



# Hindustan Times

FIRST VOICE. LAST WORD.

## Modi sarkar ki Guarantee

### Means Guarantee of Ease of Living

#### Pucca houses for over 4 crore families

#### Hamara Sankalp Viksit Bharat

## INDIA, EFTA SIGN TRADE DEAL, TO CREATE MILLION JOBS IN 15 YEARS

Rajeev Jayaswal and Rezaul H Laskar

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**NEW DELHI:** India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), comprising Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland, on Sunday signed a trade deal securing duty-free access for Indian rice to the bloc, easy services exports and a "binding commitment" on investments of \$100 billion and creation of a million jobs over 15 years.

The Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) will also ease imports of high-value wine, chocolates and watches from the four countries. Swiss chocolates and watches of brands such as Rolex, Omega and Cartier are set to become cheaper for Indian consumers.

India will give duty concessions on chocolates, watches and wine, but wine costing below \$5 won't enjoy concessions to protect local manufacturers, a commerce ministry official said requesting anonymity.

## Farmers hold 'rail roko', block train traffic for 4 hours

HT Correspondents

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**SHAMBHU/AMRITSAR/JALANDHAR/LUDHIANA:** Farmers on Sunday blocked railway tracks at several places across Punjab as part of a "rail roko" protest called by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha to press the Centre to accept their demands, including a legal guarantee on minimum support prices (MSP).

The protest was supported by four unions of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), including the influential Bhartiya Kisan Union (Ekta Ugrahan), and farm activists blocked all the major railway tracks across the state for four hours — noon to 4pm. In all, farmers blocked railway tracks at 52 locations in 22 districts, including Amritsar, Ludhiana, Tarn Taran, Hoshiarpur, Ferozepur, Fazilka, Sangrur, Mansa, Moga and Bathinda.

A total of 69 trains, including



Farmers blocking train tracks in Jalandhar Cantonment town in Punjab on Sunday.

Vande Bharat, Shatabdi and other passenger trains, were affected in the region. In the Ferozepur division alone, 24 trains were affected: nine were cancelled, eight short-terminated, and seven short-originated.

Trains were cancelled on the Ferozepur-Bathinda, Bathinda-

Ferozepur, Verka-Dera Baba Nanak, Dera Baba Nanak-Verka, Jalandhar City-Hoshiarpur, Hoshiarpur-Jalandhar City, Jalandhar City-Pathankot, Pathankot-Verka, and Verka-Pathankot routes.

Simultaneously, eight trains were short-terminated on the

## TMC snubs INDIA in Bengal, names candidates on all seats

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**KOLKATA:** The Trinamool Congress (TMC) announced its list of candidates for all 42 Lok Sabha constituencies in West Bengal on Sunday, shrugging off the Congress's proposal for an alliance in the crucial state and cementing the latest setback for the Opposition's Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA).

The party dropped five of its sitting Lok Sabha members, with West Bengal chief minister and party chairperson Mamata Banerjee naming a raft of new candidates, including former cricketer Yusuf Pathan, who will contest from the Berham-

pore constituency, which state Congress chief and five-time parliamentarian Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury has held since 1999.

Banerjee's nephew and party general secretary Abhishek Banerjee revealed the list, also comprising actors, doctors and writers, during an elaborate rally at the Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata on Sunday afternoon.

"We will contest the Lok Sabha polls in Bengal alone and will fight the Congress, BJP, and the CPI(M). We will also contest in Assam and Meghalaya. We are in talks with (Samajwadi Party chief) Akhilesh Yadav to contest one seat in Uttar Pradesh," the chief minister said

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### Going it alone



"It will be Trinamool versus BJP in Bengal. Trinamool will fight alone." — Mamata Banerjee, West Bengal CM

42 Lok Sabha seats in WB

5 sitting MPs dropped

KEY CANDIDATES

Abhishek Banerjee (Diamond Harbour)

Yusuf Pathan (Berhampore)

Mahua Moitra (Krishnanagar)

Shatrughan Sinha (Asansol)

Haji Nurul Islam (Basirhat)

Kirti Azad (Bardhaman Durgapur)

## 'Poison of appeasement' is getting weaker: Modi at Azamgarh event

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**VARANASI:** The "poison" of appeasement is weakening as Uttar Pradesh is scaling new heights of development, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday as he laid the foundation stones for projects worth more than ₹34,000 crore from a public event in Azamgarh.

Azamgarh is writing a new chapter of development with people there destroying the "strongholds of families", Modi said in an apparent criticism of the Samajwadi Party (SP), which considered the eastern UP city as a stronghold until 2022, when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) stormed its

### PM lifts wraps off revamped TI

**NEW DELHI:** PM Narendra Modi on Sunday virtually inaugurated the Delhi airport's expanded Terminal 1 (T1), which will now undergo a series of trials before being operationalised in May.

citadel and won the Lok Sabha bypoll. The people proved this when a young man like (Bhojpuri star) Dinesh Lal Yadav Nirahua broke through the bastion of dynasts, Modi said.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath in Azamgarh on Sunday.

## Man found dead in borewell inside a Delhi Jal Board unit

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**NEW DELHI:** A man was found dead at the bottom of an abandoned 40-foot deep borewell inside a locked room at a Delhi Jal Board (DJB) water treatment plant at Keshopur in west Delhi in the early hours of Sunday, police officers aware of the matter said, adding that the body was pulled out after a 14-hour-long operation.

Police were yet to ascertain the identity of the man. It was also not immediately clear why or how he entered the water treatment plant or the locked room, officers said, adding that



NDRF officials during the rescue operation.

the sequence of events leading to the man being discovered in the borewell will be ascertained once his identity is established.

