasion, reflecting on his medal win in 2021 and acknowledging the significance of securing a government job today.

20 month of Free Electricity

Upon assuming office, the question that loomed over 3 crore Punjabis was whether the new administration, led by Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, would uphold its commitment to provide 300 units of free energy within a month. Making history on April 16, less than a month after taking office, Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann announced the provision of 300 units of free electricity, amounting to 600 units in a two-month billing cycle, starting from July 1, 2022.

Even amidst scorching heat, a staggering 90% of Punjab households



More than 90% consumers getting zero bills

experienced zero electricity bills. This monumental effort not only elevated the living standards of Punjabis but also significantly alleviated their economic burdens.

The new tourism endeavor in Punjab is poised to elevate the region to new heights



Punjab's Chief Minister, Bhagwant Singh Mann, is diligently working to elevate the state's profile both nationally and internationally while steering its economy towards prosperity. Under his leadership, the Punjab government has embarked on a significant initiative to position the state as a global tourism hotspot. The inaugural tourism conference and travel mart mark the beginning of this ambitious endeavor.

This initiative by Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann aims to achieve two key objectives: bolstering the state's economy through tourism and creating employment opportunities for the youth. By nurturing the tourism sector, not only will economic growth flourish, but also new job prospects will emerge for the youth, empowering them to secure their livelihoods.

In a bid to further enhance the tourism sector, Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann recently announced the introduction of jet skiing, motor paragliding, and hot air ballooning activities at Chamard port. Following trial runs of these activities, Chief Minister Mann expressed optimism, noting that water-based recreational activities like speed boating are already popular at this picturesque location.

SENIOR CITIZENS' WELL-BEING IS TOP PRIORITY

Punjab government, under the leadership of Bhagwant Singh Mann, has initiated a special scheme for the elderly called 'Saade Buzurg Saadda Maan' (Our Elderly, Our Pride). The campaign aims to enhance the well-being of the elderly in the state. Under this campaign, health camps for the elderly are being organized at the district level across the entire state. These health camps provide medical treatment for illnesses related to the age of the elderly. Comprehensive geriatric care, ENT (Ear, Nose, Throat) examinations, eye check-ups, and free distribution of glasses are some of the services offered in these health camps.

Additionally, these camps provide free eye surgeries for senior citizens.

Senior Citizen Cards are being issued:

The list of facilities provided to the elderly by the Mann government does not end here. In addition to all these services, senior citizen cards are being issued for all senior citizens in the state.

From Oct 3, health camps already being organized in different districts of Punjab, including Faridkot, Moga, Ludhiana, Muktsar Sahib, Firozpur, Fazilka, Bathinda, Mansa, Sangrur, Malerkotla, Batala, Pathankot, Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Tarn Taran, Jalandhar, SAS Nagar, Hoshiarpur, Kapurthala, Patiala, Rupnagar, and Fatehgarh Sahib.



ELDERLINE PUNJAB 14567: A Lifeline for the Elderly in Need

The Social Security, Women, and Child Development Department's toll-free helpline number 14567 is swiftly addressing the complaints of the elderly. The Punjab government is committed to serving the elderly of the state with compassion, providing them with a happy and healthy environment. This helpline number is working as a platform for the resolution of complaints of Punjab's elderly.

32.92 LAKH SENIOR CITIZENS ARE GETTING OLD AGE PENSION IN STATE

SPORTS P

Punjab players Games records

Under the dynamic leadership of Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, the Punjab government has made a way that they have not only participated in the Asian Games but also raised the name of the country. For the Asian Games, the Punjab government provided a total of 4.64 crore to the athletes, through their hard work and dedication, they have won the name of the country. For the Asian Games, the Punjab government provided a total of 4.64 crore to the athletes, through their hard work and dedication, they have won the name of the country.

In the history of the Asian Games, Punjab's athletes have achieved the highest number of gold medals in the New Delhi (1982) Asian Games.

"Khedan Watan Punjab" transforms Punjab

The Punjab government has transformed Punjab into a sports hub. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, the Punjab government has organized various level sports competitions, encouraging participation in sports. For government organized border level sports competitions, Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, in the second round, 4.50 lakh athletes took part in the money of 7.50 crore rupees.

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Boosting Tourism
in the Picturesque
Kandi Region

AAM AADMI CLIN-
ICS PROVING AS
GAME CHANGER

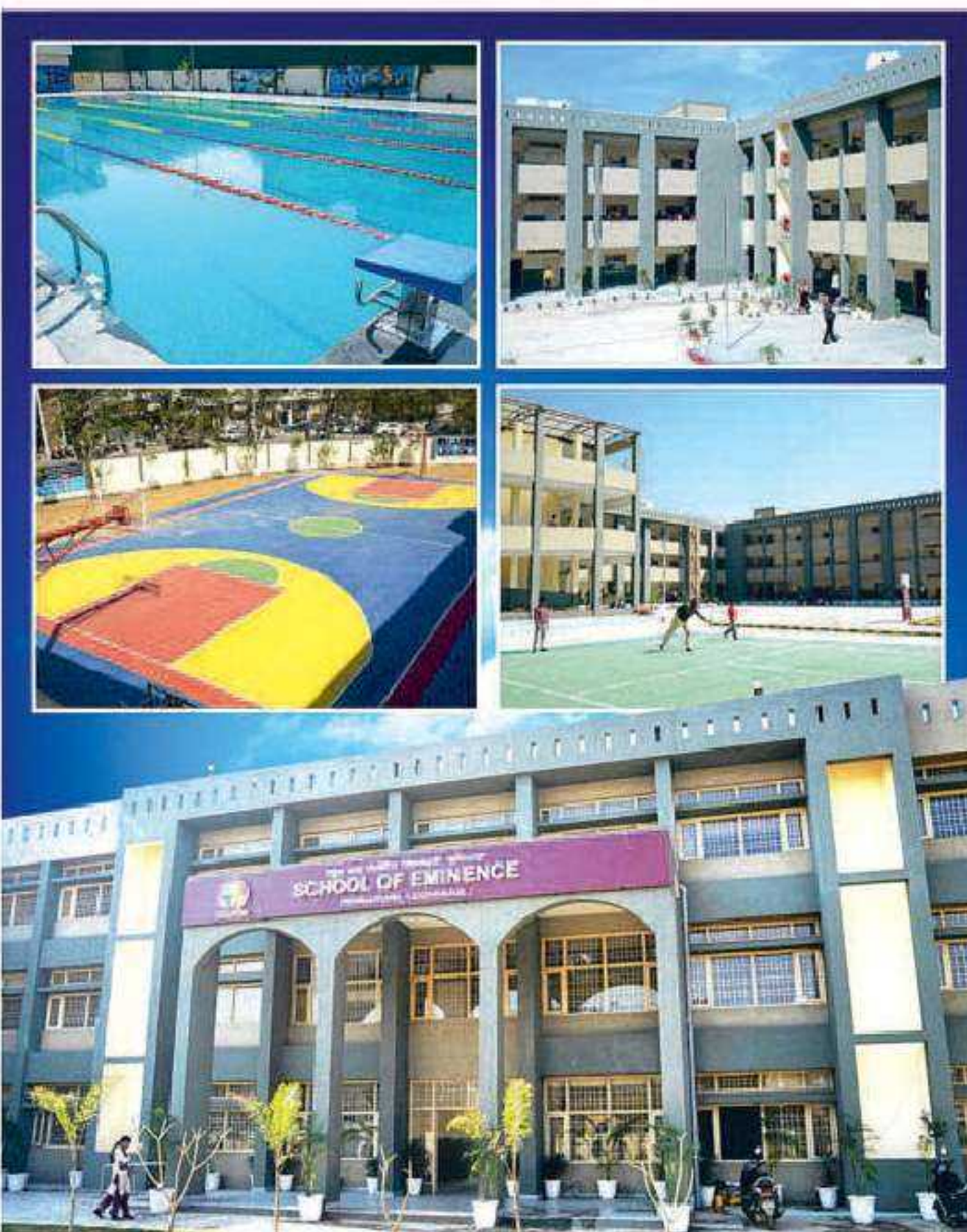
Punjab Government's
Triumph in
Job Creation



Fruitful Endeavors Transform the Horizon

Punjab starts 'sikhiya kranti'

The Punjab Government - led by Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann - has taken a multipronged approach to improve the education sector from the grassroots level so that every student in the state gets quality and affordable education



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Electricity for 3 Crore Punjabis

PSPCL GENERATES PROFIT OF RS. 564 CR, AWARDED TOP PERFORMING COMPANY
Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann led Punjab Government the Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (PSPCL) witnessed a profit of Rs 564.75 crore from April 1, 2023 to September 30, 2023. Earlier, PSPCL has been awarded by the Union Power Ministry as the top performing company among power distribution companies (Discoms) across the country for energy conservation measures under the PAT (Performance, Achievement and Business) programme during the PAT Cycle II, 80,686 Energy Saving Certificates were issued to PSPCL.

This decision holds immense significance, considering the enduring plight of Punjab residents grappling with exorbitant electricity prices for over two decades. The Punjab administration, under Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, has successfully eradicated this longstanding challenge for its

citizens.
The Punjab government led by Bhagwant Singh Mann has paid Rs. 14769 crore subsidy for financial year 2023-24 to PSPCL till 19th December 2023 and the state government had paid Rs. 20200 crore subsidy for financial year 2022-23 to PSPCL.

INDIAN POLICY BEARS FRUIT

Shatter 72-yr Asian
with stellar performance

Leadership of Chief Minister Mann, the Punjab motivated athletes in such a way they excelled in the Asian flag of Punjab alongside of sports, Punjab's work, have illuminated This time, in preparation Punjab government more rupees, with each sees among the 48

Asian Games spanning 72 had previously won the medals—7 gold medals (51) and Jakarta (1962)

Punjab Diyan"
s Image

ent has initiated "Khedan" to keep the youth use and encourage their the first time, the state ck, district, and state—with 3.50 lakh athletes leadership of Bhagwant edition of these games, t and won a prize s.



AAM AADMI CLINICS PROVING AS GAME CHANGER IN PUNJAB

In last 23 months, 829 Aam Aadmi Clinics were established in Punjab by Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, resulting in over one crore individuals availing health benefits from these facilities. Previously, people had to endure lengthy queues to avail medical treatment or diagnostic tests. However, the introduction of Aam Aadmi Clinics in close proximity to their residences has effectively resolved this predicament

FREE MEDICINES

FREE CONSULTATIONS

FREE CLINICAL TESTS

The Punjab government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, has taken a revolutionary step by launching the Aam Aadmi Clinic initiative. The aim of this initiative is to provide basic health facilities in close proximity to people's homes. This has proven to be a game-changer for the people of the state who previously had to endure long queues for treatment of common diseases or to get tests done. With the opening of Aam Aadmi Clinics near their homes, this problem has been effectively addressed.

Now, individuals are no longer required to endure lengthy queues for medical treatment, medications, and tests. This development has significantly alleviated the burden on government hospitals within the state.

It is noteworthy that this year, on 2nd March the CM inaugurated an additional 165 Aam Aadmi Clinics in Punjab. Consequently, the total number of Aam Aadmi Clinics in Punjab has now reached 829.

More than one crore people visits aam aadmi clinic OPDs



829

AAM AADMI CLINICS
OPENED IN
LAST 23 MONTHS

521 Aam Aadmi Clinics Opened in Rural Areas

With 65% of the population residing in rural areas, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann has prioritized the establishment of additional Aam Aadmi Clinics in these regions over urban areas. Out of total 829 clinics, more than 521 Aam Aadmi clinics have been opened in rural areas. The CM's vision is to ensure that individuals have access to healthcare services within a 3-4 km radius of their homes.

Punjab government's Vision: Boosting Tourism in the Picturesque Kandi Region

THRUST TO BE LAID ON DEVELOPING AREAS AROUND RANJIT SAGAR DAM, SHAHPUR KANDI DAM AND KANDI AREAS OF THE HOSHIARPUR DISTRICT

The Punjab government under the leadership of Bhagwant Singh Mann is making strenuous efforts for developing areas around Ranjit Sagar Dam, Shahpur Kandi Dam and the Kandi areas of Hoshiarpur district. These areas could be developed as ideal tourist destinations. A huge potential for developing these areas as a tourist destination for which all-out efforts would be made. Untapped potential of tourism in these areas should be harnessed for attracting the tourists to these places with immense natural beauty. Bhagwant Singh Mann government is preparing a detailed blueprint for the development of the region so that a major fillip could be given to the

2 CRORE TOURISTS VISITED PUNJAB LAST YEAR

The heritage-rich state, visited by over 2 crore tourists last year, is focused on drawing both local and global visitors and to drive growth, the state government has taken various actions. These include setting up Invest Punjab, offering financial incentives under the framework of the Industrial Policy, updating the Eco Tourism and Culture Policy.

tourism sector. This area is blessed with bounty of natural resources, which could attract the tourists from across the globe.



A REALITY CHECK: PUNJAB GOVERNMENT'S TRIUMPH IN JOB CREATION



The Punjab government, led by Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, is turning Punjab's youth's hopes for government jobs into a reality. With a total of 40437 government jobs now granted to Punjab's youngsters, the Mann government has rigorously fulfilled its pre-election vow to provide adequate employment opportunities. This number is expected to rise further in the near future, based on continuing recruitment processes across multiple departments. It is a record because the government completed this recruitment campaign in a matter of months. The drive will be

40437
YOUTH GIVEN GOVERNMENT
JOBS IN 23 MONTHS

maintained in the following days, and more youth will be welcomed into the state government family. Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann expressed enormous joy and satisfaction in the fact that his administration has successfully delivered a record-breaking 40437 government jobs to the youth.

PM inaugurates projects worth ₹56k-cr, slams 'dynastic parties'

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

HYDERABAD: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday inaugurated multiple power, rail and road projects and laid the foundation stone for others, in Telangana, asserting the projects worth ₹56,000 crore will write a new chapter of development in several states.

Addressing a rally at Adilabad, Modi said over 250 million people have risen out of poverty in the country, and attributed it to his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government's welfare schemes, stressing that such campaigns will be further amplified in the next five years.

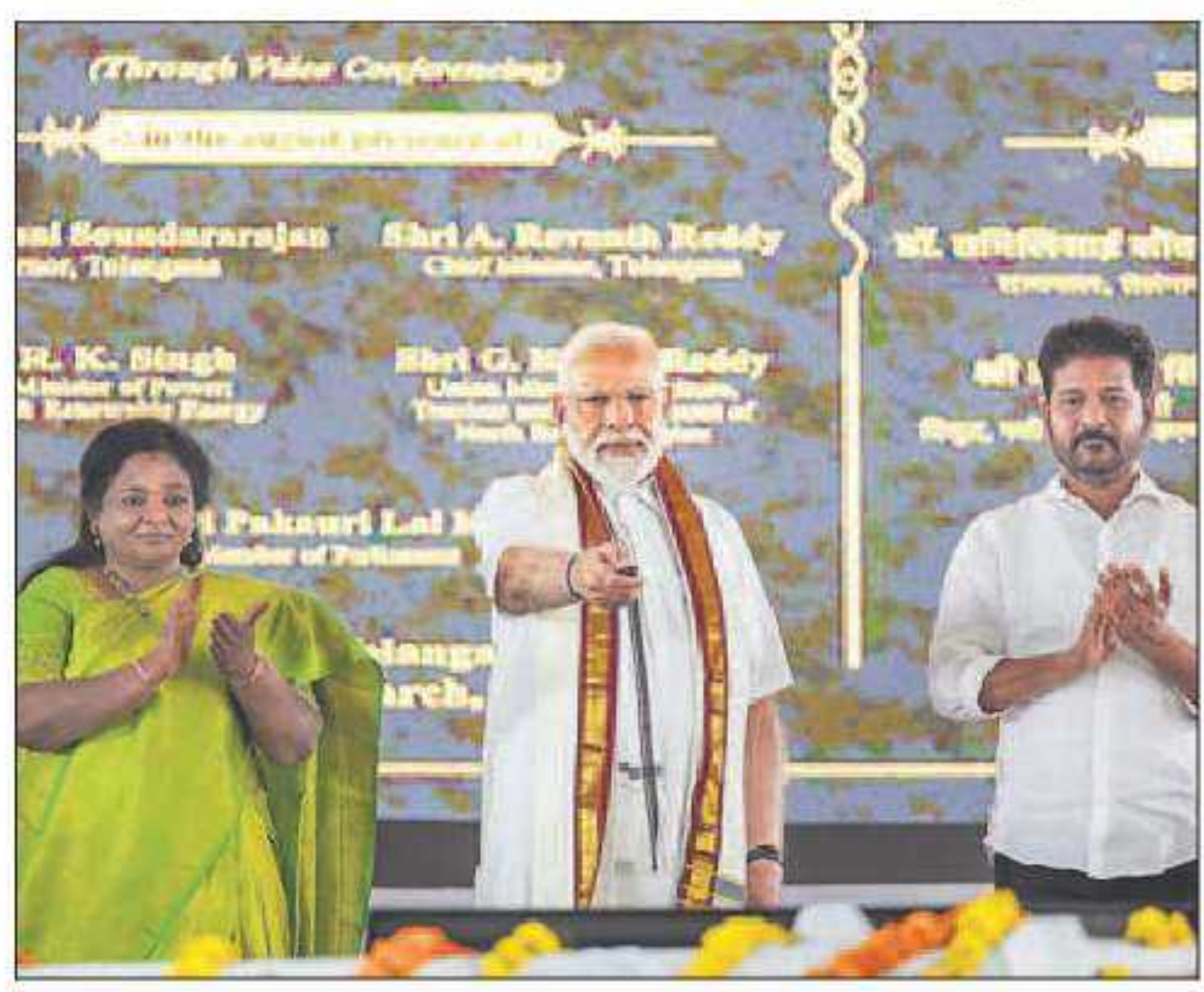
"Today, India is the only country in the world that has emerged as a large economy by clocking 8.4% growth in the previous quarter," he said, adding that India's growth rate has been a point of discussion across the world for the past three-four days. "With this pace, India will become the third largest economy in the world."

The Indian economy continued to outperform, with GDP growth in the quarter ending December coming in at 8.4%, beating analyst estimates by around 180 basis points or 1.8 percentage points, according to data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) last week.

Modi also hit out at opposition parties, saying they might have different faces, but their character of "jhoot (lies) and loot" was common. "The face of dynastic parties may be different but they have a similar character — jhoot and loot," he charged.

Underlining his party's welfare measures for tribal communities, Modi said highest priority was being accorded in this connection. "The dynastic parties could not stand the work the (BJP) government is doing for the welfare of Adivasis (tribals)," he said.

Noting that the Union government led by him and the state of



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Telangana governor Tamlisai Soundararajan (left) and chief minister A Revanth Reddy (right) in Adilabad on Monday.

Telangana have both completed 10 years, Modi said the Centre has been providing all possible assistance to the southern state to fulfil the dreams of its people. Telangana became a state on June 2, 2014, when it was carved out of Andhra Pradesh.

Emphasising that the nation's development comes through the growth of states, he said with a better economy, trust in the country grows and that states also benefit from it as they get investment. Recalling the earlier alleged neglect of regions like Telangana, Modi said there has been higher allocation for development of the state in the past 10 years. "For us, development means development of the poorest of the poor, development of Dalits, tribal people, backward people and the deprived," he said.

Earlier in the day, chief minister A Revanth Reddy of the Congress received the Prime Minister on his arrival to the state. It was after a long while that a chief minister of Telangana has received PM Modi and shared the dais with him at an official event. When Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) chief K Chan-

drashekar Rao was chief minister, he had skipped the Prime Minister's official visits to the state on several occasions.

Revanth Reddy, in his address, said the Prime Minister was like an "elder brother" and that the state needs his support for it to progress like Gujarat, Modi's home state, Telangana, a Congress-ruled state, does not want a confrontation with the Centre and desires cordial relations, Reddy stressed. "We would like to contribute to the ambitious target of a \$5 trillion economy," he added.

On the occasion, Modi inaugurated or laid the foundation stone of around 30 development projects worth over ₹56,000 crore related not only to Telangana but the entire country.

Among the many projects, Modi virtually inaugurated National Thermal Power Corporation's (NTPC's) 800 MW (Unit-2) of Telangana Super Thermal Power Project in Peddapalli. He also laid the foundation for two major national highway projects connecting Telangana with Maharashtra and Telangana with Chhattisgarh through NH-353B and NH-163.

'TN coalition govt has done little for welfare of people'

Divya Chandrababu
letters@hindustantimes.com

CHENNAI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday hit out at the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the Congress over dynastic politics and corruption, saying that the ruling coalition of Tamil Nadu had done little to improve the lives of ordinary people.

At a rally in Chennai, Modi struck an emotional pitch and responded to comments by Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) patriarch Lalu Prasad on his family. He also attempted to equate the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) with bribery and corruption.

"INDIA bloc has found a new formula to attack me that I don't have any family. When I was 16 years old, I left home. For what? For this nation. You are my family. This country is my family. So I work day and night to make everyone's life in my family better," he said. For the DMK and the Congress, their families came first but for Modi, the nation came first, he added. This was Modi's second visit in a week to the southern state where the BJP is hoping to make major inroads in the upcoming general elections.

The Prime Minister referred to two recent Supreme Court developments — a seven-judge bench verdict that reversed a 1998 ruling that let lawmakers escape punishment for accepting bribes in exchange for voting or giving speeches on the floor of the House, and a two-judge bench that pulled up Tamil Nadu youth welfare and sports minister Udhayanidhi Stalin for "abusing" his right to free-



The crowd at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rally in Chennai on Monday.

dom of speech through his controversial remark on Sanatana Dharma — to attack the Opposition.

"These dynasties are arrogant and take government posts lightly. They hurt the beliefs of people," Modi added. He also responded to criticism by the DMK that the Centre didn't provide funds for flood relief in Chennai and four southern districts last December.

"Only recently, Chennai faced a massive flood. People suffered greatly, but the DMK government has done things that have worsened their suffering instead of providing relief," Modi said. "When the Centre is working for the development of Chennai and Tamil Nadu, the ruling DMK in Tamil Nadu is turning a blind eye to the dreams of Tamils."

The DMK hit back. "The PM's speech reeks of desperation," A Saravanan, joint secretary of DMK's media wing, said. "People of Tamil Nadu want due support from the Union government but for whatever reasons, they are not releasing the relief funds for the floods...and if the 140 crore Indians indeed are Modi's family, then why is he making his family suffer through inflation and joblessness?" he added.

{ SANATANA DHARMA ROW }

'Abuse of free speech': SC pulls up TN minister

Abraham Thomas
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Monday pulled up Tamil Nadu youth welfare and sports minister Udhayanidhi Stalin for "abusing" his right to freedom of speech through his "eradicate Sanatana Dharma" — a set of duties and way of living as proscribed in the Hindu religion — remark last year, and said that being a minister, he should have been more careful with his statements and mindful of the possible consequences they could have.

"You are not a layman, you are a minister. You should have realised the consequences of your remarks," a bench of justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta told Udhayanidhi, who is the son of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) president and Tamil Nadu chief minister MK Stalin.

"You abuse your right under Article 19(1)(a) (right to freedom of speech and expression of the Constitution). You abuse your right under Article 25 (freedom of conscience, the freedom to profess, practice, and propagate religion). Now you are exercising your right under Article 32 (to file a plea in the Supreme Court directly)? Do you not know the consequences of what you said?" it added.

The bench's remarks came while hearing a petition filed by the latter seeking clubbing of multiple proceedings initiated against him in Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir and Mumbai over his remark on the Sanatana Dharma. The court agreed to consider his plea as it posted the matter for March 15.

The DMK hit back. "The PM's speech reeks of desperation," A Saravanan, joint secretary of DMK's media wing, said. "People of Tamil Nadu want due support from the Union government but for whatever reasons, they are not releasing the relief funds for the floods...and if the 140 crore Indians indeed are Modi's family, then why is he making his family suffer through inflation and joblessness?" he added.



Udhayanidhi Stalin

On September 2 last year, Udhayanidhi triggered a controversy through his remarks that Sanatana Dharma is against social justice and equality and should be "eradicated". He also likened Sanatana Dharma to the coronavirus, malaria and dengue, and said it should be destroyed.

The remarks came under severe criticism from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), as Union home minister Amit Shah accused the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) of insulting Sanatana Dharma for vote bank politics and alleged such a remark by an opposition leader was not made for the first time. Later, Ayodhya seer Paramhans Acharya announced a reward of ₹10 crore for beheading Udhayanidhi.

Appearing for the DMK leader in the top court, senior advocates Abhishek Singhvi and P Wilson said Udhayanidhi was being "persecuted" by his remark through multiple criminal cases in Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir and Mumbai.

The petitioner said the Constitution permits him under Article 19(1)(a) to speak about the evils of caste discrimination while Article 25 guarantees the right to question

the very existence of God, religion and religious dogmas.