A senior police officer said that investigators are also probing whether the man entered the plant to steal parts.

## GOEL, KUMAR HAD THEIR DIFFERENCES BUT RESIGNATION A SURPRISE: OFFICIALS

Aditi Agrawal

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**NEW DELHI:** A day after the Union law ministry announced election commissioner Arun Goel's resignation, Election Commission officials were at a loss about what caused the move, with three years left on the officer's tenure and elevation to CEC due in 2025.

Five officials HT spoke to said Goel and CEC Rajiv Kumar had their differences, including on the Sena versus Sena issue, though that did not explain the abrupt resignation.

## MODI'S OUTREACH TO PUTIN HELPED AVERT POTENTIAL N-STRIKE: REPORT

**WASHINGTON:** The US believes that outreach to President Vladimir Putin from leaders of key countries for Russia, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, helped avert in 2022 a potential nuclear strike against Ukraine as conflict raged between the two European neighbours, CNN reported, citing two senior US administration officials.

## ED arrests Lalu's aide Subhash Yadav in money laundering case

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**PATNA:** A special court in Patna on Sunday sent Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Subhash Prasad Yadav, a close associate of party chief Lalu Prasad, to 14 days in judicial custody in connection with a money laundering

case registered by Enforcement Directorate (ED).

ED arrested Subhash on Saturday night from his Danapur residence under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) after conducting raids in several locations across the state. He was produced before a special PMLA court, which

remanded him to 14 days in judicial custody at Beur central jail in Patna.

According to ED officials familiar with the matter, the central agency is set to move a petition in the PMLA court on Monday to take Yadav into remand for further interroga-

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## BJP'S MP FROM HISAR BRIJENDRA SINGH LEAVES PARTY, JOINS CONG

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**ROHTAK:** Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s Hisar MP Brijendra Singh quit the party citing "political and ideological differences" on Sunday and joined the Congress within a few hours. He later also resigned from the Lok Sabha.

Singh, a former IAS officer, took voluntary retirement after 21 years in service and joined the BJP ahead of the 2019 general elections. He defeated Jannayak Janata party leader Dushyant Chautala by 314,000 votes.

Announcing his decision on X, Singh said: "I have resigned from the primary membership of BJP, due to compelling political reasons. I extend gratitude to the party, National president JP Nadda, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amit Shah for giving me the opportunity to serve as the member of Parliament for Hisar."

→ FULL REPORT ON P10

### { OFF GAZA } FOR HUMANITARIAN AID

## US ship leaves to set up a temporary pier



US Army vessel, the General Frank S Besson, left a base in Virginia on Saturday.

**WASHINGTON/ GAZA:** A US Army vessel carrying equipment for building a temporary pier in Gaza was on its way to the Mediterranean on Sunday, even as a ship carrying dozens of tonnes of food for Gaza was getting ready to leave Cyprus, three days after US President Joe Biden announced plans to ramp up humanitarian aid deliveries by sea to the besieged enclave where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have been going hungry.

US Central Command said a first US Army vessel, the General Frank S Besson, left a base

in Virginia on Saturday and was on its way to the Eastern Mediterranean with equipment for pier construction. US officials said it will likely be weeks before the pier is operational.

The sea corridor is backed by the European Union together with the US, the United Arab Emirates and other countries. The European Commission has said that UN agencies and the Red Cross will also play a role. A salvage vessel, the Open Arms, was on Sunday ready to tow a barge with 200 tonnes of food, mostly funded by the UAE. The new push for aid

came in the final hours before the start of Ramadan. Hopes for a new cease-fire by Ramadan faded days ago with negotiations apparently stalled.

Biden on Saturday stepped up public criticism of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, telling MSNBC he believes that Netanyahu is "hurting Israel more than helping Israel" in his approach to the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, now in its sixth month.

The health ministry in Gaza said that at least 31,045 Palestinians have been killed since the war began.



{ MURDERS DISCOVERED IN IDUKKI }

## Skeletal remains exhumed from house in Kerala

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**KOCHI:** In a fresh development in the case of two murders in the Idukki district of Kerala that police uncovered during an investigation for theft, the Kattappana police on Sunday exhumed the skeletal remains of one of the victims, a 57-year-old man, a senior officer said.

While a DNA examination is awaited, police suspect that the skeletal remains belong to NM Vijayan, the father of one of the suspects in the robbery case the police was initially investigating and who had been missing since August last year.

This series of events began with the arrest of 31-year-old Nithesh, who only goes by one name, and 27-year-old Vishnu Vijayan, residents of Kakkattukada, on March 2 in connection with a robbery.

While investigating the case, police to collect evidence visited Vishnu's rented home in Kakkattukada, where they learnt that Vishnu's father had been missing. Police also learnt the about the death in 2016 of a four-day-old girl, who was born to Nithesh and Vidya, Vijayan's daughter, out of wedlock, police said.

When questioned, Nithesh confessed that he had killed Vijayan by striking him in the head with a hammer and subsequently buried the body under the house they were living in, police said. According to the first information report (FIR) filed on March 9, both Nithesh and Vijayan are accused of murdering the four-day-old child by strangulation.

"Based on Nithesh's confession, we dug a part of the house that he pointed to and found the remains of a human body about four feet deep. Inquest and post-mortem proceedings are going on. We suspect the victim to be Vijayan, but it has to be confirmed through DNA analysis. The accused has also confessed to kill-

ing a four-day-old child that he had with Vijayan's daughter. That murder took place in 2016," Vishnu Pratheep TK, superintendent of police (SP), Idukki.