"This is persecution. They are making me run around in every state. There is a reward of ₹10 crore for anyone who beheads me. I am facing six cases in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Jammu & Kashmir and Mumbai. Don't let the merits of the case colour your mind. I am not arguing on merits. All I seek is to club the cases at a single place," Singhvi said.

The petition also blamed the "mischievous misinformation campaign orchestrated by the BJP party" behind the threats issued to the DMK leader.

The top court initially suggested Singhvi move the high courts in the concerned states. "You are seeking all cases to be clubbed at one place. Why should a witness from Jammu & Kashmir travel to Tamil Nadu," it said.

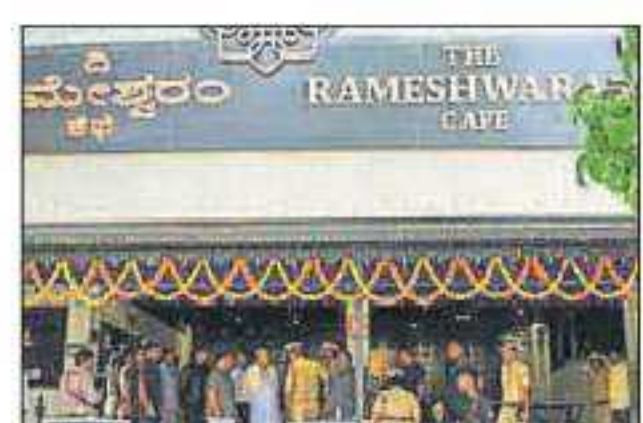
It added that it was not even aware of the stage of proceeding in each state.

"You go to different high courts. If you have a problem, you can approach us," the bench remarked.

Singhvi, however, said that summons seeking the minister's personal appearance have already been issued in two cases registered in Patna and Bengaluru.

"All cases are based on one and the same statement. I am not running away. I will win or lose, that is another thing. But there cannot be persecution before prosecution. It can be clubbed at any neutral place," he said.

The court sought time to go through the judgments and examine the facts pertaining to the case against Udhayanidhi.



Security personnel outside the cafe on Friday.

NIA TAKES OVER PROBE INTO BLAST AT RAMESHWARAM CAFE IN B'LURU

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Monday took over the probe into the blast at a popular cafe in Bengaluru last week, people aware of the matter said, adding that the federal anti-terror agency was looking at the possible role of terror outfits such as the Islamic State (IS) behind the incident.

The ministry of home affairs (MHA) handed over the investigation to NIA, which was already assisting the state investigation teams, they added.

Nine people were injured after a low-intensity bomb exploded in Rameshwaram Cafe in Bengaluru on Friday, prompting a multi-agency probe with preliminary investigations zeroing in on a man who left a bag near the cash counter of the premises.

"We are looking at all the possible angles, including the role of IS cadres, since there have been similar blasts in Coimbatore and Mangaluru in the past few years," said an NIA officer on condition of anonymity.

In November 2022, an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) kept inside a pressure cooker accidentally went off when it was being taken in an auto rickshaw by one of the accused in Mangaluru. In its charge sheet, NIA said the accused intended to plant the bomb at Kadri Manjunatha temple as part of an "Islamic State-sponsored" act.

A month earlier, an IED-borne vehicle driven by the accused Jamesha Mubeen blew up in front of a temple in Coimbatore. In its charge sheet, NIA said that Mubeen was inspired by the sermons of Zahran Hashim, a radical cleric, who masterminded the Easter serial suicide bomb attacks in Sri Lanka in 2019.

On Sunday, Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah said that they were not against NIA taking over the probe.

"The government does not underestimate the seriousness of this matter. If deemed necessary, we will consider handing over the case to NIA," he said.

Cong may assure scholarship package for caste groups in election manifesto

Saubhadra Chatterji
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Congress is set to offer a package of scholarships for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), substantially higher than the current government schemes, and also promise a bigger scope of quality education for these social groups in its manifesto for the Lok Sabha elections, party insiders said on Monday.

The manifesto panel led by former Union minister P Chidambaram met in Delhi on Monday but could only review about 10 of the 50 pages of the draft manifesto that was shown to the members through a Power Point presentation.

"We couldn't finish reviewing the entire draft. We didn't get any hard or soft copy of the draft. We are going to meet again on Tuesday and hopefully send the final draft to the Congress Working Committee by this week," said a member of the panel.

Another member, who was present in the meeting on Monday, said that a number of packages for



The Congress manifesto will be largely based on the thrust areas of party leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, functionaries said.

SCs, STs and OBCs is likely to be announced along with the commitment to conduct a caste census if the Congress comes to power.

"One of our focus areas would be the education of SCs, STs and OBCs. We will promise enhanced scope of quality education for SCs, STs, and OBCs. It would be a step ahead of the current reservation in educational institutes and further open the gates of higher education," said a Congress leader.

To achieve this goal, the Congress is expected to offer a slew of scholarships from school level to PhD students. "We would definitely announce a higher corpus

and it will cover school education to even research fellows or PhD students," added the leader.

To be sure, the central government already runs a host of scholarship programmes for the SCs, STs and backward castes. Among the ongoing programmes, there is the Scheme For Residential Education For Students in High Schools in Targeted Areas (SHRESHTA), National Fellowship for OBC Students (NF-OBC), National Overseas Scholarship, Dr Ambedkar Scheme of Interest Subsidy on Educational Loan for Overseas Studies for OBCs & EBCs, Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme for Scheduled Castes & Others, Post-Matric Scholarship for SC Students and National Fellowship for Scheduled Caste Students.

There is also the Pre-Matric Scholarship for OBC Students and Scholarships for Higher Education for Young Achievers Scheme (SHREYAS) (OBC & Others). Apart from this exhaustive list, several state governments have their own scholarships for underprivileged students.

At least two leaders added that the manifesto would be largely based on the thrust areas of party leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra and the party is set to announce a caste census to ascertain the share of population of various caste groups. The party will also promise raising the upper limits of the existing quotas for SCs, STs and OBCs, if deemed necessary, going by the census findings.

The 50-page draft manifesto has been primarily written by Chidambaram and Praveen Chakravarty, who heads the party's Professionals' Congress and data analytics cell.

The Congress announced the formation of a 16-member manifesto committee in December. Former Chhattisgarh deputy chief minister TS Singh Deo was appointed as its convener. Other members include Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah, AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, former Union minister Anand Sharma, communications chief Jai Ram Ramesh, Lok Sabha MP Shashi Tharoor, former Manipur deputy chief minister G Gaihangam, and Assam MP Gaurav Gogoi.

ED QUESTIONS BIZMAN NIRANJAN HIRANANDANI IN FEMA MATTER

Vinay Dalvi
letters@hindustantimes.com

MUMBAI: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday questioned Niranjan Hiranandani, promoter of prominent Mumbai-based realty company Hiranandani Group, in connection with a case pertaining to violations of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), an official said.

Hiranandani, who arrived at the ED office in Ballard Pier in south Mumbai around 11.30am, was interrogated for nearly 11 hours. He left the premises at around 10.15pm, the official added.

"We have recorded the statement of Hiranandani," the official said, seeking anonymity.

While leaving the agency's office, Hiranandani said: "We are co-operating with the agency and happily answered all their questions. It's an old matter, 16 years old. The agency had certain queries which were raised previously also and we answered those questions."

Isro identifies 48 backup points for safe return of Gaganyaan astronauts

Soumya Pillai
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) has identified 48 backup points across the world where the Gaganyaan crew could splash down to ensure a safe recovery and rescue of the astronauts during the return mission, senior officials said.

In an ideal situation, the Gaganyaan module is marked to land in Arabian Sea where Indian agencies will be stationed to rescue the crew and the module, the officials said. However, in case of a deviation in the main plan, the space agency has identified 48 backup sites in international waters, they said.

"In any mission, there is an ideal scenario and there are backup plans in case that is not achieved. For Gaganyaan mission, if everything goes by the book, we will be able to land the module in the Indian waters," a senior Isro official associated with the mission said.

"But since this is a human



Out of the four astronaut designates, three will be selected to fly in the final mission.

spaceflight, we cannot take any chance to ensure the safety of the crew and therefore, we have marked possible points where the capsule could land. Even a minor variation in the mission can lead to the capsule landing hundreds of kilometres away," the official said, requesting anonymity.

The Gaganyaan mission, India's first human spaceflight project, aims to demonstrate

Isro's human spaceflight capability by launching a crew of three members to a orbit of 400km for a three-day mission and bringing them back safely.

The official said that the space agency had initially finalised two landing spots in Indian waters, one in the Arabian sea and the other in the Bay of Bengal. However, considering the rough waters and the unpredictability of the Bay of Bengal, the landing

site in the Arabian Sea was finalised. "The progress for Gaganyaan mission is moving at a satisfactory pace. We are confident that we will be able to conduct at least one uncrewed mission this year before the final mission is undertaken," the official added.

Leading up to the actual manned mission, the space agency will be conducting several rounds of tests to ensure the systems are safe to carry and bring back astronauts safely to Earth.

Last week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi introduced the four astronauts designated selected by the Indian Air Force for the mission.

Indian Airforce group captain Prashant Balakrishnan Nair, group captain Ajit Krishnan, group captain Angad Pratap and wing commander Subhanshu Shukla have been training for the Gaganyaan mission for the last five years in Russian and Indian facilities.

Out of the four astronaut designates, three will be selected to fly in the final mission, which is expected to take flight by 2025.



Mahua Moitra

ED ISSUES FRESH SUMMONS TO TMC'S MOITRA IN FEMA CASE

HT Correspondent
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday issued fresh summons to Trinamool Congress leader and former Lok Sabha member Mahua Moitra in connection with a case pertaining to the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA).

According to people aware of the details, Moitra has been asked to appear before the federal agency at its office in the national capital on March 11 and record her statement under FEMA. The 49-year-old politician was initially summoned on February 19 but she sought a few weeks' time to join the investigation, the people cited above said on condition of anonymity.

The case pertains to ED's probe into transactions linked to a non-resident external (NRE) account, apart from a few other foreign remittances and transfers of funds.

Meanwhile, the Delhi high court on Monday rejected Moitra's plea for restraining BJP MP Nishikant Dubey and advocate Jai Anant Dehadrai from posting or circulating any "fake and defamatory" content against her in the cash-for-query case.



Government of
Jammu & Kashmir



Khush-haal
Jammu Kashmir

Aman aur Taraqqi ki Nayee Tasveer



Unveiling Vistas Scaling peaks

Inauguration of
**Integrated Development
of Hazratbal Shrine**
(Under PRASAD Scheme)

and

Ski Drag Lift at Sonamarg

by

Shri Narendra Modi

Hon'ble Prime Minister

March 7, 2024 | 10:30 AM
Bakshi Stadium, Srinagar





Nadda resigns from Himachal RS seat after win from Guj

NEW DELHI: BJP president J.P. Nadda on Monday resigned as a member of the Rajya Sabha from Himachal Pradesh, days after he was elected to the Upper House unopposed from Gujarat. According to people aware of the details, Nadda had to submit his resignation from Himachal (from where his tenure is ending on April 2) as he has already been elected from a second state. "Since he cannot be a member from two states, for technical reasons, he had to submit his resignation from Himachal" said a person aware of the details. His resignation has been accepted by the RS chairman.

MP varsity's VC, 4 others booked for irregularities

BHOPAL: An FIR has been registered against Madhya Pradesh state technological university's vice chancellor and four others in connection with alleged financial irregularities after an inquiry was ordered by chief minister Mohan Yadav. The CM, who returned from Lucknow on Sunday night, said an incident of ongoing financial irregularities in the Rajiv Gandhi Proudgyiki Vishwavidyalaya (RGPV) has come to his notice. "I have given instructions to immediately register an FIR in this matter and to remove all the officers posted in the university's account section and conduct an investigation by a high-level committee," Yadav stated on X.

Veteran leader and Guj unit working chief quit Congress

Maulik Pathak
letters@hindustantimes.com

AHMEDABAD: In a setback for the Congress in Gujarat ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, senior legislator Arjun Modhwadia and party's state unit working president Ambarish Der resigned from the party on Monday, just three days before party leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra is set to enter the western state, and amid speculations that the two leaders would soon join the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Both leaders aired their resentment over the party leadership's decision to not participate in the Ram Temple consecration event on January 2.

Modhwadia (67), who represented Porbandar assembly seat, submitted his resignation as legislator to Gujarat assembly speaker Shankar Chaudhary on Monday evening. One of the senior-most opposition leaders in the western state, Modhwadia was associated



Arjun Modhwadia and Ambarish Der

with the Congress for nearly 40 years and had also served as the leader of the opposition and as the state unit chief. He told the reporters that he has also resigned from all posts in Congress and also as its primary member.

Earlier in the day, former legislator Der (46) also announced that he has resigned from the Congress. Talking to reporters, he said he would join the BJP without any condition.

Modhwadia said though he has been with the Congress since 1982, he was feeling suffocated for

quite some time.

"Despite the widespread desire for the construction of a Ram Temple, even within the Congress, and the subsequent Supreme Court verdict in its favour, the party declined to participate in the Pran Pratishtha ceremony. I expressed my concerns within the party, advocating for a decision that would honour people's sentiments. Unfortunately, my efforts didn't result in a fruitful dialogue. Hence, I've decided to move forward and explore new avenues in my political journey," Modhwadia told HT.

A senior BJP leader requesting anonymity said that Modhwadia will soon join the saffron party.

With Modhwadia's resignation, the Congress's effective strength in the 182-member state assembly has come down to 14.

Hours before Der resigned, state Congress chief Shaktisinh Gohil told reporters that the party's disciplinary committee had suspended Der from all party posts and as a member of the

party for six years over his "anti-party activities" during a meeting on Sunday night.

Talking to reporters after quitting the party, Der said leaders must understand that a political party should not behave like an NGO.

"When such a grand Ram Temple finally came up and people's wait of more than 500 years finally came to an end, the Congress leaders' decision to not visit the temple was not fair. I had raised the issue at that time too... When it did not happen, I took the decision to quit the Congress," he added.

Reacting to the development, Gujarat Congress spokesperson Manish Doshi said: "Thousands of party workers have toiled tirelessly day and night to secure victory for a leader. Arjunbhai (Modhwadia) should bear this in mind... I also want to ask the BJP that despite their three-decade-long rule in Gujarat, why do they rely on turncoats during elections?"

Advisory on AI tools is not applicable to start-ups: MoS

Aditi Agrawal

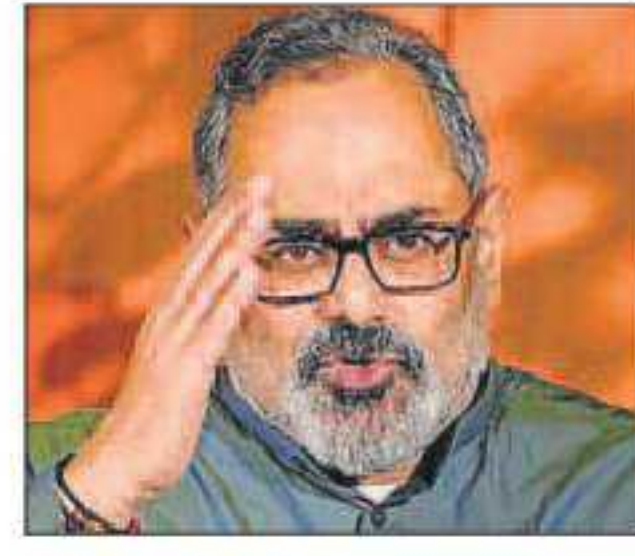
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The advisory instructing tech companies to take explicit permission from the government before releasing "under-testing" and "unreliable" artificial intelligence (AI) tools to users in India does not apply to start-ups, electronics and IT minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar clarified on Monday.

"Recent advisory of @Gol_MeitiY needs to be understood. -> Advisory is aimed at the Significant platforms and permission seeking from MeitiY is only for large platforms and will not apply to startups. -> Advisory is aimed at untested AI platforms from deploying on Indian internet -> Process of seeking permission, labelling & consent based disclosure to user at untested platforms is insurance policy to platforms who can otherwise be sued by consumers," Chandrasekhar said in a post on X (previously Twitter).

AI models should be released only after they have been properly tested, IT minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Monday. "This is important for citizens' safety and for the safety of the democratic process. This is why, such an advisory has been issued. ... This is applicable to models released on social media platforms. If someone is using AI for health care or agriculture, it is not applicable there," Vaishnaw said.

Chandrasekhar's clarification came in response to concerns raised by the AI industry on the advisory, issued on Friday. It was a "bad move" by India, Aravind Srinivas, CEO of Perplexity AI Inc, a US-based firm, said in a March 4



Rajeev Chandrasekhar

unique identifier or metadata that is limited to only "intermediaries" and does not mention "platforms".

To be sure, a "platform" is a term that has neither been used nor defined in either the Information Technology Act, 2000, or the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, under which the December 26 advisory was issued. The March 1 advisory was issued in continuation of the December 26 advisory, which advised social media companies to take down misinformation and deepfakes.

According to the IT Rules, a significant social media intermediary is "an intermediary which primarily or solely enables online interaction between two or more users and allows them to create, upload, share, disseminate, modify or access information using its services". According to an expert, generative AI tools may not even be intermediaries in the first place.

"One may argue that an entity training and deploying an AI tool that has been trained using data inputs... and then creates an output... based on user prompts is not an intermediary in relation to the new image / new song created. This is for the reason that intermediaries 'receive, store, or transmit' an electronic record on behalf of another. They do not 'create' or 'provide' another. Also, the intermediary 'provid(ing) any service with respect to' an electronic record is providing such service 'on behalf of another person' and 'not to another person'. Hence, arguably ChatGPT etc are not intermediaries," Sneha Jain, partner at Saikrishna & Associates, said.

Govt plans to procure more maize to ramp up production of ethanol

Zia Haq

zia.haq@htlive.com

NEW DELHI: India has drawn up plans to divert more maize to make ethanol for the country's fuel-blending programme and ramp up output nearly 10 times in five years, three officials said on Monday.

The Centre has also signed off on a scheme to procure maize at federally fixed minimum support prices (MSP) and supply it to distilleries, as part of a strategy to meet India's biofuels needs. Maize, or corn, the third most-grown cereal, has emerged as a strategically important commercial crop in the country because of its use in making ethanol, which is blended with petrol. The country aims to lessen the use of sugarcane-based ethanol over the years and utilise more maize grown in a sustainable way for which the Union government has approved new research projects worth ₹24.51 crore, according to



Maize or corn has emerged as an important crop because of its use in making ethanol.

Institute of Maize Research (IMR) to increase corn production in the catchment areas of ethanol industries, food secretary Sanjeev Chopra told HT. Scientists from IMR have also been mandated to step up research for climate-resilient high-starch maize hybrids by financial year 2025-26, for which ₹5.32 crore has been earmarked. Another ₹3.73 crore has been set aside for scaling up silage or the maize feed value chain, according to the documents.

documents seen by HT.

Mixing of petrol with ethanol, which is made from molasses, a byproduct of sugar, is a high-priority national programme to help lessen the amount of oil India imports. Ethanol can also be produced from rice and maize. On June 5, 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced the advancing of the target year for 20% ethanol-blending in petrol by 2025.

The Centre has set aside ₹15.46 crore for the state-run Indian

The agriculture ministry has set a target to raise corn production by 10 million tonnes over the next five years as demand for ethanol production grows, besides higher demand from the poultry industry, a second official said, requesting anonymity.

Scientists at the IMR are trying out new experiments to make high-yielding seeds that can raise productivity by a wide margin, according to Hanuman Sahay Jat, the maize institute's director.

TWO HELD IN INLD LEADER'S MURDER CASE, SAY POLICE

CHANDIGARH/NEW DELHI: Two people were arrested from Goa in connection with the killing of Indian National Lok Dal's Haryana unit chief Nafe Singh Rathee, police said on Monday.

Rathee along with another INLD worker Jai Kishan were killed after multiple rounds were fired on their vehicle in Bahadurgarh in the state's Jhajjar district on February 25.

Police identified the accused as Ashish and Saurabh alias Sachin. They were flown to Delhi from Goa and then taken to Jhajjar in the afternoon, police officials familiar with the matter said. Ashish and Saurabh - residents of Delhi - are associates of UK-based gangster Kapil Sangwan, who, through a purported social media post, had taken the responsibility for killing Rathee.

Jhajjar SP Arpit Jain said: "Both accused were arrested from a hotel in Goa. We produced them before a court and they have been taken on an eight-day police remand." HTc

Himachal govt launches scheme to give ₹1.5k per month to all women

Gaurav Bisht

letters@hindustantimes.com

SHIMLA: The Himachal Pradesh government on Monday launched a welfare scheme that provides an allowance of ₹1,500 per month to all women over 18 years under the Indira Gandhi Pyari Behna Sukh-Sammaan Nidhi Yojana, fulfilling one of its

poll promises.

"The scheme reflects the government's sensitivity towards women and the money will aid in their financial and social upliftment," chief minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said in a media briefing.

The government started the first phase of the scheme from February 1 by providing the

allowance to all women in the Lahaul and Spiti district and women above 60 years.

It will be rolled across the state from April.

The scheme would require an annual expenditure of over ₹800 crore. With this, the state's debt has crossed ₹86,000 crore. The scheme will not apply to employed women.

Government of Rajasthan
Director Printing & Stationery Department
P(1)/Paper/1/2024-25/-558 Jaipur Date: 23.02.2024

Notice Inviting Bid

Bid for Rate contract of "Different types of papers, pink paper, Stra board, Azulaid paper, Card Sheet (White), White Maplitho Paper etc. as per IS specifications" Mentioned in Annexure 'C' are invited from interested bidders upto 2.00 P.M. Date 14.03.2024. Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the procurement portal (<http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>, <http://sppp.raj.nic.in>) of the state and department notice board. The approximate value of the procurement is Rs. 4 Crore.

UBN No. PSD2324GLRC0007
Dipr/c/1661/2024 Director

TOURISM CORPORATION OF GUJARAT LIMITED (TCGL)
(A Government of Gujarat undertaking)
Udyog Bhavan, Block No. 16, 4th Floor, Sector - 11, Gandhinagar - 382 011
Website : <https://www.gujarattourism.com>

TENDER NOTICE (retender)

Bids are invited from reputed and experienced agencies towards "Selection of an Agency for Operation and Maintenance of Sunset Point, Bhachel Hill, Sasangir, Junagadh".

The project requirements, technical specifications, eligibility criteria, selection process, etc. are included in the Tender document, which shall be available for download from the websites: <https://tender.nprocure.com/> and <https://www.gujarattourism.com> from 05/03/2024 onwards.

The last date for submission of the Technical Bid and Financial Bid (online only) is 27/03/2024 up to 6:00 pm. and Technical Bid (physical only) is 30/03/2024 up to 3:00 pm.

Managing Director

UJVN Limited
H.O.: "UJJWAL" Maharanji Bagh, G.M.S. Road, Dahdurium-248006
Telephones: 0135-2763808, Fax: 0135-2763508
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025886
Website: www.ujvn.com

R.O. No.: 328 e-Tender Notice Date: 04.03.2024

Office of the Executive Engineer (Test), Dhakrani invites Tenders from interested parties. Brief summary of tender is given below:
Tender No. : e-T.No.10/EE(Test)/DKN/2023-24
Name of work: Design, Engineering, Manufacturing, Fabrication, Assembly, Supply, Installation, Testing and commissioning of pre-wired complete Numerical relay panels for Generator, Generator Transformer and unit Auxiliary Transformer protection after dismantling of existing panels at Kulhal Powerhouse.
Estimated cost: Rs. 263.5 Lakh (GST extra)
Date of Availability of bid document on e-portal : 05.03.2024 10:00 Hrs
Last date for submission of bids on e-portal : 04.04.2024 up to 16:00 hrs
For further details, kindly visit the e-procurement portal: www.uktenders.gov.in EE (Test), Dhakrani

"AVOID WASTEFUL USE OF ELECTRICITY"

NEW OKHLA INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida G.B. Nagar, (U.P)
Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com

Re-tender- Request for Proposal (RFP) to Engage Coaches / Sports Academies for various disciplines at Noida Stadium Sports Complex

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority (NOIDA) Re-invites RFP to engage Coaches/sports academies for the following disciplines in Noida Stadium Sports Complex, Sector 21A, Noida:

- Dance and Aerobics - (Job Number-12/Sports/2024-25)
- Squash - (Job Number-09/Sports/2024-25)
- Athlete & Fitness - (Job Number-22/Sports/2024-25)
- Yoga - (Job Number-21/Sports/2024-25)
- Art & Craft - (Job Number-16/Sports/2024-25)
- Kushti - (Job Number-16/Sports/2024-25)

Uploading of Bid	05.03.2024
Pre-Bid Meeting	11.03.2024 (12:00 PM)
Bid end Date & Time	18.03.2024 (05:00 PM)
Opening of Technical Bid	19.03.2024 (11:00 AM)

Interested eligible bidders can submit the RFP along with the mentioned documents. RFP can be downloaded from the website www.noidaauthority.com www.tenderup.nic.in Amendment / Modification in documents, if any, shall be uploaded only on website.

Noida Sports Trust's official Sports Secretary
NOIDA Stadium
Email: noidasportsstadium@gmail.com

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- Step 3 - Adaptability test and Medical test.

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION :

- Online Registration is open till 22 Mar 2024.
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- Videos on registration and examination process and mock tests for practice will be available on Join Indian Army website.

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Scan the QR Code for more information

cbc 10601A3/0359/2324

Hindustan Times

NO NORTH-SOUTH, IT'S 'INDIAN FILM INDUSTRY' FOR RASHMIKA MANDANNA

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NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE
Website: www.ner.indianrailways.gov.in, Email:- cos@ner.railnet.gov.in

TENDER NOTICE NO 23 DATE -04.03.2024

Invitation of tenders through e-Procurement system

Principal Chief Material Manager, North Eastern Railway, Gorakhpur- 273012 and on behalf of The President of India, invites tenders through e-procurement system for the supply of the following items. Complete description of the item and other condition are available on www.ireps.gov.in

Item No.	Tender Number	Due On	Brief Description of Stores	Reserved to be procured from
1	33241060	17/04/24	Un-insulated Cadmium Copper etc.	CORE
2	33231088B	10/04/24	Jointless Grooved copper etc.	CORE
3	2823080A	08/04/24	Wood based resin Impregnated etc.	ICF
4	33241002	03/04/24	Porcelain Bracket Insulator etc.	CORE
5	24245008	29/03/24	Magnet Frame Complete etc.	CLW
6	24235020	29/03/24	Traction Motor Type: HS-15250A etc.	CLW
7	29235107	27/03/24	Supply of UFSBI etc. etc.	RDSO
8	24231427A	25/03/24	Set of motor suspension unit etc.	CLW
9	24241130	25/03/24	IOH Kit for Pantograph Assy etc.	CLW
10	29235159B	21/03/24	SMPS BASED IPS system etc.	RDSO

CPROS-140 Principal Chief Material Manager N.E. Railway Gorakhpur
"Never travel on roof and foot boards"

PUNJAB SMALL INDUSTRIES AND EXPORT CORPORATION LTD.
A State Government Undertaking
UDYOG BHAWAN, 3rd floor, Sector-17A, Himalaya Marg, CHANDIGARH-160017, Phone: 0172-2772465

Public Notice

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) FOR HIRING LAND ACQUISITION FACILITATING CONSULTANT (L AFC) FOR DEVELOPMENT OF NEW INDUSTRIAL PARKS IN PUNJAB

Punjab Small Industries & Export Corporation proposes to develop new Industrial Parks in the State. Bids/ applications are hereby invited for hiring Land Acquisition Facilitating Consultant. RFP documents comprising detailed terms and conditions can be obtained from PSIEC office on any working day during working hours. The same is also available on the website of PSIEC (www.psiec.punjab.gov.in). The date of submission for the bids is from 06.03.2024 to 26.03.2024 upto 3.00 pm. Bids shall be opened on 26.03.2024 at 3.00 pm in presence of the consultants or their authorized representatives(s).

For any query contact PSIEC, Udyog Bhawan, Sector-17 Chandigarh Contact Smt. Ashima Aggarwal (ATP) at 99887-45051 & E-mail: ashima.psiec@punjab.gov.in

33108 MANAGING DIRECTOR

Committed to providing necessary safeguards to Ladakh, says Shah

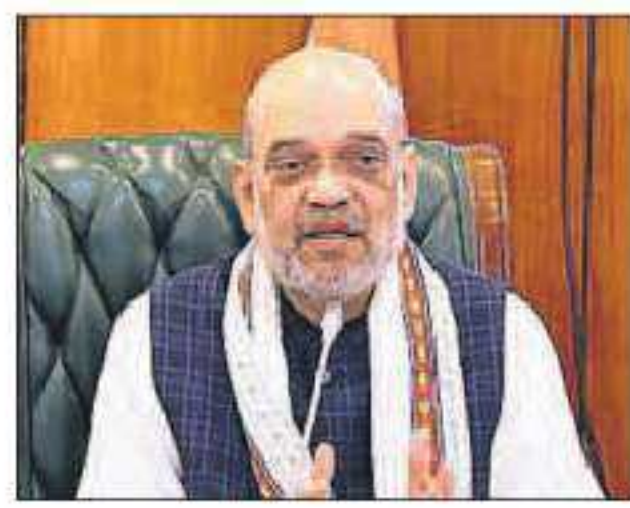
HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Union home minister Amit Shah on Monday assured a delegation from Ladakh that the Centre was committed to providing necessary constitutional safeguards to the region, according to an official statement.

A six-member delegation of the Apex Body, Leh (ABL) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) from the Union territory met Shah in the Capital, the ministry of home affairs (MHA) said in a statement.

MHA statement said that Shah told the delegation that the committee appointed by the government to look into their



Amit Shah

statement and other demands has been discussing the modalities to provide such Constitutional safeguards.

"He assured that the High Powered Committee on Ladakh constituted to look into the demands of ABL and KDA have been discussing the modalities to provide such constitutional

safeguards," it said.

The ABL and the KDA have been demanding statehood for Ladakh, the inclusion of the Union territory in the 6th Schedule of the Constitution and the setting up of an exclusive public service commission for the high-altitude region.

A statement issued by the two organisations said that a sub-committee held a meeting with officials of the MHA and the advisor "of the Union Territory of Ladakh, which ended without any concrete outcome".

The statement added: "Subsequently, the sub-committee held a meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah at his residence that too didn't result in any positive outcome."

Manipur passes bill to ban renaming of places

Utpal Parashar

letters@hindustantimes.com

GUWAHATI: The Manipur assembly on Monday passed a legislation that makes it punishable to rename places by a prison term that could extend to three years and fines of up to ₹2 lakhs.

The Manipur Name of Places Bill, 2024 was unanimously passed by the assembly on Monday in the backdrop of the ongoing ethnic strife between Meitei and the Kuki-Zo communities with instances of one community trying to change official names of places more populated with members of the other community.

"The Manipur state govern-

ment is serious about protecting our history, cultural heritage and the legacy passed down by the ancestors and forefathers," chief minister N Biren Singh posted on X.

"We will not tolerate renaming and misusing names of places without consent and those guilty of the offence will be awarded with strict legal punishment," he added.

The Bill, which was tabled on Friday, states that there have been instances of use of unauthorised names for places by certain individuals, groups of people or organisations with possible mala fide intent, which has potential to cause confusion in administration and disturb social harmony.

Promotion in army: SC seeks govt reply on plea by women officers

Abraham Thomas

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Monday sought a response from the Centre on a contempt petition filed by 30 women army officers alleging discrimination in the process for their empanelment for promotion vis-a-vis male officers. A bench headed by CJI Dhananjaya Y Chandrachud directed the central government to respond by March 11.

"Once we find that the process was fair, we will leave it," the court said. "You (Centre) file a short affidavit indicating what was the criteria followed for empanelment of male officers."

The petitioners challenged a decision of the special no 3 selection board that concluded in December to empanel just eight out of 136 women officers as Colonels against 42 vacancies. It was a violation of the November 3 order of the top court, which directed the army authorities that the selection board should not include women officers who were already empanelled by the selection board convened in January 2023, the petition said.

"The attitude of discrimination persists. The direction was not to include empaneled officers. They

THE SC ASKED THE GOVT TO FILE A SHORT AFFIDAVIT INDICATING THE CRITERIA FOLLOWED FOR EMPANELMENT OF MALE OFFICERS

have done precisely that," senior advocate Huzefa Ahmadi, who appeared for the petitioners along with advocate Rakesh Kumar.

The merit of the empaneled officers served as a cut-off for deciding the merit of the officers to be empaneled from that batch, said attorney general R Venkataramani, appearing for the Centre. There was no question of contempt as the empaneled officers were not competing with the non-empaneled officers for the vacancies, he added.

"There is no contempt. As such, it is very difficult to say if contempt is made out," the court observed. "They did not reconsider those who got empaneled but considered their merit as a benchmark. The idea was to protect those officers who have attained that benchmark, so that their merit is not disturbed." "If they were so sacro-

sanct about including empaneled officers, why the same thing has not happened for male batches?" Ahmadi asked. "The empaneled officers were not included while considering the non-empaneled male officers. This way, more males could be brought in."

"Did you follow the same procedure for male batches?" the court enquired Venkataramani. The attorney general assured the court there was no discrimination, even as the court insisted on an affidavit to be filed. It posted the matter for further hearing on Monday (March 11).

"Any fallout of this order can have some effect. It will be better for the petitioners to move the armed forces tribunal (AFT), which can examine the facts of the case," Venkataramani said. He pointed out that comparative merit in each batch was an important consideration that guided empanelment and the decision in question considered empanelment of women officers from the 1992 to 2006 batches.

While 42 vacancies are available, all were not meant to be exhausted by the petitioners, he said. Soon after the November 3 order, the Centre filed an application in the top court for clarification, he added.

भवन निर्माण विभाग
कार्यपालक अभियंता, संरचना प्रमंडल संख्या 3, पटना
केबल ई-निविदा प्रकृति के अनुसार वेबसाइट पर www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर
पुर ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना
S.B.D (EPC)-ई-निविदा संख्या-02/Cons-3/2023-24

- विज्ञापनदाता का पदनाम एवं पता :- कार्यपालक अभियंता, संरचना प्रमंडल संख्या 3, भवन निर्माण विभाग, पटना।
- निविदा आमंत्रित करने की तिथि :- दिनांक-29.02.2024
- निविदा कागजात प्राप्त करने (डाउनलोड) करने की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय :- दिनांक-05.03.2024 से 27.03.2024 के 15:00 बजे तक।
- निविदा जमा करने (अपलोड) करने की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय :- दिनांक-28.03.2024 को 15:00 बजे तक।
- तकनीकी बीड खोलने की तिथि एवं समय :- दिनांक-30.03.2024 को 15:30 बजे।
- वित्तीय बीड खोलने की तिथि एवं समय :- तकनीकी बीड निष्पादन के पश्चात्।
- प्रो-बीड मिटिंग की तिथि, समय एवं स्थान :- (क) दिनांक-12.03.2024 को 16:00 बजे अखिल भारतीय संरचना अंचल, भवन निर्माण विभाग पटना के कार्यालय कक्ष में।
(ख) दिनांक-15.03.2024 को 16:00 बजे मुख्य अभियंता (दक्षिण) भवन निर्माण विभाग पटना के कार्यालय कक्ष में।
- निविदा वैधता की अवधि :- 120 दिन
- निविदा स्वीकृत करने वाले पदाधिकारी का पदनाम :- सहायक प्राधिकार
- परिमाण विवरण विडि का स्थान :- केबल वेबसाइट (www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in) पर
- निविदा प्राप्ति का स्थान :- केबल वेबसाइट (www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in) पर

कार्य की विवरण:-

क्र. सं.	कार्य का नाम	प्राकृतिक राशि (₹) में	अनुमान की राशि (₹) में	ई-निविदा प्रकृति से वास्तविक राशि (₹) में	कार्य समाप्ति की अवधि (माह में)
1	कृषि जैव प्रौद्योगिकी महाविद्यालय, सबौर के आचार्यभूत संरचना निर्माण कार्य।	72,32,00,000/-	82,32,00,000/-	10,00,00,000/-	As Per eproc2

कार्यपालक अभियंता संरचना प्रमंडल संख्या-03, भवन निर्माण विभाग, पटना पटना-23

PR. No. 018641 (BCD) 2023-24

चिरसूत जानकारी www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar से प्राप्त की जा सकती है।

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Govt. of Bihar

Bihar State Power Holding Company Limited
(Regd. Office: Vidyut Bhawan, Jawahar Lal Nehru Marg, Patna)
GST No. 10AAFCB294AAZDCIN No. U4010BR20125GCO18495
Website: www.bspchl.co.in, E-mail: dba.bspchl@gmail.com
Contact: 9031515666

Department of Information Technology
TENDER NOTICE
NIT NO. - 04/PR/BSPHCL/2024

Bihar State Power Holding Company Limited (BSPHCL), a Government of Bihar Undertaking, invites Bids for Design, Development & Implementation and Support & Maintenance services of web-based Payroll and Pension system in all the offices of BSPHCL & four Subsidiary Company for two years and AMC for one year after contract period subject to satisfactory performance. Online bids are invited from eligible and experienced Agencies / Firms / Companies/ Limited Liability Partnership (LLP).

Sl.No.	Particulars	E.M.D.(Rs.)	Cost of B.O.Q.(Rs.)
1.	Tender for Design, Development & Implementation and Support & Maintenance services of web-based Payroll and Pension system in all the offices of BSPHCL & four Subsidiary Company for two years and AMC for one year after contract period subject to satisfactory performance	Rs. 3,00,000/-	Rs. 10,00,000/- (Non-Refundable)

Estimated cost (without GST) Rupees 1.5 Crore

Date & time of start sale of tender 20.03.2024 (10:30 AM) through website www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in

Date & time of pre-bid meeting 02.04.2024 (11:30 AM)

Date & time of tender closing 12.04.2024 (03:00 PM)

Date of opening of Technical & Commercial Part 1: 12.04.2024 (04:00 PM)

Date of opening of Price Part 2: To be notified after Technical Bid Evaluation (www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in)

For further details please visit : www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar

PR. No. 018716 (B & C) 2023-24 Chief Engineer (IT), BSPHCL

नशी से बनानी दूरी है, क्योंकि परिवार जरूरी है।

Govt set to take over all borewells to deal with water crisis in B'uru

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

BENGALURU: Karnataka deputy chief minister and Bengaluru development minister, DK Shivakumar, has issued a directive to the Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) to take charge of all irrigation and commercial borewells.

The decision comes after the mounting concerns over the looming water crisis in the city's urban and rural areas.

Addressing the media after a meeting on the drinking water crisis, Shivakumar said they



DK Shivakumar

have come up with a solution for drinking water.

"Water does not belong to any individual and it belongs to the government. That is the law of the country. The state has the right to take over the same in the time of water crisis. The law pertaining to water also allows

the state to take over borewells to ease the crisis. Half of the existing borewells have dried up and we have decided to take over irrigation as well as commercial borewells in Bengaluru city and rural areas," the deputy CM said.

Bengaluru has been facing a water crisis for the past week or so due to less than normal rainfall in two monsoon seasons — southwest and northeast monsoon.

"The government would be providing drinking water through tankers now," Shivakumar said.

Registered & Corporate Office:
YES BANK Limited | YES BANK House, Off Western Express Highway, Santacruz (E), Mumbai - 400055, India.
Tel: +91 98106 33188 | Fax: +91 (22) 2619 2866 | Website: www.yesbank.in
Email: deepansh.puri1@yesbank.in | CIN: L65190MH2003PLC143249

E-Auction Sale notice for sale of immovable assets (as mentioned hereinafter) under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) & 9 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to **M/s. R Ayush Enterprises**, a sole proprietorship concern having office at Shop bearing Plot No. 141B, Ground Floor, Gadodia Market, Khari Baoli, Delhi-110006 (the "Borrower") through its Proprietor **Mr. Ayush Bansal**, C/o Shop bearing Plot No. 141B, Ground Floor, Gadodia Market, Khari Baoli, Delhi-110006 (as the proprietor and a guarantor), **Mr. Ravinder Bansal**, C/o Shop bearing Plot No. 141B, Ground Floor, Gadodia Market, Khari Baoli, Delhi-110006 and Mrs. Poonam Bansal, C/o Shop bearing Plot No. 141B, Ground Floor, Gadodia Market, Khari Baoli, Delhi-110006 (hereinafter **Mr. Ayush Bansal, Mr. Ravinder Bansal and Mrs. Poonam Bansal are collectively referred to as "Guarantors"**) and **Mr. Ravinder Bansal and Mrs. Poonam Bansal are collectively referred to as the "Mortgagors"**) that the below described immovable properties mortgaged to YES BANK Limited (hereinafter referred to as the "Secured Creditor"), the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of the Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" and "No recourse" basis on the date of auction (specified in below mentioned table) for recovery of **Rs. 18,33,37,501.46 (Rupees Eighteen Crore Thirty Three Lakh Thirty Seven Thousand Five Hundred and One and Forty Six Paise Only)** as on December 31, 2023, due to the Secured Creditor, together with further interest and cost thereupon, from the Borrower, Guarantors and Mortgagors. The reserve price and Earnest Money Deposit ("EMD") are mentioned in the table below.

The Borrower's/Mortgagors'/Guarantors' attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Description of mortgaged assets and auction details are as under:

Sl. No	Name of the Mortgagors	Details of Property	Inspection Date	Reserve Price EMD Bid Increase Amount	Last Date of Bid Submission	Date & Time of E- Auction
1	Mr. Ravinder Bansal and Mrs. Poonam Bansal	All that the piece and parcel of the Entire Built-Up Free Hold Property Bearing No. 33, Built-On Land Measuring 131.66 Sq. Yards, With Roof/Terrace Rights up to Sky, situated in the Layout Plan of National Defense Workers Co-Operative Housing Building Society Ltd., presently Known as Shakti Vihar, Pitampura, Delhi - 110034 With the Free Hold Rights of the Land under the said Property, which is bounded on the East by : Plot No. 34, on the West by: Plot No.32, on the North By : Road 30 Ft. wide and on the South by : 15 Ft. wide service lane.	05.03.2024, Tuesday to 15.03.2024, Friday	Rs. 5,50,00,000 /- Rs. 55,00,000 /- Rs. 2,00,000 /-	20.03.2024, Wednesday	22.03.2024, Friday 11:00AM to 02:00 PM
2	Mrs. Poonam Bansal	Shop bearing No. 141/2, on Ground Floor, Area Measuring 230. SQ.FT., Situated at Gadodia Market, Khari Baoli, Delhi-110006 With Proportionate Free Hold Rights of the Land under the said Property, and bounded on the East by: Common Wall between the Mortgaged Property and other Shop bearing Pvt. No. 141/1, on the West by : Common Wall Between the Mortgaged Property And other Shop Bearing Pvt. No. 142, on the North by: 16 Ft. Wide Common Road Inside Gadodia Market on the South by: Common Wall between the Mortgaged Property And a part of Shop bearing Pvt. No. 146.	05.03.2024, Tuesday to 01.04.2024, Monday	Rs. 1,95,50,000 /- Rs. 19,55,000 /- Rs. 2,00,000 /-	08.04.2024, Monday	10.04.2024, Wednesday 11:00AM to 02:00 PM

Interested bidders are hereby advised to do their own due diligence related to the above assets before submission of bid. Bank account detail for depositing EMD and mode of payment of EMD is as given in detailed terms and conditions of the sale. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in the website of YES BANK Limited (i.e., <https://www.yesbank.in/about-us/media/auction-property>).<https://www.yesbank.in/about-us/media/auction-property>.

Place: Delhi
Date: March 05, 2024

Sd/-
Authorized Officer
YES BANK LIMITED

झारखण्ड लोक सेवा आयोग सर्कुलर रोड, राँची-834001

प्रेस विज्ञापित
झारखण्ड न्यायिक सेवान्तर्गत सिविल जज (जूनियर डिबीजन) प्रारंभिक प्रतियोगिता परीक्षा (विज्ञापन संख्या-22/2023) के संबंध में आवश्यक सूचना।

एतद् द्वारा सूचित किया जाता है कि झारखण्ड न्यायिक सेवान्तर्गत सिविल जज (जूनियर डिबीजन) प्रारंभिक प्रतियोगिता परीक्षा (विज्ञापन संख्या-22/2023) दिनांक-10.03.2024 (रविवार) को राँची, झारखण्ड में पूर्वाह्न 11:00 बजे से अपराह्न 01:00 बजे तक निर्धारित है।

2. वैसे अर्थों में जिन्हें द्वारा संबंधित विज्ञापन में निर्धारित अधिकतम उम्र सीमा में छूट दिये जाने के संबंध में माननीय उच्च न्यायालय, झारखण्ड, राँची द्वारा संबंधित विभिन्न W.P.(S) याचिकाओं के मामलों में पारित न्यायादेश के आलोक में ऑफलाईन आवेदन (Physical Mode में) आयोग कार्यालय को उपलब्ध कराया गया है, वे अपना पंजीयन संख्या (Registration Number), दिनांक-05.03.2024 से आयोग के वेबसाइट www.jpssc.gov.in पर अपना मोबाइल संख्या (Mobile Number), e-mail id एवं जन्म तिथि (Date of Birth) प्रविष्ट कर प्राप्त कर सकते हैं।

3. परीक्षार्थी अपना प्रवेश-पत्र (Admit Card), उपस्थिति पत्रक (Attendance Sheet) एवं परीक्षा से संबंधित महत्वपूर्ण अनुदेश दिनांक-05.03.2024 से आयोग के वेबसाइट www.jpssc.gov.in पर अपना पंजीयन संख्या (Registration Number) एवं जन्म तिथि (Date of Birth) प्रविष्ट कर डाउनलोड कर सकते हैं।

4. परीक्षा से संबंधित महत्वपूर्ण सूचना एवं अनुदेश, दिनांक-28.02.2024 को आयोग के वेबसाइट पर जारी प्रेस विज्ञापित में देखा जा सकता है।

5. यह प्रेस विज्ञापित आयोग के वेबसाइट www.jpssc.gov.in पर उपलब्ध है।

हो/-
PR.NO.321394 Jharkhand Public Service Commission(23-24):D परीक्षा नियंत्रक, झारखण्ड लोक सेवा आयोग, राँची।

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,
P.H. DIVISION, BALANGIR.
Email. ID - eehpbgr@yahoo.co.in / Ph. No - (06652 - 234647)

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement
Corrigendum to Invitation for (IFB) Dtd.19.02.2024

Sl. No	Name of Work	Bid Identification No.	Estimated Cost (Rs.in Lakh)	Class of Contractor	Period of Completion	Revised dates for Availability of Bid Document for Online Bidding
1	Augmentation of water supply system along ancillary works for Balangir town. (Distribution zone-8, zone-9)	SE PH BGR 17/2023-24 Dt. 19.02.2024	552.46	'A' Class	12 Month	11.00 Hrs. of 11.03.2024 17.00 Hrs. of 27.03.2024

All other terms & conditions of Invitation for Bids (IFB) remain unaltered

Superintending Engineer,
P.H. Division, Balangir
OIPR - 13005/11/0026/2324

Government of Maharashtra
Public Works Department
Executive Engineer, Public Works Division, Jalgaon Dist. Jalgaon
email- jalgaon.ee@mahapwd.com

E-Tender Notice No. 110 For 2023-2024 (Recall Tender- First Time)
(Original E-Tender Notice No. 68 for 2023-2024 Work)

Online Tenders (e-tender) of Road/ Bridge Works in "B-1" form are invited by the Executive Engineer, P.W. Division, Jalgaon (Phone No. 0257- 2227343) for and behalf of Government of Maharashtra, Electronic Tender Management System. <http://mahatenders.gov.in> from Registered P.W.D. Contractor / Eligible Contractor who fulfil the Terms and Conditions of Tender. The rights are reserve to reject all or any tender by Superintending Engineer / Executive Engineer. Conditional Tenders are not acceptable.

The details can be viewed and downloaded online from dated 01/03/2024 to 08/03/2024 at 17.00 Hours directly from the Government of Maharashtra e-tendering Portal <http://mahatenders.gov.in>. Last date of tender submission is 08/03/2024 at 17.00 Hours.

This detailed tender notice for 01 (One) Road Work is also available on portal www.mahapwd.com and on Notice Board in the office of Executive Engineer, Public Works Division, Jalgaon Dist. Jalgaon.

Sd/-
(N. P. Sonawane)
Executive Engineer,
Public Works Division, Jalgaon

{ FROM PAGE 1 }

DELHI BUDGET

our work. But the way Ram did not stop even in the face of difficulties, Kejriwal did not stop and continued work for the commitments made to the people even though he faced difficulties," Atishi said.

"We still have to do a lot of work. But the work done in nine years despite many obstacles is nothing less than a miracle. In the coming year, we will continue to fulfil the dream of Ram Rajya," she added, indicating a strategy aimed at taking on its chief opponent the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which is expected to count the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya as one of its key achievements.

The finance minister recounted welfare schemes the government runs at present, citing work for free electricity, water, rides in public buses (for women), and free pilgrimage for the elderly.

Despite these subsidies, Atishi said, the government has sustained an increase in the budget from ₹30,940 crore in 2014-15 to ₹76,000 crore.