The Idukki SP confirmed that two FIRs have been registered in connection with the murders of Vijayan and the four-day-old child. While Nithesh and Vijayan have been booked in the murder of the child, Nithesh, Vishnu and Vijayan's wife Suma have been charged in Vijayan's killing. They face charges under sections 302 (murder), 201 (destruction of evidence) and 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention) of the IPC. It was not immediately clear what role Vishnu and Suma played in the murder.

He declined to reveal the motive behind the murders and said that an investigation was ongoing.

According to Nithesh's statement, the child's remains have been buried under a cowshed at Vijayan's former home near Sagara junction in Kattappana, an officer investigating the case said.

Suresh KC, the president of Kanchiyar panchayat who was present at the spot when the police discovered the remains suspected to belong to Vijayan, said the body was found in a cardboard box buried around four feet deep under one of the bedrooms.

"It was in a decomposed state. The shirt and pants of the victim were also found in the pit. The bedroom floor was found to be relaid, possibly with concrete, after burying the man's body," Suresh added.

The village president alleged that Vijayan, his wife Suma, son Vishnu Vijayan and daughter Vidya began living in the rented home in Kakkattukada around nine months ago after selling their property in Kattappana town. He said that the police began the probe into the double murders after taking Nithesh and Vishnu into custody in connection with a robbery case.

{ SPORT } RACE FOR PARIS

## Punia, Dahiya fail to qualify for Olympics



**Bajrang Punia and Ravi Dahiya** – the Tokyo Games wrestling medallists – were both on Sunday eliminated from the race for the Paris Olympics qualification after losing their respective bouts in the selection trials for the national team. Punia, who was a prominent face of the protest against former WFI President Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, suffered a crushing 1-9 defeat in the men's freestyle 65kg semifinal against Rohit Kumar. This was after he barely managed to win against Ravinder (3-3 on criteria) in the opening round. Punia had trained in Russia to prepare for the trials. Ravi Dahiya, who is making a comeback from an injury, lost the high-scoring opening bout 13-14 to Aman Sehrawat. →P21

{ WORLD } 'THANK YOU FOR WISHES'

## Kate Middleton's 1st pic out since surgery



**Kate, Britain's Princess of Wales,** thanked the public on Sunday for their support in her first public message since undergoing abdominal surgery in January, posting a picture of herself with her three children. The photograph, taken by her husband Prince William, showed Kate, 42, smiling surrounded by Princes George and Louis and Princess Charlotte. "Thank you for your kind wishes and continued support over the last two months," Kate wrote on X. She spent two weeks in hospital in January after having surgery for a non-cancerous but unspecified condition. She's not been seen in public since. AGENCIES

{ MY INDIA } IMD FORECAST

## Gradual rise in temp ahead thanks to WD



**After an unusually chilly start to March,** Delhi is likely to see a gradual rise in temperature by 2-3 degrees Celsius (°C) this week, even as a western disturbance will approach the region on Wednesday, India Meteorological Department (IMD) officials said on Sunday. IMD said the western disturbance will impact Delhi and National Capital Region (NCR) on Wednesday, which will likely lead to gusty winds of 25-35 km/hour and isolated parts of the region will receive light rain. Delhi recorded a minimum temperature of 10°C on Sunday, which was four degrees below normal. →P5

{ SPORT } SECOND STRAIGHT TITLE

## Satwik, Chirag romp to French Open win



**Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty** continued their love affair with Paris, lifting the French Open badminton crown for the second time with a dominating straight game win over Chinese Taipei's Lee Jhe-Huei and Yang Po-Hsuan in the men's doubles final here on Sunday. The world No. 1 Indian pair had finished runners-up in the French Open in 2019 before winning the title in 2022. On Sunday, the Asian Games champions outwitted Lee and Yang 21-11 21-17 in 37 minutes to regain the Super 750 tournament title and also win their first crown of the season after reaching the summit clash for the third time in 2023. The two finished runners-up at the Malaysia Super 1000, India Super 750 this year. →P24

{ NATURE'S FURY } SEVERAL MISSING

## Floods, landslides cause mayhem in Indonesia

Torrential rains over the weekend triggered flash floods and landslides on Indonesia's Sumatra island, killing dozens and leaving several others missing. A look at the mayhem caused.



{ PRESIDENT'S RULE IN STATES } 30 YEARS OF SR BOMMAI JUDGMENT

# How an SC judgment checked the misuse of Article 356

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**W**hile the national Emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi is etched in collective Indian memory, the more frequently imposed state emergency provision, Article 356, is now rarely used. We must thank the Supreme Court judges who decided SR Bommai v Union of India 30 years ago today for this change.

Article 356, also known as President's Rule, is designed to be invoked when a state cannot function constitutionally. It grants the Union cabinet power to dismiss democratically elected state governments and dissolve legislative assemblies. While the constitutional framers intended Article 356 to be used sparingly, its misuse by various Union governments to topple Opposition-led state governments has been rampant. On March 11, 1994, nine Supreme Court judges, hailing from eight states, took a stand against this abuse of power. Without augmenting their authority, they put crucial limits on the Union government's discretionary power, strengthening democracy and federalism.

**What led to this case?**  
It started with the events on April 21, 1989. As the world watched 100,000 students march across Tiananmen Square in China, in Bengaluru, then Karnataka chief minister SR Bommai was fighting political upheaval; Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had dismissed Bommai's Janata Party-led government and dissolved the legislature after 19 MLAs withdrew support. By the time President R Venkataraman issued the order for President's Rule, seven lawmakers had rejoined Bommai, who again claimed a majority. Governor P Venkatasubbiah never gave Bommai the chance to prove his majority, and the Karnataka high court rejected Bommai's petition challenging President's Rule.