The outlay for the 2024-25 period of ₹76,000 crore is 1.47% higher than the revised estimates of ₹74,900 crore for the year 2023-24, but lower than what was initially pegged for the current financial year—₹78,800 crore (according to budget estimates for the FY24 fiscal).

The expenditure is proposed to be financed mainly from own resources, the minister said, saying revenues of ₹58,750 crore are estimated from tax earnings, ₹1,000 crore from non-tax revenue, ₹10,000 crore from small saving loans, ₹379 crore from capital receipts, ₹3,223.94 crore from centrally sponsored scheme, ₹1,168 crore as Normal Central Assistance and other central grants. The government

has an opening financial surplus of ₹1,478.95 crore, showed the budget documents.

In her two-hour-long speech, the first time she presented the budget after having taken over from Kailash Gehlot, Atishi referred to texts from the Ramayana several times to stress on the administration's focus in sectors of education, health, women's safety, food safety, free pilgrimage for the elderly, free electricity illuminating homes and beautification of the city.

The government has had a practice of basing spending plans around themes. For the current fiscal, Gehlot announced it last year as a budget for a "Saaf Sundar aur Aadhunik Dilli" (clean, beautiful and modern Delhi). The first budget of the administration was based on the theme of "swaraj", or self-rule.

Atishi spoke of the progress the Delhi economy has made with the AAP at the helm. "In 2014-15, Delhi's GSDP was ₹ 4,95,000 crore, and today, within ten years, Delhi's GSDP has reached ₹11,08,000 crore, which is 2.5 times higher. In 2014-15, the per capita income in Delhi was ₹2.47 lakh and in 2023-24, it has increased to ₹4.62 lakh at current prices; which is approximately 2.5 times higher than the national average," she said.

"Whether it's the growing economy of Delhi, the doubled per capita income, the transformation of government schools for children, the liberation of women from battles over water tankers, the splendid infrastructure of roads and flyovers in Delhi, or the provision of free hospitals and mohalla clinics for impoverished families—Delhites have defined a journey from despair to hope. When we interact with the people of Delhi, we receive our report card every day in the form of smiles of children,

women, and the elderly," the finance minister added.

One of the focus areas in the budget is the development of unauthorised colonies. "Along with increasing drains and water lines in unauthorised colonies, the government has built 5,175 kilometres of roads in 1,355 such colonies. A provision of ₹902 crore has been made in the budget for the upliftment of unauthorised colonies in the fiscal year 2024-25," said the finance minister.

The government has also proposed a budget of ₹310 crore to acquire electric buses and, another ₹5,702 crore for larger improvements to the transportation sector. The government's aim is that, by 2025, Delhi will have more than 10,000 buses, out of which 80% will be electric.

"This budget is inspired by concept of Ram Rajya, all sections and all sectors have been taken care of," Kejriwal said later.

"The world's largest women empowerment programme has been announced in today's budget. To empower women, your Delhi government has taken a step forward and has now given you a gift of ₹12,000 annually. Now all our daughters, mothers and sisters aged above 18 will be given ₹1,000 per month under this scheme. About 50 lakh (five million) women will benefit from this in Delhi. This dream of ours for years has been fulfilled this year. When money comes into the hands of the common person, they go to the market. This creates demand in the market and leads to the country's progress. The budget of Delhi government is inspired by the concept of Ram Raj," the chief minister added.

Meanwhile, leader of Opposition in Delhi assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, called the budget a bundle of papers with false

announcements.

"The use of Lord Shri Ram's name in the budget is disrespectful. CM Arvind Kejriwal has been opposing the construction of Ram Temple. One of their ministers used derogatory language towards Hindu deities and he remains in the party till date. The Rozgar Budget was presented in 2022 but not even a single person got employment and the government did not talk about it again. Last year, it was said that maximum emphasis would be given on transport but this time there is no mention of last year's budget in the budget. The public wants to know to what extent the proposals or promises made in the budget last year were implemented. Where did that money go?" Bidhuri said.

According to the public sector bank, not only were details of purchases made at SBI branches not maintained centrally at any one place, but the data related to the issuance of the bond and the data related to the redemption of the bond were also recorded in two different silos.

"No central database was maintained. This was done so as to ensure that donors' anonymity would be protected. It is submitted that donor details were kept in a sealed cover at the designated branches and all such sealed covers were deposited in the main branch of the applicant bank, which is located in Mumbai," the plea said.

At the other end, SBI said, at the time of redemption by a political party, the original bond, and the pay-in slip would be stored in a sealed cover and sent to the SBI's main branch in Mumbai.

"It can thus be noted that both sets of information's were being stored independently of each other. Thus, to re-match them would be a task requiring significant amount of effort... the retrieval of information from each silo and the procedure of matching the information of one silo to that of the other would be a time consuming exercise," it said.

the timeline fixed for it".

"It is submitted that due to the stringent measures undertaken to ensure that the identity of the donors was kept anonymous, 'decoding' of the EBs and the matching of the donor to the donations made would be a complex process," stated the plea, referring to the 2018 EB scheme and the standard operating procedure that SBI formulated for 29 authorised branches, spread all over India, with regard to sale and redemption of bonds.

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SBI added that some of the

details such as number of bonds etc are stored digitally while the other set of details such as name of purchaser, KYC etc are stored physically. "The purpose of not storing all details digitally was to ensure that it cannot be gathered easily to achieve the object of the scheme," said the plea, adding the timeline of three weeks fixed by the court in its February 15 judgment would not be sufficient for the entire exercise to be completed.

The bank highlighted that between April 12, 2019 and February 15, 2024, when the EB scheme was nixed, 22,217 EBs were used for making donations to various political parties. "Redeemed bonds were deposited to Mumbai main branch by the authorised branches at the end of each phase in sealed envelopes. Coupled with the fact that two different information silos existed, this would mean that a total of 44,434 information sets would have to be decoded, compiled and compared," said SBI's application.

In its February 15 judgment, the Constitution bench ruled that amendments made in the Representation of the People Act, Income Tax Act, and Companies Act through the 2017 Finance Act violated the constitutional right of the electors to access information on the funding of political parties "which is necessary to identify corruption and quid pro quo transactions and governance information".

The verdict came ahead of the Lok Sabha elections expected to take place this summer and was immediately welcomed by opposition parties—since the inception of the scheme, the Bharatiya Janata Party, in power at the Centre since 2014, received 54.8% of the electoral bonds purchased in this period—and civil society activists.

EBs, which are bearer bank-

ing instruments that do not carry the name of the buyer or payee, go for sale in 10-day windows in the beginning of every quarter—in January, April, July and October—besides an additional 30-day period specified by the central government during Lok Sabha election years.

The court was emphatic that the scheme violated the right to information.

"The electoral bond scheme and the impugned provisions, to the extent that they infringe upon the right to information of the voter by anonymizing contributions through electoral bonds, are violative of Article 19(1)(a).... Electoral bonds provide economically resourced contributors who already have a seat at the table selective anonymity vis-à-vis the public and not the political party," the bench, also comprising justices Sanjiv Khanna, BR Gavai, JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, said in its February 15 verdict.

Jagdeep Chhokar, founder member & trustee of ADR, said: "This is not unexpected as speculation was doing rounds that the information will not be made available on one pretext or other. It is a bit difficult to believe that the SBI needs nearly 4 months to compile the data, which obviously is in digital form. It defies logic and understanding. This shows that when the Supreme Court gives a judgment, it is not being implemented in letter and spirit."

The agency contested the order, arguing that the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 provides for an appeal against orders of attachment. By releasing the properties from attachment, the NCLT, according to ED, rendered the provisions of the PMLA ineffective.

NCLT CAN RELEASE PROPERTIES ATTACHED BY ED, SAYS BOMBAY HC

Kanchan Chaudhari
letters@hindustantimes.com

MUMBAI: The Bombay high court has said that the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) can release properties attached by Enforcement Directorate (ED) if conditions outlined in the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) 2016 are met.

The NCLT is empowered to declare the end of prosecution against the corporate debtor and the attachment over its properties by agencies like ED.

The division bench comprising justices BP Colabawalla and Somasekar Sundaresan stated that under Sections 31 and Section 32A of the IBC, the NCLT has the authority to direct the ED to lift its attachment over properties of the corporate debtor once a resolution plan that qualifies for immunity under Section 32A is approved.

"This is the clear mandate of the legislature as enshrined in Section 32A of the IBC, 2016," the bench remarked while dismissing the petition filed by ED.

ED had approached the high court challenging the NCLT Mumbai's order dated April 28, 2023, which declared the termination of prosecution of DSK Southern Projects Pvt Ltd and ₹32.51 crore, previously attached by the agency.

The agency contested the order, arguing that the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 provides for an appeal against orders of attachment. By releasing the properties from attachment, the NCLT, according to ED, rendered the provisions of the PMLA ineffective.

Correction
The graphic carried along with the story 'First house constructed in record time' on P10 erroneously mentioned the sanctioned projects as completed projects.

HT Shine Jobs

Delence Electronics and beyond
BHARAT ELECTRONICS LIMITED
Bharat Electronics Limited, a Navaratna & India's leading Professional Electronics Company has the following requirement for its Koldwara Unit on permanent basis:

Table with 5 columns: S. No., Post, Qualification, Minimum Experience, No. of Posts, Grade & Pay Scale

IDBI Bank
Appointment of Chief Information Security Officer (CISO)
Post Name: CISO (On Contract), Vacancy: 1

IDBI Bank
Appointment of Data Protection Officer (DPO)
Post Name: Data Protection Officer (On Contract), Vacancy: 1

ग्रेटर नौएडा औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण
सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि शासनादेश संख्या-4835/77-4-20-03 दिनांक 01.01.2021, शासनादेश संख्या-852/77-4-20-03जीएन/20, दिनांक 21.04.2021 एवं शासनादेश संख्या-2958/77-4-22-03जीएन/20, दिनांक 05.09.2022 के प्रावधानों के अन्तर्गत ग्रेटर नौएडा औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण में कार्यरहित में रिक्त पदों के सम्बंध में आवेदन प्रस्ताविका सहायकार (निगम) को कार्य हेतु महाप्रबंधक (प्रशासन/सामान्य) को 02 रिक्त पदों पर सेवानिवृत्त अधिकारियों को एक निरिच्छत अवधि के लिए नियमित मानदंड पर अनुबन्ध के आधार पर प्रस्तावित करने के अन्तर्गत सूचना प्रकाशित की जा रही है।

ग्रेटर नौएडा औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण
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CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF TELEMATICS
VACANCY NOTICE FOR THE POST OF DEPUTY REGISTRAR, SR. MANAGER - PURCHASE & ADMIN ASSOCIATES ON DIRECT RECRUITMENT BASIS AND ADVISOR POSTS ON CONTRACT BASIS

IDBI Bank
Appointment of Chief Information Security Officer (CISO)
Post Name: CISO (On Contract), Vacancy: 1

IDBI Bank
Appointment of Data Protection Officer (DPO)
Post Name: Data Protection Officer (On Contract), Vacancy: 1

ग्रेटर नौएडा औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण
सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि शासनादेश संख्या-4835/77-4-20-03 दिनांक 01.01.2021, शासनादेश संख्या-852/77-4-20-03जीएन/20, दिनांक 21.04.2021 एवं शासनादेश संख्या-2958/77-4-22-03जीएन/20, दिनांक 05.09.2022 के प्रावधानों के अन्तर्गत ग्रेटर नौएडा औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण में कार्यरहित में रिक्त पदों के सम्बंध में आवेदन प्रस्ताविका सहायकार (निगम) को कार्य हेतु महाप्रबंधक (प्रशासन/सामान्य) को 02 रिक्त पदों पर सेवानिवृत्त अधिकारियों को एक निरिच्छत अवधि के लिए नियमित मानदंड पर अनुबन्ध के आधार पर प्रस्तावित करने के अन्तर्गत सूचना प्रकाशित की जा रही है।

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{ OUR TAKE }

Shehbaz Sharif's many priorities

Pakistan has a government, but reconciliation with India is unlikely to be its first priority

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Shehbaz Sharif has been elected the country's new prime minister despite his party and the Pakistan People's Party winning fewer seats than independent candidates backed by Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and this was mostly due to the powers that have their hands on the levers in Pakistan. Sharif spoke of a "charter of reconciliation" as he offered to work with the PTI to help lead Pakistan out of the multiple crises it currently faces, but the Opposition lawmakers appear to be in no mood to join hands with the government. If the behaviour of the PTI-backed lawmakers at the special Parliament session on Sunday was any indication, Pakistan's main opposition party appears to have made up its mind about adopting a path of protests and confrontation with the government. Sharif must now act wisely to take along all sections of Pakistan's polity and ensure there is no more victimisation of Khan's party and its workers, keeping in mind that the PTI's candidates received far more support from the voters than the two parties that have come together to form the coalition government. This will not be easy because of the muddled policies of the PTI, which has learnt that there are quick gains to be made from a confrontational approach that appeals to vote banks.

The task on hand for Sharif is Herculean, with the new government facing a deficit because successive administrations have been unable to balance revenues and expenditure or carry out much-needed reforms to kick-start an economy that has been in the doldrums for much of the past decade. Simply turning to benefactors such as China and Saudi Arabia can no longer be a viable option. Then there are the mammoth problems posed by a resurgent Pakistani Taliban and the country's strained relations with its neighbours. All these problems will require Sharif's coalition to take along the Opposition in order to find solutions. Any form of rapprochement with New Delhi is hardly likely to be among Sharif's priorities, at least until India's general elections are over. This provides time to both sides to go deeper into the issue of what may constitute a viable form of re-engagement that is also sustainable. While back-channel contacts in recent years have managed to lower the temperature, including on the Line of Control (LoC), they can never be a substitute for a formal engagement at the political level.

Addressing Tripura's indigeneity concerns

The tripartite accord in Tripura is a face-saver for the Tipra Motha, whose leader Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma has been on a hunger strike. The Centre, the state government and Tipra Motha have agreed to constitute a joint working committee to resolve various contentious issues, including land rights, identity, language, and culture. Following the agreement, Debbarma has withdrawn his strike. Though he has not clarified if the party will join the NDA, it is clear that the BJP, which holds both Lok Sabha seats from the state, can now breathe easy before the general elections.

Debbarma, a scion of the Tripura royal family and a former state Congress chief, launched the Tipra Motha claiming that mainstream political parties had compromised the interests of the local population. The idea of Greater Tripaland, a geography imagined to be inhabited by local tribes once upon a time, was the utopia he projected — one where the rights of the tribals would be protected. Such an idea of indigeneity ignores the passage of time and the complicated history of the region. That said, indigenous communities have become a minority in Tripura, where the mostly immigrant Bengali population has come to dominate political, economic and cultural life. The Left, which dominated Tripura for nearly four decades, subsumed concerns about tribal identity and agency within its class politics, which also led to the rise of a short-lived insurgency.

Identity politics revolving around questions of ethnicity, language and faith has been central to the Northeast. Solutions have been found within the framework of the Constitution with varying degrees of success. Tripura's concerns about ethnicity and cultural identity too can be addressed, surely, but without glorifying indigeneity to the extent of exclusivity.

Winners and losers in Pakistan elections

Shehbaz Sharif is sworn in as prime minister, but the real winner is the Pakistan People's Party

While the dust raised by Pakistan's most contested general elections has almost settled, the wind still swirls over the question of its real winners and losers. Observers might be forgiven for wondering why. The elections were, after all, billed by its organisers as a free and fair democratic exercise. As such, there should have been no room for doubt: Those with the most votes are winners and those who fall short must accept defeat. The rules are formalised by inviting winners to test their majority and form a government.

Events in Pakistan since the February 8 elections have upended these neat suppositions. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) led by former prime minister Imran Khan, currently serving several jail sentences, won the largest number of seats (93). Yet his party is still fighting for the right to form the next government.

Its misfortunes stem from a string of explosive claims.

The most serious involve allegations of widespread electoral fraud overseen by authorities acting at the behest of Pakistan's powerful military establishment. It was said to be deter-

mined to keep Khan, its erstwhile protégé, out of power following a dramatic falling out in 2022 and has been accused of skewing the electoral landscape to achieve its objectives. When these plans threatened to go awry with results pointing to a clear win for independent candidates backed by Khan, orders were apparently issued to manipulate the final count and divest the PTI of a majority. Though yet to be fully substantiated, these desperate measures have since fuelled claims of a military that stands irreversibly defeated, with its gameplan in tatters.

Such wishful thinking rested on expectations that the established practice of a democratic election — however flawed — would still hold up. There were some grounds for optimism.

The PTI, which had been forced to field independent candidates after a court ruling denied it the use of its iconic election symbol — the bat — fought back by announcing that it would merge with the little-known Sunni sectarian party, the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) to forge a cohesive parliamentary bloc. Although the SIC itself had no parliamentary representation — having failed to win any seats — the PTI was undeterred and sought to use its merger with the SIC to claim reserved seats for women and minorities, allocated to winning parties on a proportional basis, in an attempt to boost its numbers.

The PTI's gamble did not pay off.

On March 4, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) announced that it had rejected the petition filed by the SIC following the merger for the allocation of reserved seats on grounds of "non-curable legal defects".

Events elsewhere were also putting to rest illusions of a democratic transition. On February 20, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), which had emerged as the second- and third-largest parties with 75 and 54 seats, respectively, announced they had reached an agreement on a coalition government.

But the alliance led by former interim prime minister Shehbaz Sharif of the PML-N, who was elected prime minister for the second time on March 3 and sworn in on Monday, masked simmering tensions between its two main partners. Cobbed with the help of a handful of smaller parties, the partnership got off to a shaky start when the PPP indicated that it would refuse to serve in any government led by PML-N chief, Nawaz Sharif.

His anointment as prime minister for a historic fourth term had been seen as a foregone conclusion on the assumption of a sure win for the PML-N and reports of a thaw in his relations with the military after years of mutual suspicion.

But the split mandate delivered by voters proved to be a crushing defeat for Nawaz Sharif. Although he had signalled his reluctance to lead a coa-



As interim prime minister, Shehbaz Sharif did not disappoint. He was known as a pragmatist ready to widen the space for military influence

alition government, the election results clearly sealed his decision.

It is likely to have been welcomed by the military, which could not have relished the prospect, so soon after the election debacle, of managing another political leader with a known taste for challenging military supremacy.

No such risk is attached to Shehbaz Sharif. As interim prime minister Shehbaz did not disappoint. Known as a pragmatist ready to widen the space for military influence, his notable concessions included the 2023 Army Act allowing civilians to be tried by military courts and the creation of the Special Investment Facilitation Council formalising the army's role in economic decision-making.

Judged from this perspective then, the election results were as much a decisive advance by the military in taming the residual ambitions of an ascendant PML-N as a temporary setback in its aim to cripple the PTI.

But the most immediate beneficiary of this outcome — while the military takes time to nurse wounds inflicted by its electoral missteps — is

the PPP. It has emerged as the real winner of the 2024 general elections.

Under the canny leadership of Asif Ali Zardari, the PPP drove a hard bargain with the PML-N by offering mere conditional support to the coalition on a "case-by-case basis". It has also refused all ministerial posts — seen as calculated to avoid being party to unpopular decisions needed to fix the economy and no doubt to raise questions about the longevity of a fractious and fragile coalition. But the PPP's ultimate trump card lay in securing the PML-N's agreement to back its bid for top constitutional positions, notably an unprecedented second five-year term as president for Zardari, who held the office in 2008-2013.

If elected on March 9, as seems certain, the PPP under Zardari can be guaranteed to frequent the corridors of power long after the tenure of its political rivals in government may be abruptly cut short.

Farzana Shaikh is associate fellow, Asia Pacific Programme, Chatham House, London. The views expressed are personal

Is this the beginning of the end of WTO?

Yet another WTO Ministerial Conference concluded in Abu Dhabi with little to show for it. After all, the main functions of WTO, i.e. the negotiating function and the dispute settlement function have been paralysed for some time now. Attempts to revive both came to nought in Abu Dhabi, reflecting the serious divisions that afflict the 166-strong membership of this troubled organisation.

Four main challenges confronted WTO members at the 13th Ministerial Conference (MC 13) in Abu Dhabi. One, how to conclude the elusive multilateral agreement on fisheries subsidies. Two, how to restore the appellate body so that the dispute settlement mechanism could regain its reputation as the jewel in the crown of WTO. Three, how to secure a permanent solution to the public stockholding (PSH) issue related to food security that India and several others have been demanding from WTO. And finally, how to ensure the extension of the moratorium on customs duty on electronic transmissions that the industry sought and some governments (such as India's) disliked for the revenue loss that it entailed. There were some other issues, but these constituted the main negotiating agenda for MC 13.

The multilateral agreement on fisheries subsidies was concluded in part at the last ministerial conference and it was to be completed at this MC 13 so that it could enter into force. In the event, the negotiators could achieve neither. India put up a fight for equity and justice, causing the European Union (EU) negotiator to say that there was only one country (India) that withheld consent. Even if this were true, equating the subsidies granted by India for the livelihood of its fishermen with the huge subsidies given by the EU, Japan, China and Taiwan is absurd. India sought a time of 25 years, which seems a tad high, but in a federal structure such as ours, we can only make haste slowly! In an election year, the government could not have done anything else other than to vigorously protect the interests of fishermen.

The same goes for our farmers. WTO has reneged on a solemn commitment made to countries such as India to find a permanent solution to the PSH issue. The problem lay with the advanced countries and the CAIRNS



The multilateral agreement on fisheries subsidies was to be completed at this MC 13 so that it could enter into force

Group which insisted on linking this to market access. PSH is a serious issue that must be linked to the sustainable development goal (SDG) of abolishing extreme poverty and hunger. To make it hostage to the issue of market access was unfair and unjust. Anyway, the bottom line is that MC 13 failed to make progress on this issue.

The story about the restoration of the appellate body was no different. There was only one WTO member, i.e. the United States, objecting to it and it would not budge. There is also the added uncertainty posed by the American elections. If Donald Trump does make it, all bets are off. It is not inconceivable that the US under Trump not only thwarts the restoration of the appellate body but goes as far as to withdraw from WTO altogether. One can only wait and watch.

Having failed at meeting the three main challenges, MC 13 barely managed to extend the moratorium on customs duty on electronic transmissions by two years. India, which was bent on preventing this from happening, clarified through its commerce minister that it only agreed at the last minute due to a personal request from the UAE trade minister.

The other major issue facing MC 13 was how to deal with plurilateral negotiating initiatives. One was particularly important: The China-led Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD) Agreement backed by over 100 countries. But because it did not secure the consensus of every WTO member, India and South Africa opposed it in principle. China would have taken note of this development, and it is fair to conclude that the era of close Sino-Indian cooperation in multilateral fora is drawing to a close. What implications this will have for the BRICS grouping remains to be seen.

All things considered therefore, the outcome at MC 13 was very modest. Some tentative conclusions may be drawn. One, WTO does not have a bright future as a purely multilateral organisation. So, will it turn plurilateral and if so, how does India approach it? Two, it appears unlikely that the US will agree to the restoration of the appellate body which will represent *status quo ante*. Instead, we may see a return to the bad old days of GATT with just the single-stage panel procedure. If that happens, how does India cope with that? Last, given the dismal prospects of resurrecting WTO, India should make haste with its key FTAs, particularly the ones with the EU, UK and the GCC. There is no time to waste and the new government in May should focus on this as a matter of priority.

There is also a bit of a disconnect between India's strategic/foreign policy discourse and its trade policy discourse. The strategic discourse is based on the assumption that we will become a seven or ten trillion-dollar economy before long. The current trade policy discourse is arguably fit for a two trillion-dollar economy! This gap needs bridging. One of the ways to do this is for the new government in May to carry out the deep, structural reforms in agriculture, land, labour and logistics that will help catapult India into the big economic league.

Mohan Kumar is a former ambassador and an India negotiator at WTO in Geneva. The views expressed are personal

{ ANWAR IBRAHIM } MALAYSIA PRIME MINISTER

We do not want to be dictated to by any force. So while we remain an important friend to the US and Europe, they should not preclude us from being friendly to one of our important neighbours, precisely China

When myth and music make it to the movies

At various points in the documentary series *The Beatles: Get Back*, The Beatles, also known as the Fab Four, are seen sitting in perfect harmony, wearing their iconic mop-top hairdos and taking on reporters. One reporter asks George Harrison: "George, do you think all this success is a one-night stand?" He responds, "I mean, it can't go on the way it has been going on." Another one asks: "Any of you have any ambition left at all?" And he says, "Yeah, I wanna be an astronaut."

The complexity of the band and the idiosyncrasies of its members accompanied by cryptic lyrics and a flare for counterculture only make it a Herculean task at hand for director Sam Mendes — to capture the essence of Beatlemania in spirit and in cinema. Ever since Sony Pictures announced that Mendes would direct and produce a biopic each on the Fab Four, upping the hopes of fans on the internet and elsewhere, the world of Beatlemania has been on the edge.

This is the first attempt at a biopic on each of The Beatles — and the stakes are both commercial and sentimental, the legacy of Harrison, John Lennon, Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr. It comes with consent from the surviving members — McCartney and Starr — and the families of Lennon and Harrison.

Even at the peak of their musical careers in the 1960s, surrounded by the press and fans, The Beatles were eerily familiar with the perils of stardom. Perhaps it was an awareness brought on by the brave new world that individualised the band and its members. They dealt with their art, and political and personal lives with the same gusto.

The glory they attained was not a matter of chance for The Beatles. It came with reimagining the individual in a society that thwarted any semblance of it, one that was only loyal towards a collective sense of statehood. It was little after the mid-20th century that The Beatles took over the English rock scene — something they continue to dominate decades later. The band played a role in jolting the UK out of its uppity stupor while invading the music industry in other parts of the world.

Get Back, the three-part documentary TV series directed and produced by Peter Jackson, came out in 2021. Comprising edited versions of 60 hours of film footage and 150 hours of audio, the series — most of which is

the making of The Beatles' 1970 studio album *Let It Be* — acts like a premonition. It is disconcerting for a fan to watch the undoing of a heroic band, to witness a tangible hostility between its members.

But unlike a documentary, a biopic makes room for explanations for the hostilities. Just like it makes room for the love and the friendships. A biopic is not a product of yesteryears in which its protagonist flourished but one that is made decades later, influenced by the politics and cultures of the contemporary. Biopics seek to canonise the icons they depict in an attempt to uphold a larger sense of unity among the viewers, subsequently reconstructing what is out there as public history.

However, for Mendes, the challenge will be to replay and recast some of the same events from the perspectives of four luminaries — to produce a work of cinematic realism shrouded by what is understood as the "Rashomon effect" — one that possibly serves contradicting versions of a given incident.

In popular culture, Lennon's has been the most dramatic life of the four while Starr's has been the least. Starr is better understood as the most innocuous member of the band even though his personal life was as tumultuous as the others.

Notably, small-scale biopics have been made on Lennon and the band previously (*Nowhere Boy* in 2009 and *Backbeat* in 1994), but they caused barely a ripple. Biopics on musical legends such as Freddie Mercury (*Bohemian Rhapsody* in 2019) were a commercial success because they depicted "safer plots", as many fans pointed out.

Mendes is a master storyteller who uses tools of symbolism and cinematography — cases in point are his directorial debut *American Beauty* (1999) and his war film *1917* (2019). His strength has been the focus on developing characters over advancing his plots, something that may come in handy in the case of The Beatles. In the four films to be made by Mendes, it will be interesting to see each main character become a supporting character as the story shifts from one protagonist to another. It will also be interesting to witness a shift in what might be a layered fandom alongside a shift in a layered stardom. May we recommend Mendes watch *Todd Haynes' I'm Not There* for starters?

The views expressed are personal

WORLD

Super Tuesday: Haley's last chance to stop Trump

March 5 could be former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley's last chance to stop former US President Donald Trump's drive to clinch the 2024 Republican presidential nomination



WHY THE DAY IS IMPORTANT?

Haley has no clear path to beating Trump. This could be her last chance to at least slow the former president's path to the nomination

Trump has easily swept all six Republican nominating contests in Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada, the US Virgin Islands, South Carolina and Michigan

Haley lost the early nominating states by wide margins, and pundits give her little chance of catching up to Trump, who claims his opponent has "no traction" and will lose every Super Tuesday state

Opinion polls show Trump to be an overwhelming favourite in California and Texas, as well as in states such as Alabama, Maine and Minnesota

His campaign projects that he will win at least 773 delegates and clinch the nomination a week or two later

WHAT IS SUPER TUESDAY?

Americans from 15 states and one territory vote simultaneously on "Super Tuesday", a campaign calendar milestone expected to leave Donald Trump a hair's breadth from securing the Republican Party's presidential nomination in July

REPUBLICANS

15 states 1 US territory

hold the party's nominating contests on March 5, when more than a third of delegates will be assigned to July's Republican National Convention in Milwaukee

874 of 2,429 delegates up for grabs, including from the two most populous states of California and Texas

1,215 delegates needed to win the nomination at the Republican National Convention in July

DELEGATE COUNTS FOR SUPER TUESDAY



DEMOCRATS

BIDEN A SHOO-IN

for the Democratic nomination when party loyalists vote for delegates to August's Democratic National Convention in Chicago

A THIRD OF DELEGATES TO BE DECIDED

With nominating contests held in 14 of 15 states, plus American Samoa, in Alaska, Democrats vote on April 6

IOWA: MAIL-IN BALLOTS

March 5 is also the final day for Democrats in Iowa to mail in their ballots in that state's caucuses and when results will be announced

Trump can stay on Colorado primary ballot: US top court

The key ruling in favour of the former president came on the eve of the Super Tuesday primaries

Agence France-Presse

letters@hindustantimes.com

WASHINGTON: The US Supreme Court on Monday removed a potential hurdle to Donald Trump's bid to recapture the White House, unanimously dismissing a state court ruling that could have barred him from the ballot for engaging in insurrection.

The high-stakes ruling in favour of the former president came on the eve of the Super Tuesday primaries that are expected to cement Trump's march towards the Republican nomination to take on President Joe Biden in November.

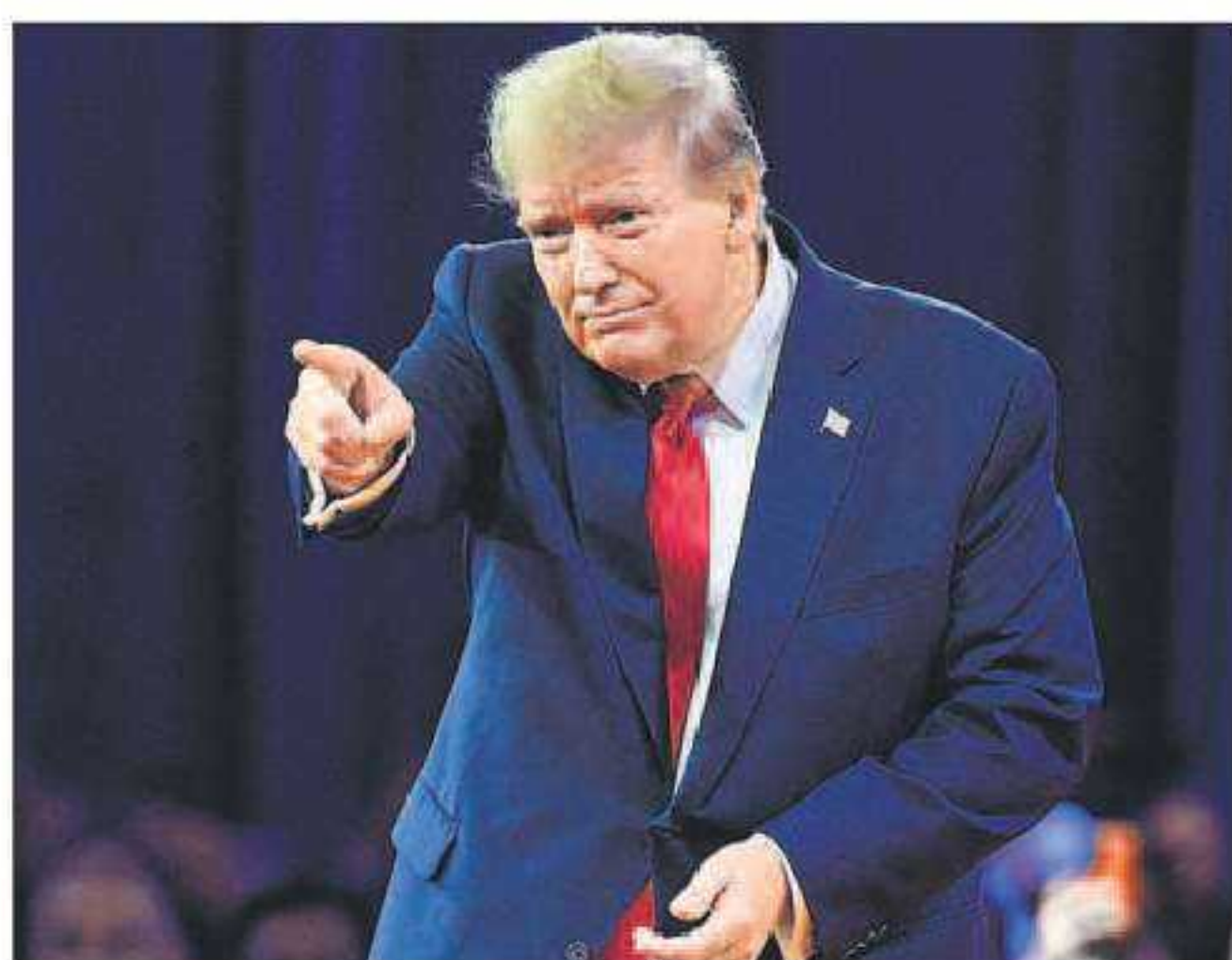
It was the most consequential election case heard by the court since it halted the Florida vote recount in 2000 with Republican George W Bush narrowly leading Democrat Al Gore.

The question before the nine justices was whether Trump was ineligible to appear on the Republican presidential primary ballot in Colorado because he engaged in an insurrection—the January 6, 2021 assault on the US Capitol by his supporters.

In a 9-0 decision, the conservative-dominated court said "the judgment of the Colorado Supreme Court... cannot stand," meaning 77-year-old Trump, the Republican White House frontrunner, can appear on the state's primary ballot.

"All nine Members of the Court agree with that result," they added.

Trump hailed the decision, declaring a "BIG WIN FOR AMERICA!!!" in a post on his



Donald Trump addresses the annual Conservative Political Action Conference meeting, in Maryland, on February 24. AFP

Truth Social website.

The case stemmed from a ruling in December by the state Supreme Court in Colorado, one of the 15 states and territories voting on Super Tuesday.

The state court, citing the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, ruled that Trump should be kicked off the ballot because of his role in the January 6 attack on Congress, when a mob

tried to halt certification of Biden's 2020 election victory.

Section 3 of the 14th Amendment bars anyone from holding public office if they engaged in "insurrection or rebellion" after once pledging to support and defend the Constitution.

But during two hours of arguments last month, both conservative and liberal justices on the US Supreme Court expressed concern about having individual states decide which candidates can be on the presidential ballot this November.

On Monday, the top court ruled that "responsibility for enforcing Section 3 against federal officeholders and candidates rests with Congress and not the States"—and that the principle applied "especially (to) the Presidency."

Monday's ruling renders other similar state challenges to Trump's primary ballot appearance, including in Maine, effectively moot.

Shehbaz Sharif sworn in as Pak's prime minister

Agencies

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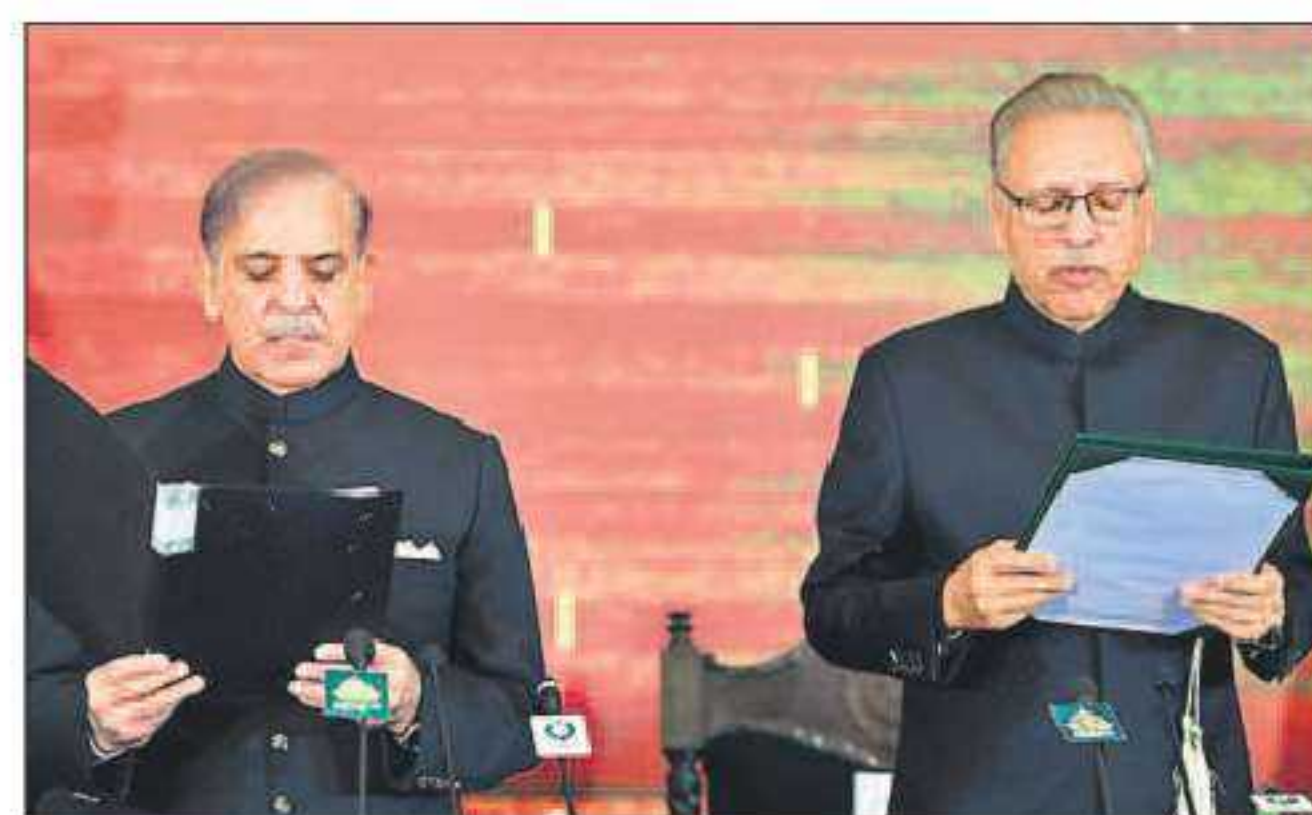
ISLAMABAD: Shehbaz Sharif was sworn in as Pakistan's new prime minister on Monday after being elected a day earlier in a raucous parliamentary session.

He held the same position from April 2022 to August 2023, replacing arch rival Imran Khan who was kicked out of the job after a no-confidence vote.

Shehbaz is the younger brother of three-time premier Nawaz Sharif. His appointment is controversial because of elections last month that his opponents claimed were rigged in his favour.

Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party (PTI) insists it did better in the poll but that electoral theft and other irregularities deprived it of a parliamentary majority. Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League party (PML-N) didn't win enough seats to form a government but went into coalition with others to get a majority, clearing his path to a second premiership. He secured 201 votes in parliament to become prime minister, defeating the PTI-backed candidate Omar Ayub, who got 92 votes.

Sharif pledged to perform his duties and functions with honesty



President Arif Alvi (right) administers the oath of office to Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad, on Monday. PTI

and loyalty and always for the country's independence, "integrity, stability, and for the sake of unity".

But stability and unity are in short supply in Pakistani politics, and Sharif has a tough task of bringing lawmakers together to steer the country through challenging times.

Imran Khan-backed party declined reserved seats

Pakistan's election commission on Monday ruled that a party aligned with candidates backed by former premier Imran Khan was not eligible for extra reserved seats in the

legislature. Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party couldn't contest the election under its traditional electoral symbol, a cricket bat, which was denied on technical grounds.

PTI subsequently struck an alliance with another party, the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), in a bid to secure reserved seats.

Under Pakistan's election rules, parties are allocated 70 reserved seats—60 for women, 10 for non-Muslims—in proportion to the number of seats they win. This completes the National Assembly's total strength of 336 seats.



Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal (right) shakes hand with KP Sharma Oli in Kathmandu, Nepal on Monday. ANI

Nepalese PM forms new coalition govt, dumps Cong party

Agencies

letters@hindustantimes.com

KATHMANDU: Nepal's Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' named three ministers, including one each from two opposition parties, in a new coalition government on Monday, dumping the centrist Nepali Congress party which had dominated his previous government.

After breaking the alliance with the Nepali Congress—the largest party in the House of Representatives—Prachanda joined hands with the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), led by ex-premier KP Sharma Oli, who was regarded as Prachanda's

top critic.

Last year, the CPN-UML withdrew its support to the Prachanda-led government following a rift over backing the main opposition party's candidate for the presidential poll.

Dahal, a former Maoist guerrilla leader in the mountain nation lying between China and India, formed a coalition cabinet including the Nepali Congress and other smaller groups last year.

But his Maoist Centre party, which is the third biggest group in the 275-member parliament, had criticised the Nepali Congress for not giving him free hand and putting "hurdles" to removing some ministers with whom he was not satisfied.

Indian student applications to Canadian institutions fall by 15%

Anirudh Bhattacharyya

letters@hindustantimes.com

TORONTO: After growing each year in recent times, study permit applications from Indians to join Canadian higher education institutions fell by over 15% in 2023 as compared to 2022, as bilateral tensions coupled with housing affordability played a part in the decline.

According to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) data, applications for 2023 fell to 307,603 from 363,484 the previous year, which was an overall record. In comparison, the numbers for 2021 were at 203,6075.

The decrease was significant in the last quarter of 2023 (October-December), going from 119,923 recorded in 2022 to 69,203, a reduction of 42%.

While the number of applications has dropped, actual study permits issued to students from India increased. They rose to a record 278,860 in 2023 from

225,820 the previous year. Indian students comprised over 41% of study permit holders out of the total 548,720 issued in 2022, and 684,385 in 2023.

Applications started falling in the second half of 2023, driven mainly by concerns over housing, as shelter costs rose steeply in Canada, and the situation was compounded by a chill in bilateral ties after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's statement in the House of Commons on September 18 last year that there were "credible allegations" of a potential link between Indian agents and the

killing of pro-Khalistan figure Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Surrey, British Columbia, three months earlier.

These numbers may be further impacted in 2024 as the Canadian government is going to implement measures to reduce the number of international students, who crossed a million last year.

In January, Ottawa announced an intake cap, which is expected to result in a reduction in 35% this year as compared to 2023.

This was announced by Canada's Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Marc Miller who said the "temporary" cap will be placed for two years and the cap for 2025 re-assessed at the end of this year.

"For 2024, the cap is expected to result in approximately 360,000 approved study permits, a decrease of 35% from 2023," IRCC announced in a release at the time.

Economy tops agenda at key annual political meet in China

Agence France-Presse

letters@hindustantimes.com

BEIJING: China's annual "Two Sessions" political meeting kicked off in Beijing on Monday, with the country's flagging economy high on the agenda.

The "Two Sessions" began with the opening meeting of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), which will last until Sunday, attended by Beijing's top leadership including President Xi Jinping.

Tuesday's opening of the National People's Congress (NPC) is expected to see Premier Li Qiang announce that growth in 2024 will stay largely flat, at around 5%.

But at a Monday press conference, NPC spokesperson Lou Qianjian struck a bullish tone.

China's leaders, he said, had "ample confidence" that the economy would rebound, adding the country has "more favourable conditions than challenges in its economic development".

"The underlying trend of a rebound in the economy and long-term growth remains unchanged."

The NPC spokesperson on Monday also addressed China's hope for this year's presidential election in the United States, with which it has clashed in recent years on flashpoint issues from technology and trade to human rights.

"No matter who becomes the president, we hope that the United States can work in the same direction with China and work for a stable, healthy and sustainable China-US relationship," he said.

Premier's annual press conference scrapped for 1st time since 1993

BEIJING: China's Premier Li Qiang will not hold a press conference after the close of this year's annual parliamentary meeting, an official said.

Since 1993, China's premiers have met the media after the annual gathering of the National People's Congress (NPC), offering journalists, including the foreign press, a rare chance to ask questions in a typically wide-ranging news conference.

REUTERS

Parliament in France votes to make abortion constitutional right

VERSAILLES, FRANCE: The French parliament on Monday voted to anchor the right to abortion in the country's constitution, making France the first country in the world to offer explicit protection for terminating a pregnancy in its basic law.

A congress of both the lower and upper houses of parliament, gathered in a special chamber at the Palace of Versailles, easily obtained the three-fifths supermajority needed for the change, with 72 lawmakers voting against. Deputies applauded with a standing ovation.

President Emmanuel Macron described the move as "French pride" that had sent a "universal message".

In an exceptional joint session of parliament convened at the Palace of Versailles, the bill was approved in a 780-72 vote. Abortion enjoys wide support in France across most of the political spectrum, and has been legal since 1975.

The vote makes France the first country to have a constitutional right to abortion since the former Yugoslavia inscribed it in its 1974 constitution. Serbia's

2006 constitution carries on that spirit, stating that "everyone has the right to decide on childbirth".

Nearly the entire hall in France stood in a long standing ovation, and many female legislators in the hall smiled broadly as they cheered.

There were jubilant scenes of celebrations all over France as women's rights activists hailed the measure promised by President Emmanuel Macron immediately following the Dobbs ruling by the US Supreme Court in 2022.

AGENCIES

{ FROM PAGE 1 }

head. Why did you not shave? You only spread hatred in society," Lalu Prasad said on Sunday.

On Monday, Modi hit back, reiterating his credentials as a leader who did not promote nepotism and opposed dynastic rule.

"If I am living, I am living only for all of you (people). This is why crores of Indians consider me as their family," he said.

The PM attributed the Opposition leader's statement to his nervousness. "Leaders of the INDI alliance (INDIA bloc), deeply engrossed in corruption, nepotism and appeasement, are becoming nervous. When I question their parivarad, they say Modi has no family," he said.

Rajya Sabha MP Sudhanshu Trivedi also attacked the INDIA for making "abusive and derogatory remarks" against the PM. "Over the past 16-17 years, Modi has faced jealousy, hatred and cheap statements from the Opposition leaders... they have targeted his caste, community, family and made objectionable remarks, undermining the dignity of democracy," Trivedi said.

This is not the first time that the party and the PM have attempted to turn the tables on the Opposition's comments and jibes to build a narrative for a campaign.

and referred to him as a "chai-wala" (tea-seller), the BJP launched the "chai pe charcha" (conversation over tea) campaign to draw home the message that the Congress insulted the working class. The PM had earlier spoken about his humble origins and how he had to sell tea to support the family income.

In 2019, in addition to the "main bhi chowkidar" campaign, the PM attacked Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati for calling him a "fake OBC".

"You are distributing pramaan patra (certificates) of caste, a game I have never played. But I want to tell you, my caste is most backward caste," he said. The PM also attacked the Opposition for calling him "neech" (lowly) by linking it with "neech jaat" (lower caste).

A senior BJP leader said the personal attacks on the PM will only strengthen the BJP's bid to retain power for the third time. "Each time the Opposition attacked the PM, whether it was comments such as maut ka saudagar (merchant of death) or neech jaat (lower caste), people of this country rallied behind him and sent him with a bigger mandate... the BJP's positive campaign trump over the opposition's negative campaigns," the leader said.

The PM's policies of empowering the backward and the poor, the leader quoted above explained, created a new caste of people.

US steps up efforts to halt fighting in Gaza

GAZA STRIP: Mediators in Cairo persisted on Monday with efforts towards a Gaza truce after Israel's top ally the US stepped up pressure for a halt in fighting and more aid to enter the besieged Palestinian territory.

Bombardments and combat killed 124 more people within 24 hours, said the health ministry in the Hamas-ruled territory. Gaza has been devastated and

gripped by dire food shortages in the war sparked by Hamas's October 7 attacks on Israel.

Qatari and Egyptian mediators were meeting with United States and Hamas envoys—but no Israeli delegates so far—in Cairo for a second day of talks. They are aiming for a halt in fighting before the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan starts on March 10 or 11.

AFP



TRANSFORMING CULTURAL SPIRITUAL HUBS INTO ECONOMIC POWERHOUSE



Uttar Pradesh's remarkable transformation, spearheaded by CM Yogi's relentless crackdown on crime and corruption, has earned the unshakable trust of investors, propelling Uttar Pradesh into a prime investment destination. Investments pouring in all sectors and job opportunities for lakhs of youth have effectively controlled migration to other states. In a concerted effort, the state government has prioritized the development of world-class infrastructure, while also highlighting the cultural, spiritual, and historical significance of its cities. This dual focus has not only enhanced the overall appeal of these cities but has also contributed significantly to the state's economic growth. Cities such as Ayodhya Dham, Varanasi, Mathura, Prayagraj, and the Buddhist circuits have emerged as highly sought-after destinations for tourists within the country. Additionally, the government has embarked on the establishment of a State Capital Region (SCR), modeled after the National Capital Region (NCR). This initiative aims to equip districts, including Lucknow, with cutting-edge infrastructure and amenities, thereby attracting more investors and fostering a thriving business environment. Programs like One District One Product (ODOP) and Vishwakarma Shram Samman Yojana have not only provided a distinct identity to these districts but have also bolstered their economic self-reliance. UP has achieved a monumental milestone by simultaneously launching investment projects exceeding Rs 10 lakh crore during the GBC 4.0, marking a historic first in the nation. The initiative, comprising over 14,500 projects, promises to generate employment opportunities for 34 lakh youths in the foreseeable future.