His government's fate reflected a broader pattern of Union governments missing Article 356. In

1988 the Sarkaria Commission found that at least a third of all Article 356 impositions were politically motivated.

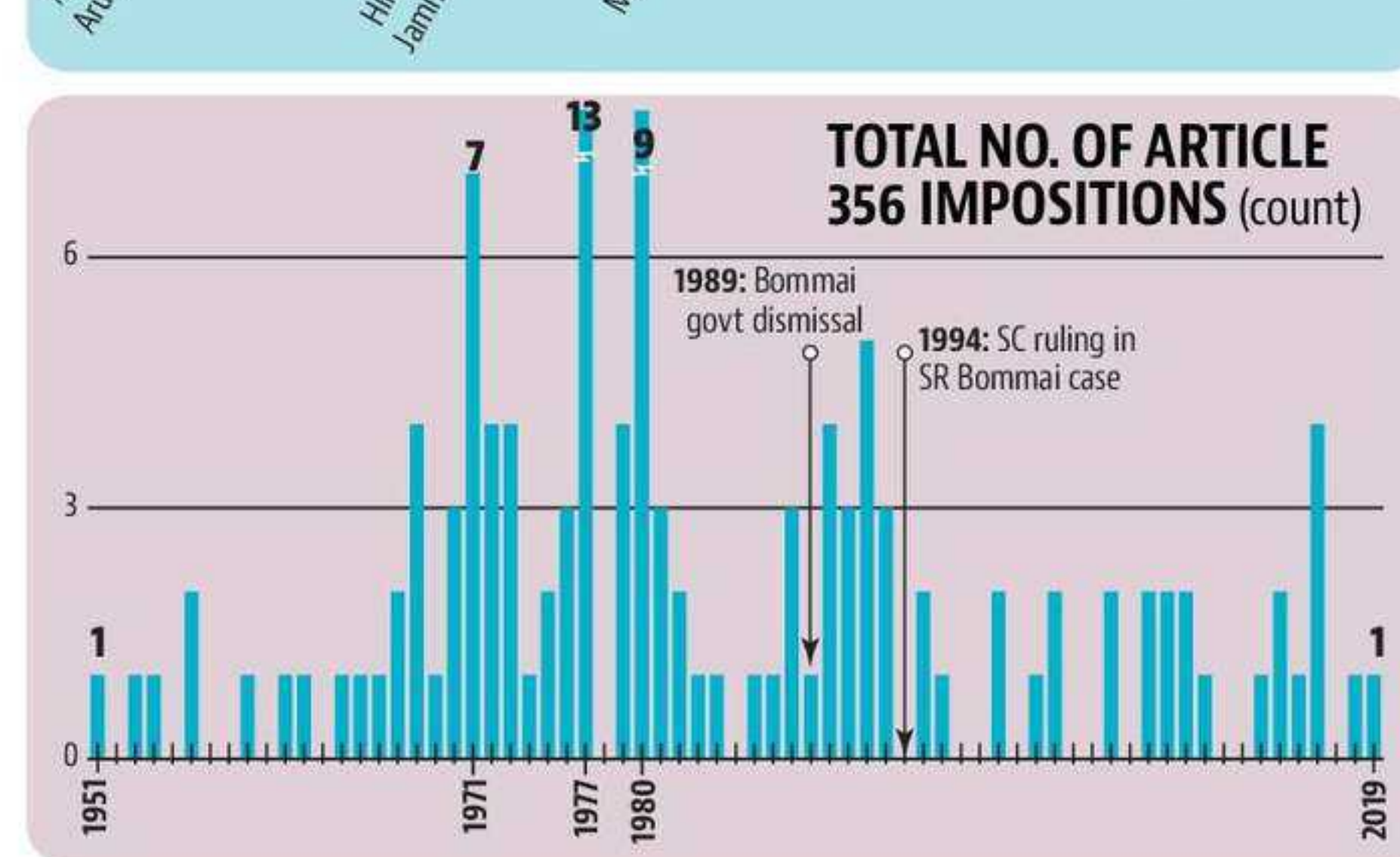
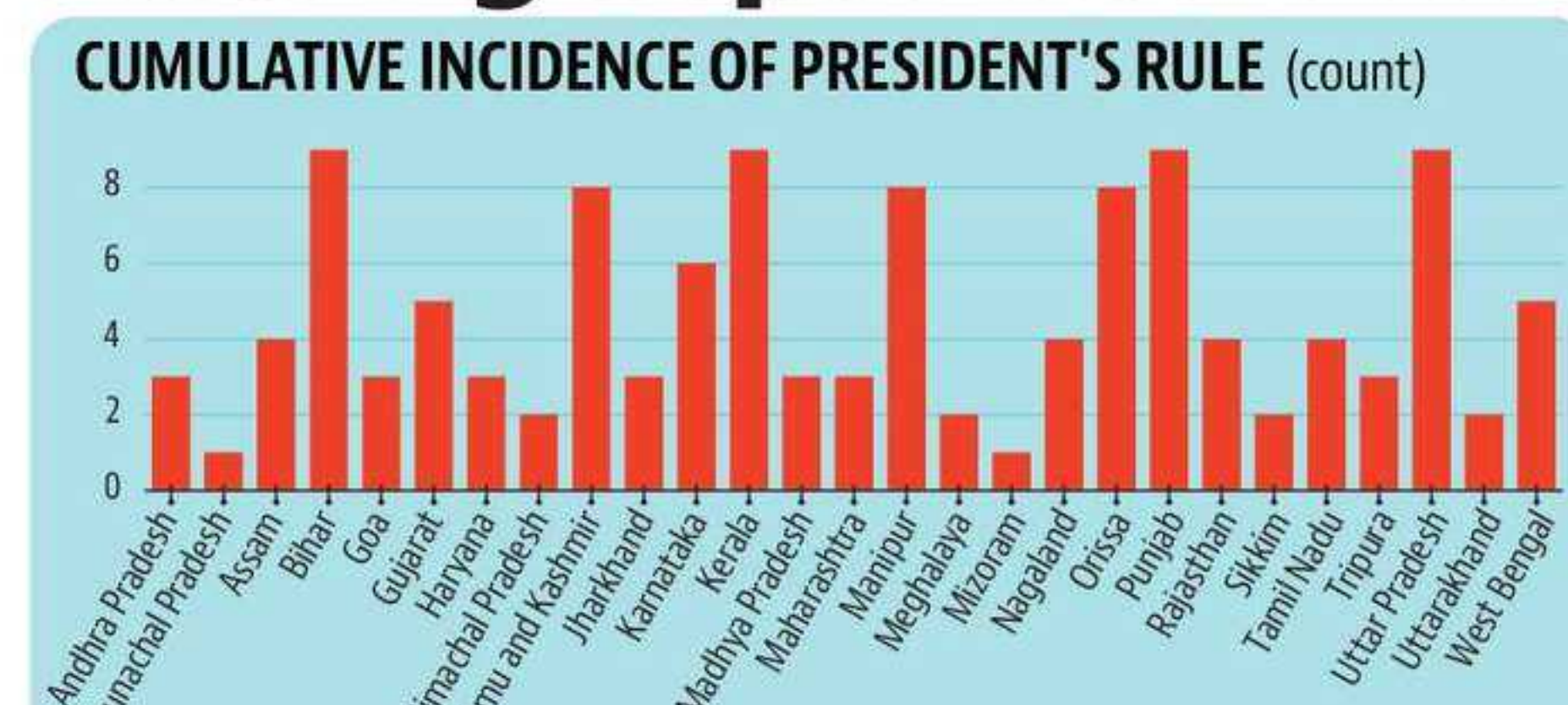
The reason was simple: Once dismissed, it was much harder for that government or party to get re-elected. Our study titled "President's Rule in India: State Emergency or Political Capture?" finds that of the 123 instances of President's Rule in states (1952-2019), the dismissed chief minister continued only in 24 cases, and the dismissed party formed the government again in only 44 instances. The then-dominant Congress represents 29 of these 44 instances.