VARANASI

UPGIS-2023	
Projects	MoU's (Rs. crore)
581	142903
GBC 4.0	
Investment (Rs. crore)	Employment
19245	44215

INVESTMENT FRIENDLY STATE

Gorakhpur is witnessing a lot of industrial development. GIDA is the economic capital of east UP, Nepal, and border districts of Bihar. It has a market potential with a good supply of manpower also. We are expanding our paper disposable unit with an investment of Rs 10 crore

Sudhanshu Tibrewal, Industrialist, Gorakhpur

AYODHYA

UPGIS-2023	
Projects	MoU's (Rs. crore)
508	145116
GBC 4.0	
Investment (Rs. crore)	Employment
12915	25000



MATHURA

UPGIS-2023	
Projects	MoU's (Rs. crore)
484	30235
GBC 4.0	
Investment (Rs. crore)	Employment
16587	31680

The Uttar Pradesh government has focussed on urban development resulting in the creation of job opportunities and the development of cities. Our company is investing about Rs 750 crore in real estate projects of housing and commercial complexes at Prayagraj, Lucknow, Gorakhpur and Mathura

Sunil Solanki, Omaxe Ltd., Prayagraj

GORAKHPUR

UPGIS-2023	
Projects	MoU's (Rs. crore)
630	183738
GBC 4.0	
Investment (Rs. crore)	Employment
17313	37000



PRAYAGRAJ

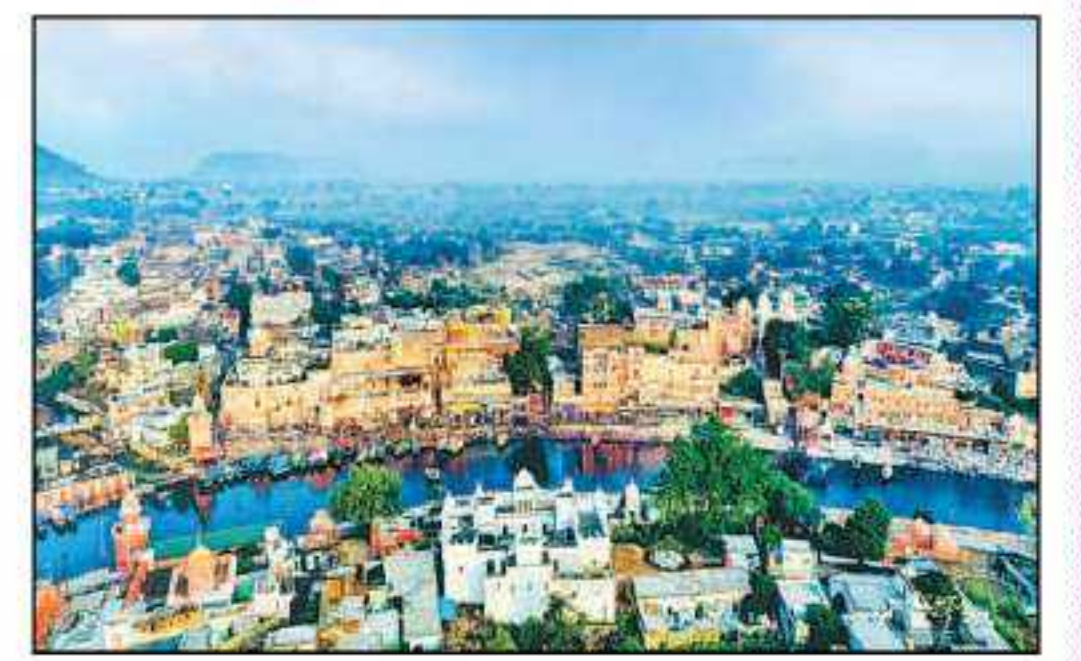
UPGIS-2023	
Projects	MoU's (Rs. crore)
460	63618
GBC 4.0	
Investment (Rs. crore)	Employment
13227	25000

A favorable business environment is prevailing at Sitapur. The policies of the government are helpful in promoting business and development. Industries are being set up in accordance with local needs facilitating easy availability of raw materials. Naimsharanya has great potential in terms of tourism

Ajeet Kumar Singh, Industrialist Sitapur

CHITRAKOOT

UPGIS-2023	
Projects	MoU's (Rs. crore)
280	67422
GBC 4.0	
Investment (Rs. crore)	Employment
7147	7000



SANT KABIR NAGAR

UPGIS-2023	
Projects	MoU's (Rs. crore)
92	5480
GBC 4.0	
Investment (Rs. crore)	Employment
1872	3652

MAJOR INVESTMENT BY COMPANIES

AYODHYA

House of Abhinandan Lodha (Real Estate)
Investment - Rs. 3000 crore
Employment Opportunity - 100 people
Pakka Limited (Paper Manufacturing Machines)
Investment - Rs. 550 crore
Employment Opportunity - 600 people

MIRZAPUR

Dalmia Cement Bharat Limited (Cement Manufacturing)
Investment - Rs. 3000 crore
Employment Opportunity - 2500 people

SITAPUR

Century Plyboard India Limited (Wood)
Investment - Rs. 1500 crore
Employment Opportunity - 3000 people
Greenlam South India Limited (Wood/MDF)
Investment - Rs. 1500 crore
Employment Opportunity - 2000 people

MATHURA

Keshav Publications Pvt Limited (Stationary goods, electric items, plastic products mfg.)
Investment - Rs. 1250 crore
Employment Opportunity - 10000 people

IFP Petro Products Pvt Limited (Refinery)
Investment - Rs. 1100 crore
Employment Opportunity - 700 people

MUZAFFARNAGAR

Bhartiyam Beverages Pvt Limited (Beverages)
Investment - Rs. 600 crore
Employment Opportunity - 500 people

PRAYAGRAJ

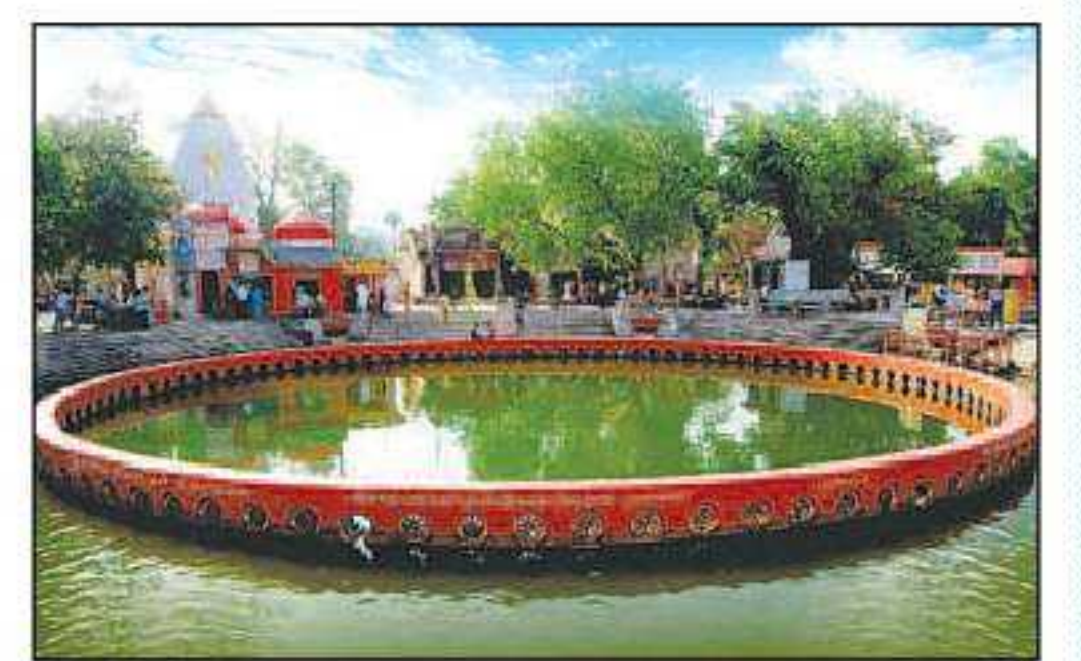
JK Cement Limited (Cement Manufacturing)
Investment - Rs. 400 crore
Employment Opportunity - 250 people

PRAYAGRAJ, GORAKHPUR, CHITRAKOOT, AMETHI

Varun Beverages Limited (Beverages)
Investment - Rs. 3500 crore
Employment Opportunity - 1000 people

SITAPUR

UPGIS-2023	
Projects	MoU's (Rs. crore)
302	29886
GBC 4.0	
Investment (Rs. crore)	Employment
22172	18000



MIRZAPUR

UPGIS-2023	
Projects	MoU's (Rs. crore)
243	17166
GBC 4.0	
Investment (Rs. crore)	Employment
7437	15135



SHRAVASTI

UPGIS-2023	
Projects	MoU's (Rs. crore)
439	2422
GBC 4.0	
Investment (Rs. crore)	Employment
866	3905

BALRAMPUR

UPGIS-2023	
Projects	MoU's (Rs. crore)
194	1402
GBC 4.0	
Investment (Rs. crore)	Employment
438	1851

KAUSHAMBI

UPGIS-2023	
Projects	MoU's (Rs. crore)
143	1589
GBC 4.0	
Investment (Rs. crore)	Employment
681	3382



MUZAFFARNAGAR

UPGIS-2023	
Projects	MoU's (Rs. crore)
249	15549
GBC 4.0	
Investment (Rs. crore)	Employment
9938	10284

KUSHINAGAR

UPGIS-2023	
Projects	MoU's (Rs. crore)
346	3713
GBC 4.0	
Investment (Rs. crore)	Employment
1169	9133



Apps-Google Play spat reaches corridors of govt

Some of the apps by nine developers were re-listed on the Play Store on Monday

Aditi Agrawal
aditi@hindustantimes.com

A clutch of Indian app developers met the government to voice their complaints about Google, which removed apps by 10 developers from its Play Store, but later put many of them back after they complied with its payments policy.

The developers met with IT minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, deputy IT minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar and IT secretary S Krishna in three separate meetings on Monday, four people aware of the meetings said. A Google representative met Vaishnaw before his meeting with the developers.

Google on Friday delisted over 250 apps from 10 Indian app developers from its Play Store for not complying with its payment policy, a policy the developers have challenged in Madras High Court and Supreme Court. By Monday



Ashwini Vaishnaw, Union IT minister.

to two app developers, said the top priority was to get the apps re-listed and to maintain the status as it was before the delisting. The government would then consider what can be done on a medium- to long-term basis, the ministers said.

"Under the leadership of PM @narendramodi ji, the Govt will continue to work towards a level playing field for big and small firms alike while creating an ecosystem that will catalyze growth from startups. Today, starts presented their concerns regarding a few policies of @google. Assured them that @Go_Meitiy will take it up with Google for a sustainable and long-term solution," Chandrasekhar posted on X (previously Twitter) on March 4 after his meeting with the developers.

Neither minister mentioned what specific actions the government could take, the people said. On Saturday, when HT asked Vaishnaw if the app developers had to abide by Google's terms to be re-listed, he said he was not aware of it. "We are not privy to the internal, commercial discussions between companies," he had said.

evening, some of the apps by nine developers were re-listed on the Play Store. No apps by one developer — Cold Brew Tech (FRND) — were brought back until Monday evening.

The ministers and government officials have not committed to any particular course of action, the people said. Google told Vaishnaw how the tech giant imposes a service fee on app developers who sell in-app digital goods and services to invest in safeguards for users on the Play Store ecosystem, the people said. In its blog post on Friday, the company had said that only 3% of the 200,000 Play Store developers

in India sell digital goods or services and fewer than 60 developers were subjected to a service fee greater than 15% of their annual revenue. The company also told Vaishnaw it delisted the apps from 10 Indian developers because they did not comply with its payments policy for more than three years, and that it was a contractual issue.

The developers, accompanied by representatives from lobby groups Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), and Alliance of Digital India Foundation (ADIF), told the ministers about the problems with getting delisted, the people said. Both ministers, according

TaMo to split passenger, commercial vehicle units

Alisha Sachdev
alisha.sachdev@livemint.com

NEW DELHI: Homegrown auto-maker Tata Motors Ltd has decided to split its commercial and passenger vehicles businesses and separately list them, in a move aimed to unlock value and signalling its confidence in the prospects of both divisions.

While Tata Motors' commercial vehicles (CV) unit builds trucks, vans and buses, the passenger vehicles (PV) divisions makes cars, SUVs and electric vehicles (EV). The PV division also includes Jaguar Land-Rover (JLR), the British luxury carmaker that fetches over 80% of its revenue.

"The three automotive business units are now operating independently and delivering consistent performance. This demerger will help them better capitalize on the opportunities provided by the market by enhancing their focus and agility," Tata Motors chairman N. Chandrasekaran said.

While the PV unit of Tata Motors is led by Shailesh Chandra, the CV division is headed by Girish Wagh, and JLR is steered by Adrian Mardell.

The demerger will be implemented through a scheme of arrangement to be filed before the National Company Law Tribunal, and the company hopes



N. Chandrasekaran, chairman, Tata Motors.

rolled out in 2020, is India's largest selling electric car.

For the company that was once reliant on cash flows from its CV business, the demerger underlines the strength of the PV unit and JLR's capability to sustain positive cash flow independently, after an aggressive turnaround strategy spanning the last few years. This also comes at a pivotal moment when its EV business is closing in on profitability.

Financial services firm BNP Paribas values Tata Motors' India PV and CV businesses at ₹585 and ₹335 per share (\$27 billion and \$5 billion respectively), which are a discount to listed peers Maruti Suzuki and Ashok Leyland; hence, the Street has been awaiting a demerger to unlock the value of these businesses for long.

However, since JLR fetches the bulk of Tata Motors' PV business, true value unlocking for the India PV business is likely only if Tata Motors decides to de-merge JLR from its domestic PV and EV businesses, an analyst said on condition of anonymity.

The demerger follows the earlier separation of PV and EV businesses in 2022, and aims to enable more targeted strategies and operations for each segment, Tata Motors said in a press release.

to complete the exercise over the next 12-15 months. All shareholders of Tata Motors will have identical shareholding in both the listed entities.

Starting out as a bus and truckmaker eight decades ago, Tata Motors ventured into passenger vehicles in 1991 with the Tata Sierra.

This was followed by several models in the PV space, followed by the Tata Indica in 1998, marking a serious turn to car making.

In 2008, Tata Motors acquired luxury carmaker JLR and rolled out Tata Nano, a micro-car. The Tata Nexon EV,

Moody's lifts 2024 India GDP growth forecast to 6.8%

Rhik Kundu
rhik.kundu@livemint.com

NEW DELHI: Rating agency Moody's Investors Service, Inc. on Monday raised its forecast for India's gross domestic product (GDP) growth in 2024, reflecting both global and domestic optimism in the country's economy on the back of robust manufacturing activity and infrastructure spending.

"India's economy has performed well and stronger-than-expected data in 2023 has caused us to raise our 2024 growth estimate to 6.8% from 6.1%," the agency said in its Global Macro Outlook 2024-25. "India is likely to remain the fastest-growing among G20 economies over our forecast horizon," it added.

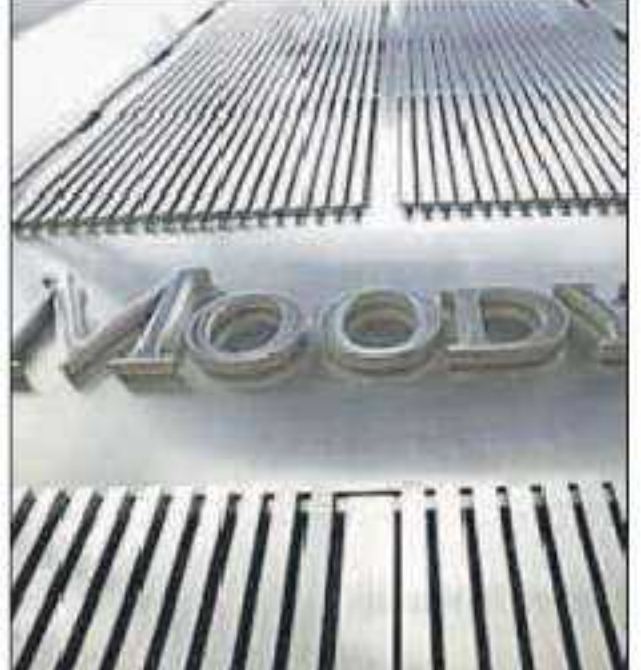
The Indian economy soared in the December quarter (the third quarter of 2023-24) with a surprise growth of 8.4%, belying fears of tempering as its manufacturing, electricity and construction sectors put up a robust show. The statistics ministry has raised its GDP growth estimate for 2023-24 to 7.6% in its second revised estimate, up from 7.3% in its first advance forecast.

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) GDP growth estimate for 2023-24 is 7%, while the International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects 6.7%.

"We believe that with global headwinds fading, the Indian economy should be able to comfortably register 6-7% real GDP growth and we therefore forecast around 6.8% growth in calendar year 2024, followed by 6.4% in 2025," Moody's said.

"Capital spending by the government and strong manufacturing activity have meaningfully contributed to the robust growth outcomes in 2023. We expect policy continuity after the general election and continued focus on infrastructure development," it added.

Moody's said while private



Moody's expects India's urban consumption demand to remain resilient.

industrial capital spending in India has been slow, it is expected to pick up with ongoing supply-chain diversification benefits and investors' response to the government's production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme to boost key manufacturing industries. "Additionally, rising capacity utilization, robust credit growth and upbeat business sentiment point to an improving outlook for private investment," the rating agency said.

"High-frequency indicators show that the economy's strong Q3 and Q4 momentum carried into the first quarter of this year," it added, referring to the January-March period as the first quarter.

According to RBI, the total cost of private corporate projects sanctioned by major banks and financial institutions was up 23% annually during April-December as compared with the year-ago period, suggesting that the private capital expenditure cycle is gaining steam.

Moody's expects India's urban consumption demand to remain resilient, based on robust goods and services tax collections, rising auto sales, consumer optimism and double-digit credit growth, while expanding manufacturing and services PMIs are expected to add to economic momentum.

International airlines covet the Indian globetrotter

Anu Sharma
anu.sharma@livemint.com

NEW DELHI: Indians are flying overseas like never before. And airlines are taking measures to cater to the rising demand.

This January has seen 6.52 million people take off for foreign destinations from India, 17% more than January 2023 and 0.5% higher than the pre-covid level of January 2020. So far this fiscal (April-January), international traffic from India has risen 24% on-year, and was just 1.7% lower than the same pre-covid period.

DOMESTIC CARRIERS, TOO, ARE ANTICIPATING SIMILAR SURGE IN FOREIGN TRAVEL

Going ahead, foreign airlines such as Emirates, Singapore Airlines, Qantas, Cathay Pacific and Etihad, among others, are anticipating demand to balloon further, and are planning accordingly.

Domestic carriers, too, are anticipating similar surge in demand for foreign travel. Rat-

ing agency Ica Ltd expects international passenger traffic for Indian carriers to surpass the peak levels of 2023-24.

To be sure, foreign carriers accounted for 56% share in international air traffic to and from India in 2022-23, and Indian carriers, 44%, as per data from Directorate General of Civil Aviation.

Online travel portal ixigo has seen a 150% increase in searches for international travel in April and May this year compared to last year, ixigo has also seen increased searches for countries that have made travel for Indi-

ans visa free, such as Kenya, Thailand and Malaysia. Data from ixigo showed a 321% increase on-year in travel searches for Thailand, and more than 100% increase in travel searches for Kenya and Malaysia.

For countries with visa requirements, visa processing platform VFS Global expects to surpass pre-covid level of visa processing volume in 2024. In 2023, it had recorded 93% of the 2019 levels.

"Higher disposable income and competitive fares between domestic and short-haul inter-

national destinations are adding to the demand," Mark D. Martin MRAeS, CEO of Martin Consulting said. "But I think the shortage in capacity on account of low reliability of aircraft and engines could impact international travel."

Emirates, the largest foreign airline for the Indian market with 10% share in outbound traffic, is seeing demand from Indian travellers for not only Dubai, but also for Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa on account of safari attractions, and for popular European destinations Italy and Switzerland as well.

India accounts for nearly 46% of world's digital transactions: Das

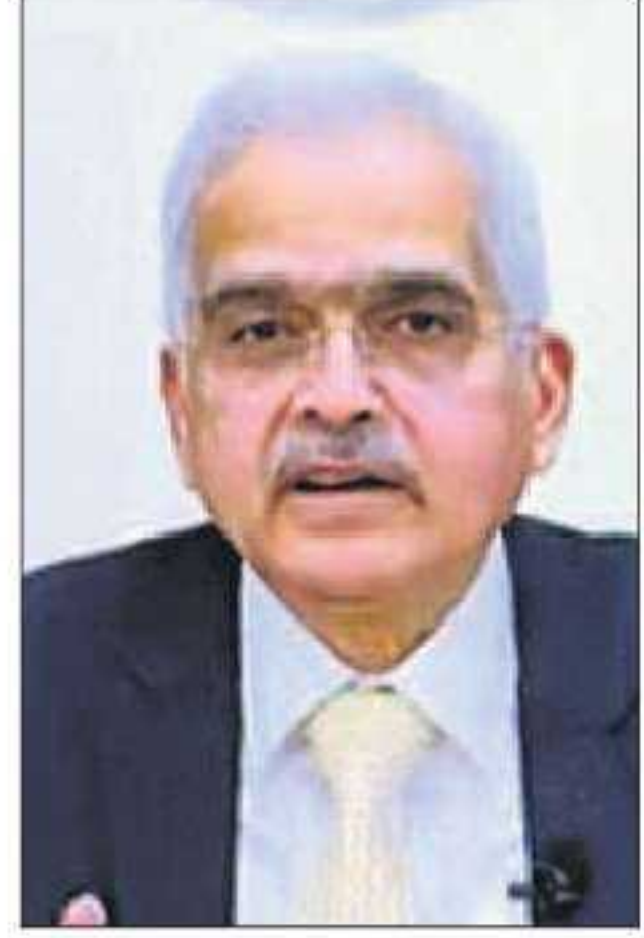
ANI
feedback@livemint.com

The share of UPI in digital payments in India has reached close to 80% in 2023, informed Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Shaktikanta Das on Monday, as he outlined the growth of payments ecosystem in the country.

Addressing the Digital Payments Awareness Week organised by Reserve Bank of India, the RBI governor said India has not only navigated through the fast-evolving technological innovations but also played a pivotal role, as a catalyst, in developing one of the most modern payment systems in the world.

"This has been made possible by nurturing diverse payment systems in the country, namely, the bill payments, merchant payments, vendor payments, transit payments, or recurring payments," Das said.

Retail digital payments in India have grown from 162 crore transactions in the financial year 2012-13 to over 14,726 crore transactions in 2024 (till February 2024) — approximately a 90-fold increase over



Currently, UPI is processing close to 42 crore transactions in a day, said RBI governor Shaktikanta Das.

12 years. Today, India accounts for nearly 46% of the world's digital transactions (as per 2022 data), the governor said.

"The extraordinary growth in digital payments is also evident in the Reserve Bank's Digital Payment Index, which has witnessed a four-fold rise in the last five years," he asserted.

"The flagship of our payment systems, the 'UPI', has become

the most talked about fast payment system not only in India but across the world. It is the biggest contributor to the growth of digital payments in India. The share of Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in digital payments has reached close to 80% in 2023," he said.

At a macro level, the volume of UPI transactions increased from 43 crore in 2017 to 11,761 crore in 2023.

Apart from being a user-friendly interface and facilitating QR code-based payments, the UPI has evolved to include advanced functionalities such as offline payments through near field communication (NFC) technology (UPI Lite X), payments through feature phones (UPI 123Pay), Artificial intelligence (AI)-based conversational payments (hello! UPI).

"The recent progress of the UPI has thus been enormous. Currently, UPI is processing close to 42 crore transactions in a day," Das said.

UPI is India's mobile-based fast payment system, which facilitates customers to make round-the-clock payments instantly, using a Virtual Payment Address (VPA) created by the customer.

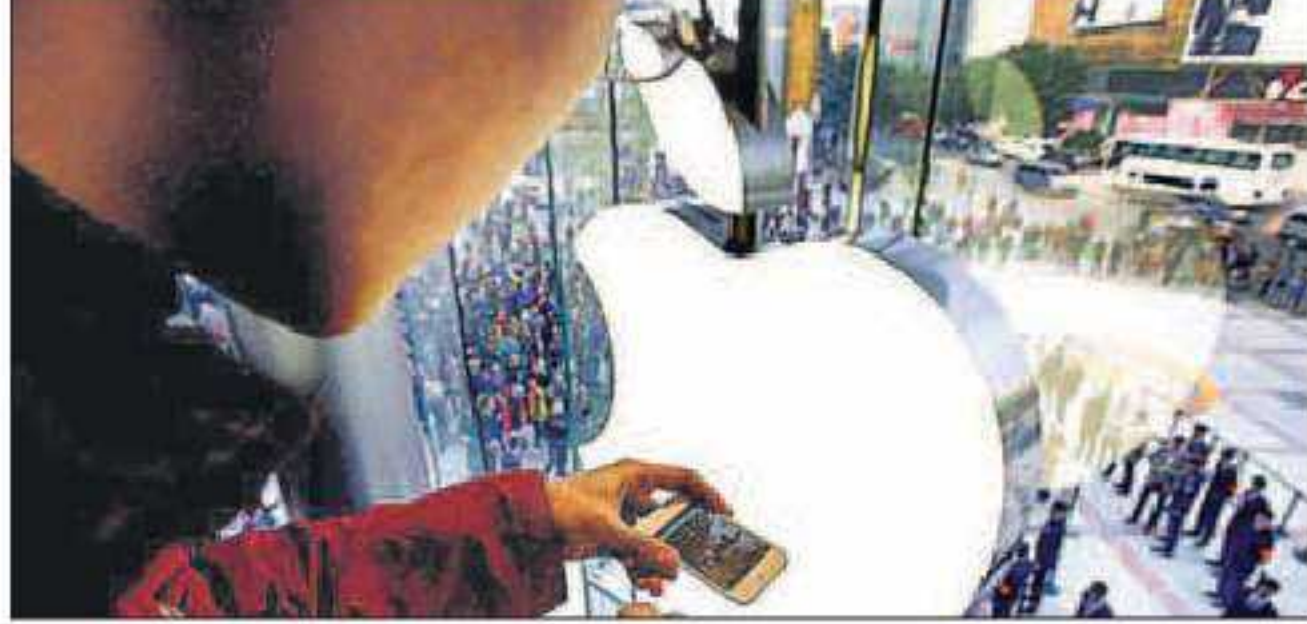
Apple fined \$2 bn by EU over music streaming issue

AP
feedback@livemint.com

LONDON: The European Union leveled its first antitrust penalty against Apple on Monday, fining the U.S. tech giant nearly \$2 billion for breaking the bloc's competition laws by unfairly favouring its own music streaming service over rivals.

Apple banned app developers from "fully informing iOS users about alternative and cheaper music subscription services outside of the app," said the European Commission, the 27-nation bloc's executive arm and top antitrust enforcer.

"This is illegal, and it has impacted millions of European consumers," Margrethe Vestager, the EU's competition commissioner, said at a news conference. Apple behaved this way



Apple hit back at both the commission and Spotify, saying it would appeal the penalty.

for almost a decade, which meant many users paid "significantly higher prices for music streaming subscriptions," the commission said.

The 1.8 billion-euro fine follows a long-running investigation triggered by a complaint from Swedish streaming service Spotify five years ago.

The EU has led global efforts to crack down on Big Tech companies, including a series of multibillion-dollar fines for Google and charging Meta with distorting the online classified ad market. The commission also has opened a separate antitrust investigation into Apple's mobile payments service.

Apple hit back at both the commission and Spotify, saying it would appeal the penalty.

"The decision was reached despite the Commission's failure to uncover any credible evidence of consumer harm, and ignores the realities of a market that is thriving, competitive, and growing fast," the company said in a statement.

It said Spotify stood to benefit from the decision, asserting that the Swedish streaming service that holds a 56% share of Europe's music streaming market and doesn't pay Apple for using its App Store met 65 times with the commission over eight years.

"Ironically, in the name of competition, today's decision just cements the dominant position of a successful European company that is the digital music market's runaway

leader," Apple said. The commission's investigation initially centered on two concerns. One was the iPhone maker's practice of forcing app developers that are selling digital content to use its in-house payment system, which charges a 30% commission on all subscriptions.

But the EU later dropped that to focus on how Apple prevents app makers from telling their users about cheaper ways to pay for subscriptions that don't involve going through an app.

The investigation found that Apple banned streaming services from telling users about how much subscription offers cost outside of their apps, including links in their apps to pay for alternative subscriptions or even emailing users to tell them about different pricing options.

{ THE CROSSWORDS }

CRYPTIC CLUES

- ACROSS**
- Card game we hear (5)
 - Permission to start? (2-5)
 - Catch a number on the rebound (3)
 - Its ups and downs may be studied by the pilot (4,5)
 - Hide away or gradually let out (7)
 - Money belt (5)
 - Fool put back on the dole perhaps (6)
 - Shy and put out when red spots appear (6)
 - Manoeuvre near a battlefield (5)
 - Officer's responsibility given to the men (7)
 - A dog hunts? This sort does (9)
 - A fatal cast (3)
 - Apparently an off-day for twelve (7)
 - Rises and flits about (5)
- DOWN**
- Keeps going like a parasite (5,2)
 - Vegetable makes Rita squirm and splutter (9)
 - It was in the church's interest (5)
 - Incorrectly tagged labour-saving device (6)
 - A stiff examination (7)
 - Period of maritime decline (3)
 - Fear father will come round again? (5)
 - Foe had run into unprecedented difficulty (7-2)
 - Lead on? (7)
 - A send-up on board produces melancholy (7)
 - Busy tenant (6)
 - Bad lighting (5)
 - Design a miniature (5)
 - A love note enclosed produces excitement (3)

PUZZLE 16799



QUICK CLUES

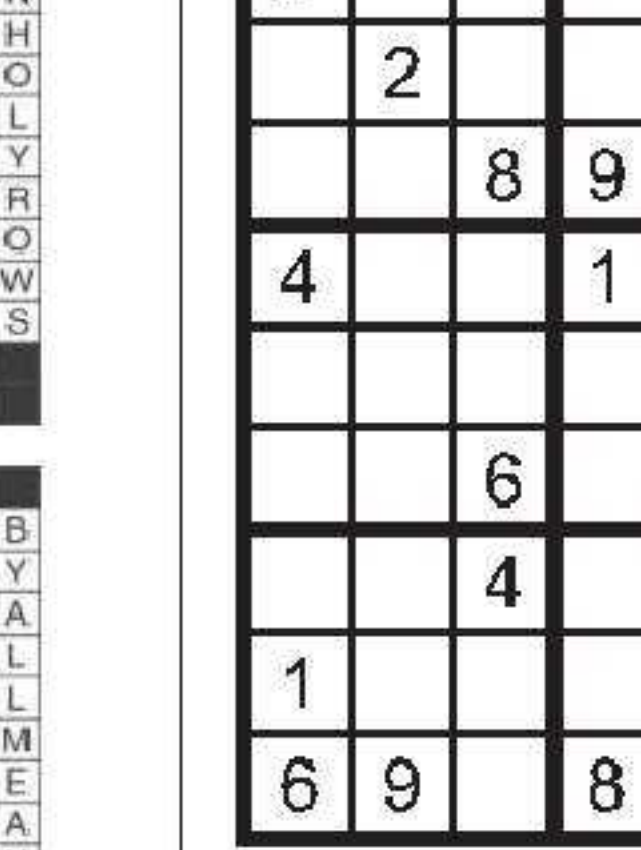
- ACROSS**
- Style of furnishings (5)
 - Pompos language (7)
 - Total amount (3)
 - Offer freely (9)
 - A republic in the Caucasus (7)
 - Sky-blue (5)
 - Wobble (6)
 - Repressed (4-2)
 - Provide what is needed (5)
 - Forestall (3-4)
 - Reach required standard (7,2)
 - Moreover (3)
 - Refuse to acknowledge (3,4)
 - Country of south Arabia (5)
- DOWN**
- Aloof (7)
 - A soft cream cheese (9)
 - Split (5)
 - Slow romantic song (6)
 - Commonplace (7)
 - To mature (3)
 - Curt (5)
 - Final terms (9)
 - On the way (2,5)
 - Humiliate (3,4)
 - Attach (6)
 - Funny (5)
 - Insincere (5)
 - Perform a part (3)

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTIONS (16798)



{ SUDOKU }

DIFFICULTY LEVEL ★★★★★



Fill in all the squares in the grid so that each row, column and each of the 9x9 squares contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

{ WEATHER }

TEMPERATURE HIGH * LOW

TUESDAY Partly cloudy sky
26°C | 10°C

WEDNESDAY Partly cloudy sky
27°C | 11°C

THURSDAY Mainly clear sky
28°C | 12°C

ALMANAC

Today is 5th March 2024
* 23 Shaaban, 1445
* 9, 10, Phalguna, Krishna Paksha, 9, 10
* Samat: 20:08
* Sunset: Tuesday at 06:23 pm
* Sunrise: Wednesday at 06:40 a.m.
* Moonset: Tuesday at 12:43 p.m.
* Moonrise: Wednesday at 02:36 a.m.

RETAIL INVESTORS CASH OUT OF SMALL-CAP STOCKS RALLY

Mayur Bhalerao & Ram Sahgal
mayur.bhalerao@livemint.com

MUMBAI: Retail investors appear to have turned savvy with stock trading, cashing out of small-cap counters while prices ruled high.

As a category, retail investors' share in these stocks declined between the March and December quarters, a period when many small-cap stocks generated sky-high returns. In the past, many retail investors used to burn their fingers, buying up overheated shares and selling lower.

For instance, stocks like BSE, Birlasoft, Zensar Technologies, Sonata Software and RBL Bank, which rose between 23% and 41% in the nine months through December, saw the share of the retail category falling 4.26-10.8%. The retail category comprises investors who buy shares up to ₹2 lakh.

In all, out of the 250 stocks comprising the Nifty Smallcap index, retail investors cut their stakes in 139, while increasing them in 108. Against this, mutual funds increased their stakes in 162 out of 250 stocks, while cutting them in only 86.

Valuations in some of these companies have gone through the roof. For instance, in BSE, which saw retail stake falling to 13.66% from 19.84% as the P/E multiple surged to 36.32 from 22.21 times and in Zensar, the stake declined to 12.9% from 17.58% amid the P/E rising to 26.99 times from 19.09 times.

"Retail has been taking more informed decisions, thanks to them being better equipped, educated and more aware of the risks inherent in small- and mid-cap stocks," said Kishor Kansagra, chairman of BSE Brokers' Forum, comprising over 700 brokers across India. "This is a change from the past when retail, acting largely on hearsay, entered at the peak and exited at a loss and stayed away from the markets, thereafter."

The 700 club: Jaiswal looks to join Gavaskar, aim higher

Gavaskar made more than 700 runs in a series twice and is the only Indian to have achieved the feat

Vivek Krishnan

vivek.krishnan@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: For fans of an older vintage well-versed with Indian cricket and its landmarks, 774 is a hallowed figure embedded in memory.

In a sport that's fixated with stats and records, Sunil Gavaskar's colossal volume of runs as a 21-year-old in his debut series against West Indies in 1971 is more importantly a benchmark for greatness — a grand arrival on the big stage if ever there was one, and also the kindling of a long-standing love affair between the opening batter and the Caribbean.

More than five decades later, that benchmark still stands. It is entirely to Yashasvi Jaiswal's credit then that he has a small chance of breaching that barrier. He's still 120 runs away from surpassing that tally with the final Test against England in Dharamsala remaining, but if you are not putting it beyond the left-handed opening batter, it's an ode to the series he's had so far.

In four Tests, he has racked up 655 runs at an average of 93.57 with two double centuries. It's the sort of run that already places him in a venerated league alongside Gavaskar, Virat Kohli, Dilip Sardesai and Rahul Dravid as the only Indian batters to amass more than 600 runs in a Test series. No Indian has scored more than 700 runs in a series other than Gavaskar, whose greatness is illustrated by the fact he did it twice against West Indies (1971 and 1978-79).

In 1971, in a series comprising four Tests, Gavaskar had only one failure — he was dismissed for 1 in the first innings of the third Test in Barbados. His other scores were 65, 67*, 116, 64*, 117*, 124 and 220, embodying the work ethic and 'khardos' mentality of Bombay batters who would seldom give away a start.

Gavaskar often reserved his best for that invincible team, which a record of 2749 runs in 27 Tests at an average of 65.45 underlines.

Gavaskar belonged to an era where helmets and high-quality protective gear weren't available, and yet churned out big scores against the fearsome West Indian quartet on a regular basis, armed as he was with a defensive technique right out of the coaching manual.

If Gavaskar was the poster boy of the conventional Bombay school of batting in the 1970s and 80s, Kohli symbolises the multi-

ple avatars of the modern-day batter, equally adept at piling up a big hundred or double hundred in a Test and bashing the ball into the stands in a T20. Kohli is second to Gavaskar for most runs scored by an Indian in a Test series, which shows what India have been missing lately.

Kohli made 692 runs in four Tests in Australia in 2014/15, overpowering a Mitchell Johnson-led Aussie pace attack that was on a high after its exploits in the Ashes a year earlier.

Remember that Kohli had gone into this series on the back of a wretched tour of England, returning 134 runs in five Tests at an average of 13.4 owing to a tendency to flirt with balls outside off stump. His contrasting returns that year also bring into focus the double-edged sword that a long series can be. While it is true that a large volume of runs is possible only where there are four or five Tests to play, a duel of that duration can also expose frailties in a batter's technique that a short series simply can't.

The Don legacy

This is also why Don Bradman's legacy transcends generations — of the 34 instances of a batter scoring more than 700 runs in a series, he features as many as five times. Bradman's best is an unrivalled 974 runs in five Tests at a staggering average of 139.14 with a top score of 334 on Australia's tour of England in 1930.

So frustrated were England's players with the sight of Bradman by the end of the series that skipper Douglas Jardine came out with the infamous 'bodyline' tactic merely to combat the great Australian for their tour in 1932/33. They were successful, in that they won the series 4-1 and confined Bradman to "only" 396 runs at 56.57.

The devious ploy rightly brought a restriction to the number of fielders behind square on the leg side, and normal course resumed as Bradman compiled 810 runs at 90 in 1936/37. Some of the other batters to score more than 700 runs in a series include Wally Hammond, Viv Richards, Gary Sobers and Brian Lara, all undisputed greats of this game.

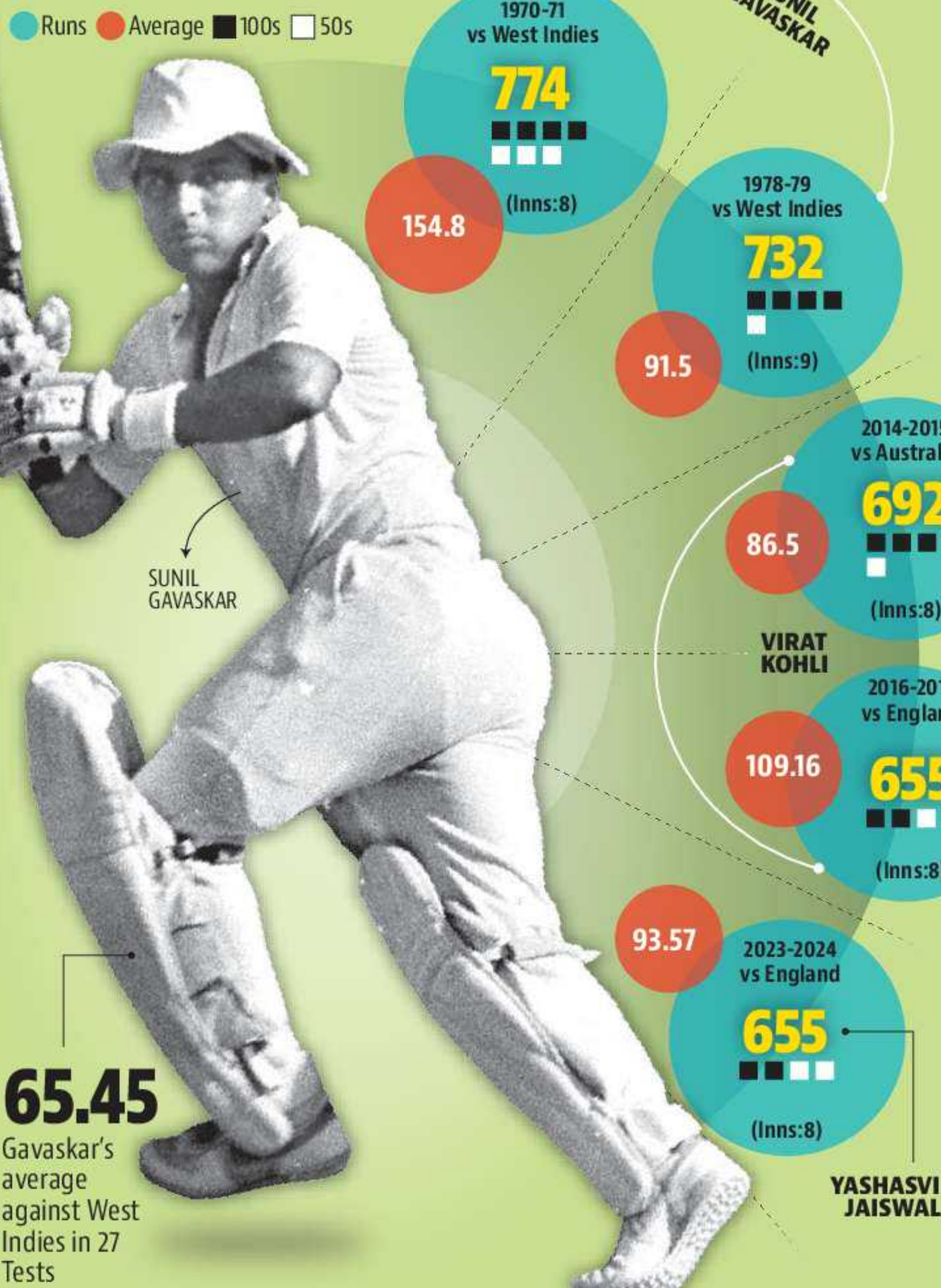
Among active players, Steve Smith features twice, having hoarded 774 runs in four Ashes Tests in 2019 and 769 against India in a four-match series in 2014/15.

It seems to highlight that only a certain rank of players can achieve such a feat. If Jaiswal can join this elite group during the Dharamsala Test, it will provide further affirmation of his extremely bright future.

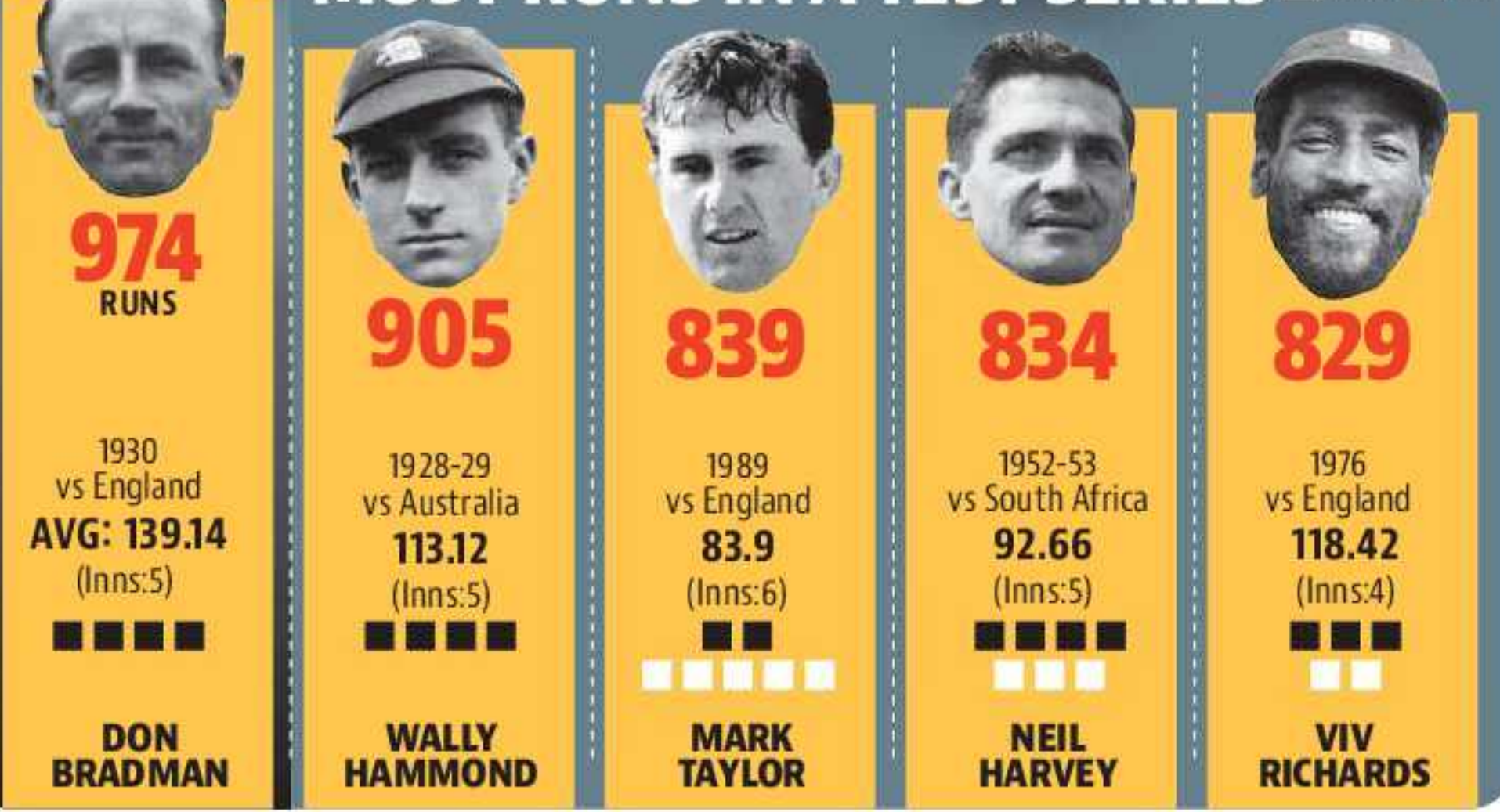
Making a mountain of runs

Among Indian batters, Sunil Gavaskar is the only one to score more than 700 runs in a Test series. Jaiswal now has that opportunity

Most runs by an Indian in a Test series



MOST RUNS IN A TEST SERIES



Mumbai thrash divided TN, sail into Ranji final

Sanjeev K Samyal

sanjeev.samyal@htlive.com

MUMBAI: Mumbai capped their dominant showing by thrashing Tamil Nadu inside three days in the Ranji Trophy semi-finals to storm into the final on Monday. The 41-time champions completed victory by an innings and 70 runs to enter the final for a record-extending 48th time.

Mumbai hosted the semi-final at the MCA-Sharad Pawar Cricket Academy ground, Bandra Kurla Complex. The title clash though held at the Wankhede Stadium from March 10 against the winner of the other semi-final between former champions Madhya Pradesh and Vidarbha.

Shardul Thakur was Mumbai's star with a brilliant all-round show. After his thrilling 109 on Sunday helped Mumbai take a 232-run lead, he bowled an inspired opening spell in the second innings to extinguish Tamil Nadu's hopes of a fightback.