As Bommai approached the Supreme Court, there were other cases of President's Rule with varying circumstances. In 1987, Congress won and formed the government in Nagaland, but a 1988 split in the party and the wrongful confinement of 13 MLAs prompted the Union government to impose President's Rule. In 1991, in Meghalaya, the speaker challenged the government and disqualified five MLAs for defection, and then called the confidence motion a tie, triggering President's Rule. The Babri Masjid demolition in 1992 sparked violence, followed by the government's resignation and President's Rule in Uttar Pradesh, which was never challenged. However, soon after, BJP governments in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh also faced President's Rule for alleged support of communal groups and a breakdown in law and order. All three states challenged President's Rule as politically biased. Petitions challenging the imposition of President's Rule in all five states (except Uttar Pradesh) were reviewed along with SR Bommai's petition.

**Why did the Constitution have such a provision?**

Writing during the Partition, the Constitution framers feared secession, violent ethnic conflict, and communist revolutions in certain states. They decided that the power to intervene during a breakdown of law and order, or constitutional governance, would lie with the Union government rather than the state chief minister. However, they were also aware of its

## Tracking imposition of President's Rule



potential for abuse. BR Ambedkar explained, "I do not altogether deny that there is a possibility of these articles being abused or employed for political purposes... and I share the sentiments that such articles will never be called into operation and that they would remain a dead letter."

Far from it. All but two states (Chhattisgarh and Telangana) have been under President's Rule, 123 times, not including 19 impositions in Union territories. The governments in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir, Odisha, Manipur, and Kerala have been dismissed most frequently.

In terms of duration, Punjab and the erstwhile state of Jammu & Kashmir have borne the brunt. Typically, President's Rule is valid for two months unless Parliament extends it for up to six months. Extensions beyond a year are only permitted in a national security emergency or if the Election Commission certifies that holding assembly elections is difficult. Even then, the limit for President's

Rule is three years, but through a constitutional amendment, an exception was made for Punjab, whose residents experienced Union rule, cumulatively, for almost a decade.

**When should Article 356 be used?**

The formal procedure to invoke Article 356 begins when the governor sends a report to the Union cabinet explaining why the state government cannot function according to the Constitution. If the cabinet concurs with the governor's report and recommends that the President invoke Article 356, then the President has discretionary power. However, the Constitution is silent on what constitutes a failure of constitutional machinery or a constitutional emergency, making the provision vulnerable to misuse.

In practice, the governor is appointed by the Union cabinet, and over time, the governor's office becomes partisan. Consequently, taking time to form a co-

alition is sometimes opportunistically interpreted as political instability.

Article 356 can be invoked in three broad ways — one, in line with the goal spelled out in the Constitution to deal with a genuine constitutional emergency, two, using an emergency as a pretext to increase the power of the Union government, and three, to increase the power of the Union government and reduce the power of the state government without any emergency occurring.