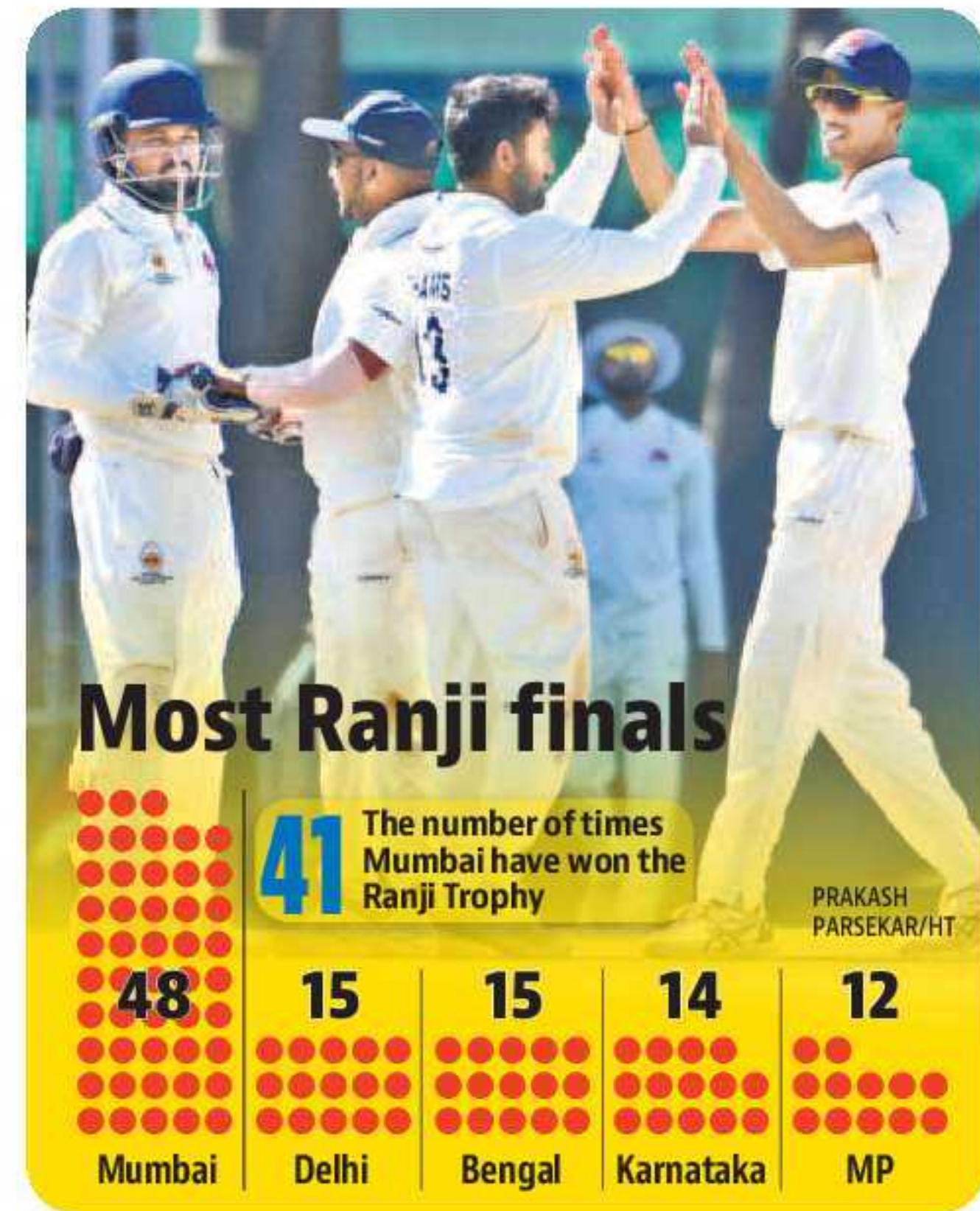
Thakur snared two wickets to leave the visitors tottering at 10/3. Despite a brief fightback by Baba Indrajith (70), Tamil Nadu never recovered from the early collapse and were 162 all out.

Shardul was superb with the new ball, putting on an exhibition of how to use the conditions. He bowled within the stumps and moved the ball just enough, returning figures of 10-4-16-2. With a big first innings deficit, TN batters in a bid to be positive made mistakes.

Opener B Sai Sudharsan was out trying to play a forceful shot; the bottom hand taking over led to a bat-pad gap and he was caught behind off an inside edge. N Jagdeesan played across to a fuller ball and the late swing opened him to be trapped leg before.

Thakur's new ball partner Mohit Avasthi was also superb. He produced a beauty to get rid of the well-set Indrajith, the ball kissing his glove on way to the keeper.

In the morning, Mumbai's last wicket pair of Tanush Kotian (89*) and Tushar Deshpande (26)



batted freely to stretch their partnership to 88 (130 balls). Kotian looked good for his second successive century, but Deshpande's dismissal left him 11 runs short.

Blame game

The defeat opened the Pandora's Box in the Tamil Nadu camp, coach Sulakshan Kulkarni calling skipper R Sai Kishore's decision to bat on a seaming wicket wrong. After Sai Kishore decided to bat first, Tamil Nadu collapsed to 42/5 before being shot out for 146.

"I always speak straightforward — we lost the match at 9 o'clock on Day One. Everything was set, we won the toss, as a coach, as a Mumbaier, I know the conditions well. We should have bowled but the captain had some different instinct," said Kulkarni. "Ultimately he is the boss. I can give my feedback and inputs (as to) what kind of wickets and Mumbai's mindset also," the former Mumbai player and coach said.

"We were mentally prepared that whoever wins the toss would

bowl first. We knew that we would bowl first. The moment they (TV broadcast) said we would bat first, whatever you say, it goes in the batsmen's minds. That first half an hour (before play) got in the batsmen's minds," the coach said.

Kulkarni said he had anticipated a lower-order fightback from Mumbai. "From 106/7, I knew before the match that this (Mumbai fightback) may happen. They are the best (Nos) 9 and 10 in India. I said this in the dressing room, that their batting starts after 6. I can take the horse to the water, the horse has to drink."

Brief scores: Tamil Nadu 146 and 162 in 51.5 overs (Baba Indrajith 70; Shardul Thakur 2/16, Shams Mulani 4/53, Tanush Kotian 2/18) lost to Mumbai 378, by an innings and 70 runs.

Vidarbha 170 & 343/6 in 90 overs (Yash Rathod 97 batting, Akshay Wadkar 77, Aman Mokhadde 59, Dhruv Shorey 40; Anubhav Agarwal 2/68) vs Madhya Pradesh 252.



Dhoni: Stay tuned for new role, new season

NEW DELHI: Barely two weeks before the start of the IPL, Mahendra Singh Dhoni spent speculations into overdrive by claiming that a "new role" awaits him in the "new season" in a social media post. The former India captain, who led the Chennai Super Kings to their fifth IPL title last season, however, neither mentioned the league nor elaborated on the new role. "Can't wait for the new season and the new 'role'. Stay tuned!", Dhoni wrote in a rare social media post on Facebook.

Shuttler Sai Praneeth announces retirement

NEW DELHI: Worlds bronze medalist B Sai Praneeth announced his retirement from international badminton, bringing down curtains on a successful career during which he won the Singapore Open and also represented India at the Tokyo Olympics. The 31-year-old from Hyderabad decided to hang his boost after battling nagging injuries since the Tokyo Games. Praneeth is set to join as a head coach of Triangle Badminton Academy, USA next month.

Pragg beats Gujrathi in Prague Masters

PRAGUE: R Praggnanandhaa defeated compatriot Vidit Gujrathi but D Gukesh suffered a shock loss from a position of strength against Czech Republic's David Navara in the fifth round of the Prague Masters. Pragg lies fourth with Navara and Gukesh. Uzbekistan's Nodirbek Abdusattorov (4) continued his dream run as he cruised past Mateusz Bartel of Poland to emerge as the sole leader ahead of Parham Maghsoodloo (3.5) of Iran, who drew with Romanian Richard Rapport.

Where does India women's hockey go from here?

Sandip Sikdar

sandip.sikdar@htlive.com

NEW DELHI: There will be 16 fewer athletes travelling with the India contingent to the Paris Olympics in July. The women's hockey team didn't make the cut despite qualifying for both Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020. But that story is over. As disappointing and hurtful as it may be, it is time to look forward so that the girls do not suffer the same fate at Los Angeles 2028.

The first step in that direction will be to identify players who will be available in 2028. "They should draw a line under the team now and start a new project involving the national junior team players that you'll see playing in 2028," former India coach Neil Hawgood, who guided the women's team to their first Olympic qualification in 36 years at Rio 2016, said from Hiroshima where he is coaching a corporate team.

Former coach Sjoerd Marjine agreed. "Now India need to choose players who will play for long. You have to choose valuable players and mix them with young players. It is perfect time to reset for the next Olympics."

India's next major tournaments will all be in 2026 — CWG, Asian Games and the World Cup. While there is a question around CWG, the Asian Games should be taken with utmost seriousness as winning a gold in Nagoya will ensure a ticket to LA. It will also do away with the pressure of making the cut through the Olympic Qualifiers which turned out to be a disaster at Ranchi.



KEY AREAS TO WORK ON BEFORE MISSION LA 2028

- Identify players**
The management should identify players who will be available to play at Los Angeles 2028 and build the team accordingly
- Inject young blood**
The key will be to include more juniors, give them enough exposure so that they are confident enough to play when the need arises
- Build the bench**
Increase the size of the core group which will better the bench strength
- Coach for long term**
Hire a coach for the next Olympic cycle, give him/her time to build the team
- Improve PC conversion**
Not just PC conversion, India should also improve its PC defence as it still remains one of the most important parts of modern hockey

"There is no major competition in the near future. This period should be used to prepare our new batch which should be a mix of juniors and seniors, who can play till LA. We should work on creating two groups who can prepare together," former India captain Pritam Rani Siwach said from Sonapat.

Netherlands regularly send not just their B side but also the juniors to Pro League. Though they may be losing those games, what they gain is experience so that

when they graduate, they are ready, confident and unafraid to take on the rest of the world, somewhat like the IPL effect.

Part of the only Indian team (male or female) to have won a CWG gold in 2002, Siwach has always been critical of the small core group and the lack of injection of young blood to boost the bench strength. "Give chances to everyone. We made a mistake earlier. We were only making one group play. You should have 40 girls so that irrespective of who

goes out, it won't affect the team," said Siwach.

Perhaps the most crucial area that hurt India in recent times was the inability to convert their chances, especially penalty corners (PC). It is true that due to better training, equipment and technique, PC defence is getting better. But the best in the business are still able to convert. "They should start working on converting penalty corners. They have been creating chances but now they should be converting those. Also, the new

coach should focus on the field goals. If they are to win, they should score field goals too. That will be one of the first tasks for the new coach," said Marjine.

Another key area that can be worked on is the exposure given to the second goalkeeper. The reliance on Savita Punia has been overwhelming and with the defence failing, it adds to the pressure of the skipper. The team can take a cue from the men's outfit which, from the time of Graham Reid who led India to an Olympic

medal after 41 years in Tokyo, has been changing keepers every quarter. The tactic has not just helped reduce pressure on three-time Olympian PRSreejesh but has also handed exposure to Krishan Bahadur Pathak. The result is that Pathak has at times even outperformed his senior colleague.

The women's team second keeper Bichu Devi Kharibam played only one match during the Olympic Qualifiers in Ranchi and played in only three Pro League games out of eight this year.

"If you play them together, her confidence will also be high. All of a sudden if you send in a second keeper who then concedes a goal, it demotates them. In all areas, they have to get serious now and not just before competitions," added Siwach.

Which brings us to the final piece in the puzzle: new coach. It has been learnt that Hockey India (HI) is on the lookout for a new coach but finalisation could probably take place around the Olympics when the contracts of most top coaches in the world ends.

"It needs to be local leadership now. It has been 12 years since a foreign coach was appointed to lead the changes required. First four years were about setting a new direction. The second four years was where they grew and had belief. This cycle was unfortunate," says Hawgood.

"I believe it's time for a local coach with maybe a foreign advisor to help develop and create a solid link between both senior and junior teams, down to U-18s and play a style that suits the natural Indian skill set."

Smriti takes RCB to 23-run win vs UPW

Aditya Chaturvedi

aditya.chaturvedi@hindustantimes.com

MUMBAI: Greeted with rapturous applause at the toss, Smriti Mandhana was all smiles when Royal Challengers Bangalore were beginning their Women's Premier League campaign in front of home fans last month. On Monday, in what was this season's last game at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, the RCB skipper signed off in style as her splendid knock led to a 23-run victory against UP Warriorz.

With defeats in their last two outings, RCB were just below UPW in fourth position on the points table. But as the tournament heads to Delhi for its second half, the Royal Challengers are back in contention. Asked the bat first, the hosts posted 198/3 — the highest total so far this season — thanks to a 50-ball 80 by Smriti. Aysha Healy, too, led from the front with the bat but her half-century wasn't enough as UPW finished with 175/8.

Bangalore promoted S Meghana (28) to the top and the move worked as the right-hander helped add a quick-fire 51-run partnership for the first wicket. Smriti then got two reprieves in a span of three deliveries, as Chamari Athapaththu misjudged a catch and Healy missed a stumping, but remained aggressive and treated the 26,000-plus spectators to some classy strokes.

Elyse Perry cut loose once Smriti perished in the 17th over after a 95-run stand. The Australia



Smriti Mandhana. PTI

lian star smacked 25 runs off the last nine deliveries as RCB added 44 in their last three overs. Richa Ghosh, in at No.4, provided the finishing touches with 21 off 10 balls.

Healy and Kiran Navgire were off to a promising start but the Warriorz couldn't capitalise on the momentum. Kiran was sent packing by Sophie Devine before Athapaththu suffered a contentious LBW off Georgia Wareham.

A lot depended on the in-form Grace Harris but she too couldn't get going and scooped one to Richa, who took a fine catch diving to her left. Even as Deepti Sharma and Poonam Khemnar tried to put up a fight, the result was never really in doubt as Devine, Wareham, Asha Sobhana and Sophie Molineux split the eight wickets between them.

Brief scores: RCB 198/3 (Smriti Mandhana 80, Elyse Perry 58), UPW 175/8 (Aysha Healy 55, Deepti Sharma 33). **RCB won by 23 runs.**

India TT teams seal Olympics berths

This is the first time since the inception of team events in 2008, that Indian teams have booked Olympics spots

Rutvik Mehta

rutvik.mehta@htlive.com

MUMBAI: On February 21 when India's campaign at the World Team Table Tennis Championships ended, they could all smile quietly. On March 4 when India's spot at the Paris Olympics was officially announced, they could say it openly.

A historic number of Indian paddlers will earn the Olympian tag come the Games in July-August. For, both the men's and women's teams officially secured quotas through world rankings on Monday after their respective pre-quarterfinal finishes at the team Worlds. No Indian team, let alone both, had qualified for the Olympics since the team events were introduced at 2008 Beijing.

In Beijing, Indian table tennis' representation was confined to one men's singles and women's singles player each. In Paris, six quotas have been secured — the team quota also brings along two spots in the singles events — with scope for more. In a sport headlined more by off-field issues (federation suspension, selection drama, court cases) in recent times, this comes as the most significant cause for cheer.

Sharath Kamal, who was there in Beijing and will now gear up for Paris, called it a "fantastic situation for Indian table tennis".

"Last couple of years, the sport has been brought down by controversies. At the end of the day, when the racket does the talking, that is the best part," Sharath, 41, said. "It's good for the entire TT community that the sport is back on the right track. And hopefully we can go beyond just qualification. If we win a match at the Olympics, we make the quarters. That's among the best eight teams in the world."

Indian teams were among the best 16 in the team Worlds in Busan last month, a finish that ensured they would sneak into the Olympics through the rankings route. The tournament show-

cased the depth and potential Indian TT currently possesses (and the work that still needs to be done to improve among the world's strongest teams).

Two of the most remarkable victories — against the world No.1 and 2 Chinese — were scripted by Ayhika Mukherjee and Sreeja Akula while Manika Batra, India's top-ranked paddler and a consistent face in the top 50 rankings, continued to do her thing in leading a promising and dangerous women's pack. The men's unit comprised Harmeet Desai and Manav Thakkar, who have overtaken Sharath and G Sathiyam in the rankings even as the experienced 2022 Commonwealth Games singles medalists are still around for a fight.

"I'm really happy with how we performed against each team at the Worlds," Manika said. "These matches will help us in the Olympics. We will go in with a lot of self-belief that we can do something there, we can win against great players. We will be prepared well for the Olympics."

Booking the Olympics ticket with more than four months to go is a big bonus, which players can utilise by charting preparation plans. "For the first time, I am getting around five months' prior notice that I'm going. Most times, it would be 1-2 months. It's a new situation for me too," Sharath chuckled. "You end up spending all energy trying to qualify rather than doing well there. Now, we can plan well and focus on just preparing for it. I will now give everything to put my best foot forward there and give the Olympics one big goodbye."

Teams would be announced well in advance so that the players can be mentally prepared, Table Tennis Federation of India secretary general Kamlesh Mehta said.

A roadmap of players participating in WTT events to protect their rankings (and thereby ensure a better seeding at the Olympics) and training camps in India and abroad will be worked out. According to PTI, talks to hire a foreign head coach for the teams are on.

"The time factor is crucial, and we have already started working on plans," Mehta said. "The fact that not only one but both teams have qualified for the first time is a significant achievement. It's a very big day for Indian table tennis."



INDIAN TT'S PRESENCE IN RECENT OLYMPICS	BEIJING 2008	LONDON 2012	RIO 2016	TOKYO 2021	PARIS 2024*
	Men's singles: 1 Women's singles: 1	Men's singles: 1 Women's singles: 1	Men's singles: 2 Women's singles: 2	Men's singles: 2 Women's singles: 2	Men's team: 1 Men's singles: 2 Women's team: 1 Women's singles: 2

* World ranking as on March 2024

*More spots could be booked in mixed doubles

India's Paris ticket

For the first time since team events were introduced in Beijing 2008, both Indian men and women table tennis teams have qualified for the Paris Olympics

QUALIFIED TEAMS

Men

China (World ranking 1), Germany (2), France (3), Chinese Taipei (4), Korea Republic (5), Japan (6), Sweden (7), Portugal (8), Brazil (9), Denmark (10), Slovenia (11), Croatia (12), Egypt (13), Australia (14), India (15), Canada (24)

Women

China (1), Japan (2), Germany (3), Korea Republic (4), Romania (5), Hong Kong (6), France (7), Chinese Taipei (8), Egypt (9), Brazil (10), Thailand (11), Poland (12), India (13), USA (14), Sweden (15), Australia (23)

Eyes on Paris, Batra seeks physical, mental peak

Rutvik Mehta

rutvik.mehta@htlive.com

MUMBAI: Manika Batra brings up the match against Chen Szu-Yu. From last month's World Team Table Tennis Championships where a couple of Indians beat the world's top two players and from where both Indian table tennis teams secured a quota for the Paris Olympics (made official on Monday), it wasn't quite a result that stood out.

Personally too, Manika has tasted greater victories and defeated players ranked higher than the world No. 41 from Chinese Taipei. Yet, there was something about that particular contest that she remains pleased about.

"If you see that match against Chen, it was extremely close. But I was fighting for every point —

whether I was leading or trailing or a game up or down. That mindset, you need for every point," she said.

India's No. 1 paddler won that match 3-2, finding herself two games to one down after pocketing the first one. In the deciding game, Manika trailed for a large part yet kept coming back before nudging ahead eventually. It wasn't Manika at her fluent and frightening best, which can be quite a handful for any player. It was Manika who still found a way to remain positive, composed and get across the line.

As she builds up for the Paris Games where she is preparing for a hectic workload of turning up for the team, singles and mixed doubles events, she'd hope to bring out that version of herself more often.

On her day and with her gear, the 36th-ranked Manika can fly;

the players she has taken down over the last couple of years include Hina Hayata (world No. 5), Chen Xingtong (No. 6), Cheng I-Ching (No. 9) and Joo Cheonhui (No. 16), to name a few big scalps. But on the days when she can't quite take off in the same fashion, finding the gear to scrape through and get the job done is something she believes she is getting better at. Kirill Barabanov, her Belarussian sparring partner, has played a role in that.

"At times, it happens during the match itself that it comes to your mind (that it's perhaps not your day). But my sparring partner Kirill always tells me that if you're 8-0 down, you have to believe that you can make it 8-8 and even 10-8. You have to drill that into your mind. And that mindset and confidence has been helping me from the last few years — that I can turn the match

around at any point and win against any player," Manika said.

More than her skill training though, Manika said she would put greater emphasis on her physical training over the next few months leading up to the Olympics. With the women's team making the cut and India's top-ranked paddler expected to take one of the two spots in the singles event while also being the mix for the mixed doubles with G Sathiyam (they are ranked No. 11), there will be a lot on Manika's plate in Paris.

"I will focus more on my physical training, because if I'm playing team, singles and mixed doubles, I have to be physically up for it, build that kind of stamina and recover well and quickly," she said. "I've realised that physical and mental is equally important. You practicing for things is one thing, but to bring that into a

match, you need self-confidence and calmness in your mind. I will keep the skill training the same — what has worked for me."

That's not to say that Manika isn't on the lookout for improving and developing her game. When she burst onto the scene, her much-famed pimped rubber was the talk of the town and a weapon that flummoxed opponents. Over the years as players started figuring it out better, it has compelled Manika to polish other aspects of her game; for instance, she has worked on her attacking forehand play of late.

"Nowadays, people are trying to understand it (pimped rubber) and are able to play against this rubber. So, I am focussing on how I can improve on that aspect itself, and what changes I can bring in my game so that the player continues to find it difficult to adjust," she said.

DELHI HC SEEKS RESPONSE FROM WFI, SPORTS MINISTRY ON WRESTLERS' PLEA

Shruti Kakkar

shruti.kakkar@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Delhi high court on Monday issued notice in a plea filed by four wrestlers, including Tokyo Olympics bronze medalist Bajrang Punia, challenging Wrestling Federation of India's (WFI) notice announcing selection trials on March 10 and 11 for the Senior Asian Wrestling Championships and the Asian Olympic Qualifiers.

The court sought the response of union sports ministry, WFI and the WFI ad hoc committee to the plea and posted the case for March 7 to decide if it would allow WFI to go ahead with the trials to be held in Delhi's IG Stadium.

The plea, also filed by Vinesh Phogat, Sakshi Malik and her husband Satyawart Kadian, contended that WFI deliberately issued its February 26 notice despite being barred by the union sports ministry from conducting competitions and being fully aware of the ad hoc committee's February 9 announcement calling wrestlers for trials for the same events, on the same dates.

In their plea, the wrestlers have in the interim sought the court to restrain WFI from conducting the trials notified by it.

Senior advocate Rahul Mehra, appearing for the petitioners, submitted that after the Dec 21 federation elections, the sports ministry issued an order (on Dec. 24) restraining WFI's executive committee from carrying out administrative activities and directing the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) to constitute an ad hoc committee to manage the federation's affairs.

Mehra submitted that the ministry had on Dec 27 constituted the ad hoc panel. Considering his submissions, the court said WFI's activities were in utter disregard of the sports ministry's order.

"Today there is an order and you (WFI) have been warned twice... As long as this order stands, then that is the operative order... there is an ad hoc committee which has been appointed... You (WFI) are in utter disregard of the order... have you challenged the order? Is there an ad hoc committee to oversee your operations? Are you aggrieved or not?" a bench of justice Sachin Datta asked senior advocate Dayanan Krishnan, who appeared for WFI.

EXPLORING THE ALLEYWAYS OF DELHI

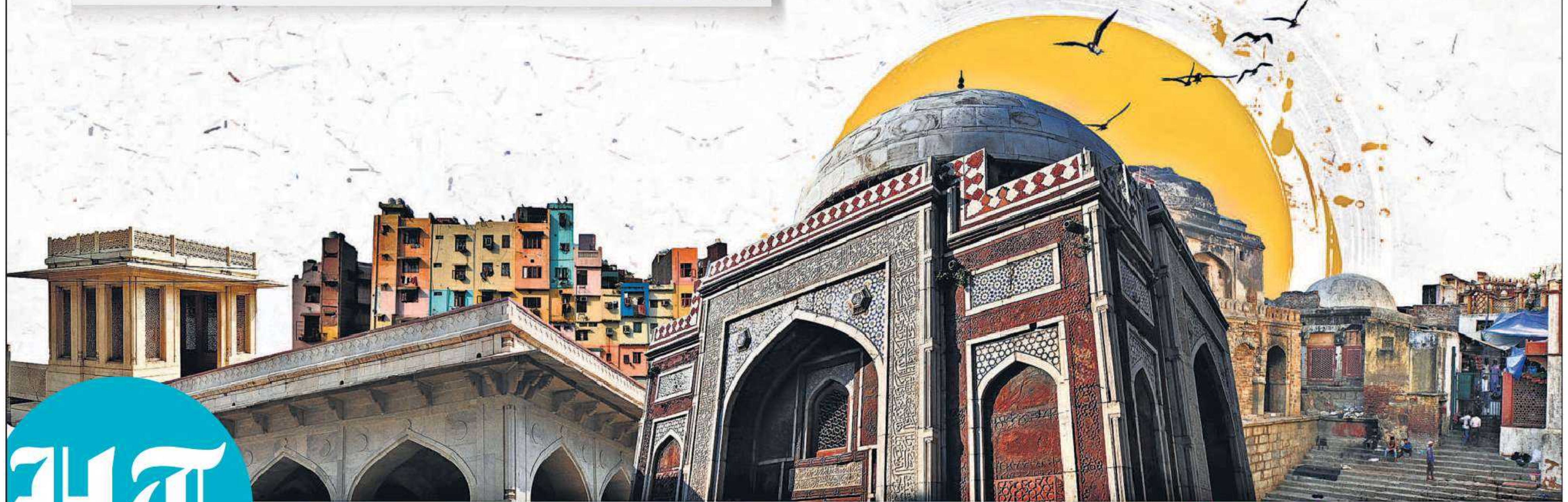


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