The frequent misuse of Article 356 started with Indira Gandhi, who imposed it 48 times, including four times during the 22-month national Emergency. In 1977, when Morarji Desai formed a coalition government, he imposed President's Rule 13 times, including in nine Congress-governed states. The Janata government would impose President's Rule four more times in 1979 under Charan Singh. When Indira Gandhi returned as PM in 1980, her government retaliated and

imposed President's Rule in nine states with Opposition party governments.

Were the tactics of Indira Gandhi and the Janata Party exceptional? In our study, we analysed the legislative data of every Union and state government between 1952 and 2019. We find that the primary driver for imposing President's Rule is political arithmetic. Given a Union government in power at the Centre, a five-percentage-point smaller seat share of a state government is associated with a 10% higher probability of President's Rule.

Unsurprisingly, coalition governments in states are about three times more likely to experience President's Rule than state governments formed by a single party. The number of times a party has formed a government in the state in the past, i.e., more experienced governments, is correlated with a lower likelihood of President's Rule. The Union government is more likely to take advantage when there is a political vacuum in

a state; for instance, the death of a CM in office increases the likelihood of President's Rule by 37 times. Finally, emergencies such as communal riots or natural disasters are not significant predictors of President's Rule, and emergencies are not even ostensible triggers. It's pure politics — the strength of the state's political majority determines the likelihood of President's Rule.

**The SR Bommai judgment**

In Bommai, the Supreme Court faced three primary questions: One, whether proclamations of President's Rule were justiciable; two, the scope and limits of the President's powers under Article 356; and three, the effects of holding such a proclamation invalid after Parliament's approval.

The majority of the bench, across six opinions, overruled the 1977 decision in State of Rajasthan v Union of India, and held that proclamations under Article 356 were subject to judicial review. The courts could strike down an Article 356 proclamation if found to be mala fide or based on wholly irrelevant grounds. When reviewing the proclamation, the court would examine if it was issued based on any material, if such material was relevant, even if partially, to impose President's Rule.

Furthermore, it said that the President must have relevant material, such as a governor's report, before imposing President's Rule. Despite Article 74(2) prohibiting review of ministerial advice, courts can verify the existence and relevance of the underlying material for such advice without reviewing the quality of the advice. And if the proclamation is held unconstitutional, the court can restore the dissolved government, even if Parliament had previously approved such a proclamation. The review would have no meaning without granting relief upon finding President's Rule unconstitutional.

One relevant question was whether the state government had the chance to test its strength in the state legislature before President's Rule was imposed. A majority declared the imposition of President's Rule in Karnataka, Nagaland and Meghalaya unconstitutional. But the imposition of President's Rule in Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Mad-

hya Pradesh, to control communal violence, was upheld.

**Did it have an impact?**  
President's Rule was invoked 81 times pre-Bommai, 16 times during review, and 26 times post-Bommai. In our study, we calculated simple probabilities of observing President's Rule of 0.9%, 1.2%, and 0.3% before, during, and after the judgment.

We found that post-Bommai, destabilising state governments with strong political mandates became harder. Crucially, coalition governments are not more likely to face President's Rule, likely due to the floor test requirement, allowing them to demonstrate political strength. Now, situations where parties are unable to form a government or the government has collapsed can be separated from skirmishes involving defecting MLAs.

The Bommai judgment did not eliminate Article 356's opportunistic potential. Small or precarious majorities in state governments remain vulnerable to partisan applications of this rule. Furthermore, the Union government has demonstrated its ability to bypass Article 356, as seen in Jammu & Kashmir since 2019. President's Rule, imposed in 2018 when Mehbooba Mufti's coalition government fell, was lifted in 2019 after Jammu & Kashmir became a Union Territory. Yet even after four years, no legislative assembly elections have been held in Jammu & Kashmir, which is still governed by a lieutenant governor who reports to the Union home ministry.

The significance of Bommai lies in its success in curbing the Union government's arbitrary actions. It made Article 356 proclamations justiciable without undermining the President's discretionary powers, thus strengthening India's federalism without diminishing its separation of powers.

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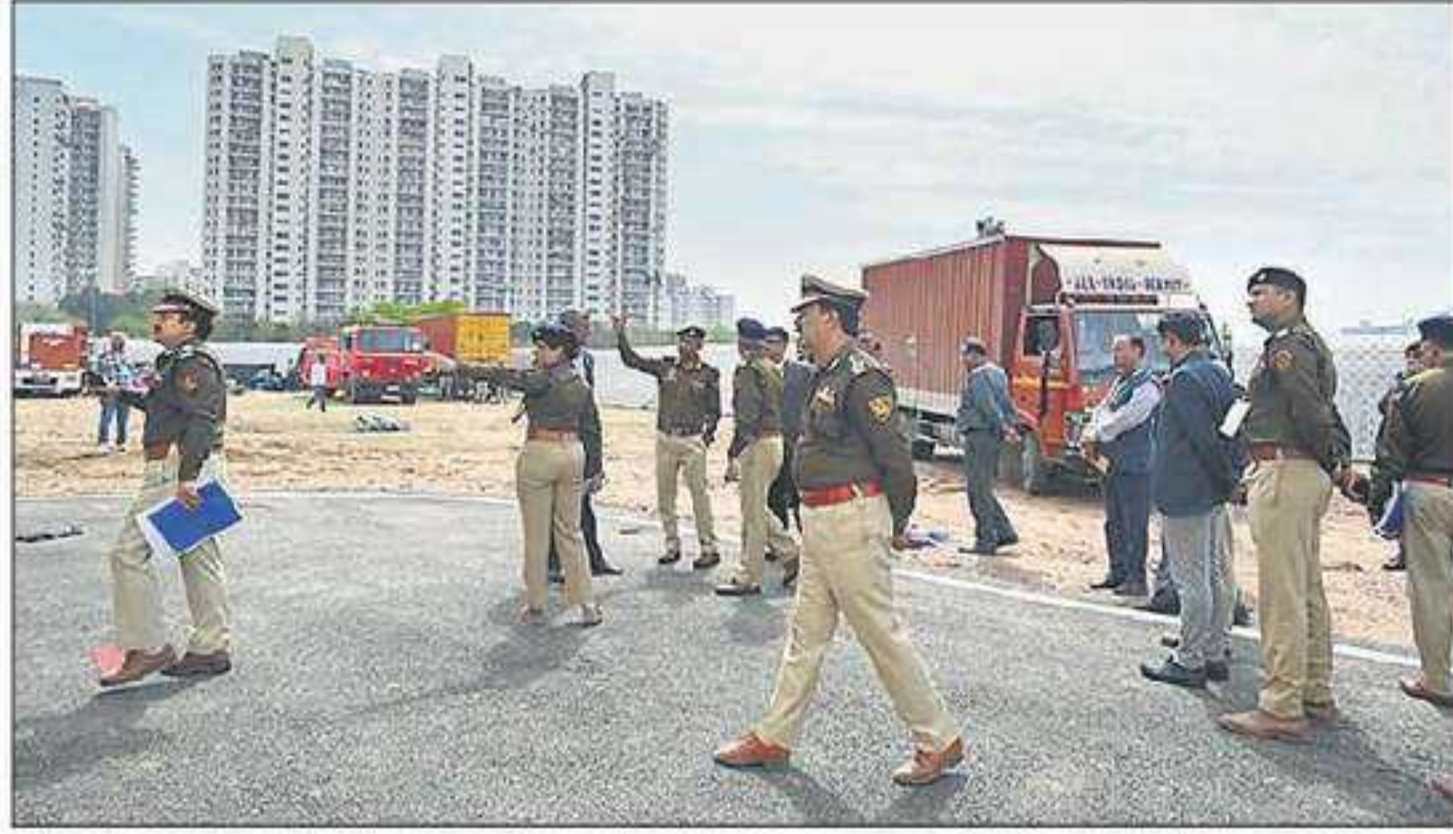


# MY DELHI

## PM to inaugurate Dwarka e-way today, all arrangements in place

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**GURUGRAM:** The 19km Gurugram section of the Dwarka expressway is scheduled to be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday afternoon, along with a range of highway projects across the country at an estimated total cost of around ₹1 lakh crore.



Haryana DGP Shatrueet Kapoor reviews security arrangements in Gurugram Sector 84 ahead of Modi's visit. PARVEEN KUMAR/HT

The section of the expressway to be inaugurated on Monday — from the Haryana border near Bajghera to the Kherki Daula cloverleaf — has been built at a cost of ₹4,100 crore. The total length of the expressway is 29km, with a 10km segment in Delhi still undergoing construction.

Union minister and Gurugram MP Rao Inderjit Singh, who visited the venue on Sunday, said that adequate arrangements have been made for the public. "The opening of the expressway was long awaited and it will reduce congestion and pollution in the

city. We expect a large gathering in the public meeting on Monday," he said.

The expressway is being constructed in four packages. The 5.8km-long package 1 connects Shiv Murti in Mahipalpur on NH 48 to Bijwasan. The 4.2km-long package 2 connects Bijwasan to Delhi-Haryana border in Gurugram. The 10.2km-long package 3

of the eight-lane access control expressway connects Delhi-Haryana border to Basai in Haryana while the 8.7km-long package 4 connects Basai to the Kherki Daula cloverleaf interchange on NH 248BB.

According to NHAI, Modi will inaugurate packages 3 and 4. While work on the Gurugram section started in December 2018,

work in Delhi commenced in December 2020. The Delhi section comprises packages 1 and 2, which is around 85% complete, NHAI said.

Preparations for the visit of the PM were on in full swing with Gurugram MP Singh, Haryana chief secretary Sanjeev Kaushal, and director general of police Shatrueet Kapoor visiting the venue at Sector 82 adjacent to Dwarka expressway.

Gurugram deputy commissioner Nishant Yadav said that they have created 36 segments at the venue to accommodate visitors for the inaugural ceremony.

Apart from the Dwarka expressway, Modi will inaugurate and launch 111 other projects. Yadav also said that Modi will hold a road show, which will start from Mahipalpur and enter Gurugram at Bajghera, after which he will reach Basai village on the Dwarka expressway. He will also inspect the road on foot near the Central Peripheral Road.

## Traffic advisory for Delhi, Gm issued

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**NEW DELHI:** The traffic police of Delhi and Gurugram have issued advisories for Monday afternoon, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to inaugurate the Gurugram leg of the Dwarka expressway and hold a roadshow in Delhi.

The Delhi Traffic Police on Sunday said that in view of the event, traffic movement will be regulated and diverted from 8am to 2 pm. The traffic police has advised the commuters to avoid Dhulsiras Chowk, Sector 8-9 crossing, Carmel Chowk Sector 20, Janki Chowk near Sector 23 police station, Pochanpur flyover Sector 23, Dwarka Sector 21

Metro station, Golf Course Road to Dhulsiras Chowk, Bamnoli, Bharthal Chowk to Dhulsiras Chowk and Chhawla Road.

"The commuters going to railway stations, hospitals and ISBTs should leave with sufficient time on their hand so as to accommodate possible delays," it added.

The Gurugram traffic police on Sunday asked commuters and vehicular traffic to avoid heading towards the Dwarka expressway using the Kherki Daula cloverleaf, as it could see heavy traffic due to Modi's public meeting in Sector 82. Virender Vij, DCP, traffic, said that people should use this road sparingly as it could see restrictions on movement during the day.

**Independent House**  
Hauz Khas Enclave main road park facing 385 sqyds plot having basement, stilt, first & second floor with roof, available for rent to embassies, corporates etc.  
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**11<sup>th</sup> March 2024 | Yashobhoomi, Dwarka, New Delhi | 04:00 PM**



# Man found in W Delhi borewell, pulled out dead

**Hemani Bhandari**  
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**NEW DELHI:** A man was found dead at the bottom of an abandoned 40-foot deep borewell inside a locked room at a Delhi Jal Board (DJB) water treatment plant at Keshopur in west Delhi in the early hours of Sunday, police officers aware of the matter said, adding that the body was pulled out after a nearly 14-hour-long operation.

Police were yet to ascertain the identity of the man, who they assume was aged between 25 or 30. It was also not immediately clear why or how he entered the water treatment plant or the locked room, officers said, adding that the sequence of events leading to the man being discovered in the borewell will be ascertained once his identity is established.

A senior police officer said that investigators are also probing whether the man entered the plant to steal parts. "He may have broken into the room to steal something and then accidentally fell in. But he may also have been pushed inside by someone," the

officer said, on condition of anonymity.

A Delhi government official said the borewell is inside a locked room.

"So, whoever entered the room would have had to break the lock. There is also a possibility of foul play, because it's not easy for an adult to fall inside a 12-inch wide borewell," he said.

Deputy commissioner of police (west) Vichitra Veer said that the police control room received a call around 1am about a person falling inside a borewell in Keshopur, following which, police teams were rushed to the spot. "The fire brigade and NDRF teams also arrived, and began rescue operations at around 1.30am," the DCP said.

According to Veer, the call to the police was made by a DJB field assistant, who was informed that somebody had entered the plant. He went in to investigate and saw the deceased man at the bottom of the borewell.

Delhi Fire Services (DFS) director Atul Garg said that five fire tenders were pressed into service. "The initial informa-



**NDRF personnel take part in the rescue operation at DJB's sewage treatment plant in Keshopur on Sunday.** SANCHIT KHANNA/HT

tion was that a child had fallen into the borewell. It was only later established that it was an older person," he said.

Another fire official, on condition of anonymity, said that the man was not shouting for help.

"We were not informed whether he was alive or dead but he wasn't shouting for help.

We first tried to pull him out by throwing a rope inside, thinking that the person might hold it and we'll pull him out, but he didn't hold it. It was later established that the man was not responding," the official said.

Subsequently, NDRF personnel arrived at the spot at around 4.30am. NDRF inspector general Nar-

endra Bundela said, "The team created a loop using an iron sheet and tied it with a smaller rope to fit the hands of the man. They then pushed it down using a white rope, and kept an eye on the progress using live visuals. Eventually, the team was able to loop the rope around the man's hands and pulled him up."

At 2.52pm, after the man was pulled out, he was rushed to Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital, where he was declared dead on arrival.

As word spread of the incident, multiple people living in the neighbourhood reached the spot, fearing that the person trapped may be a member of their family.

Pushpa Devi, aged 75, said the man could be her grandson, who was allegedly missing since Friday. Another woman, who said that she was 65 years old but did not share her name, came with a photograph of her 30-year-old son who she said was missing for the past three months.

The body has been preserved for an autopsy, police said. "All efforts are being made to identify the man," DCP Veer added.

**HT Correspondent**

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**NEW DELHI:** Hours after a man's body was pulled out from an abandoned Delhi Jal Board (DJB) borewell in Keshopur in west Delhi, the Delhi government on Sunday ordered chief secretary Naresh Kumar and the water utility to seal all public and private borewells that are not in use within 48 hours, and demanded a time-bound inquiry into the incident.

According to police, the body of the man, who is yet to be identified, was pulled out after a 14-hour operation led by the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), along with the police and fire brigade.

Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, in a post on X in Hindi, said, "Water minister Atishi took stock of the situation. It was found that the borewell was inside a room locked with a lock

and key. Delhi Police is investigating the entire incident. DJB has also been ordered to investigate. Strictest action will be taken against the responsible officers. And within 48 hours all abandoned government and private borewells will be sealed on war footing."

Atishi said the borewell was inside a locked room. "Prima facie, it seems that an attempt was made to enter by forcefully breaking the lock. Police will investigate it. To ensure that such cases do not come up again, strict orders have been given to the jal board that all private and government borewells lying closed in Delhi should be sealed by welding within 48 hours, and a report should be submitted to me."

She also issued an order to the chief secretary and DJB CEO, which states that a "deeply unfortunate incident" took place in Keshopur. "While the

borewell was on land which had been handed over to Delhi Metro in 2020, nonetheless it is our responsibility to examine if any lapses have taken place on the part of DJB and to ensure that no such incident takes place in future," the order said.

"The chief secretary is directed to conduct a time bound inquiry into the incident and take strong and exemplary action against any officer found responsible," the order underwritten by the minister added.

However, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) blamed DJB for the incident, accusing it of negligence.

"On February 28, another person died due to a fall in a ditch at Alipur, which had been left open by the DJB. The government should announce a ₹1 crore compensation due to these deaths," Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said.

## LG: Outer Ring Road to be beautified with sculptures

**HT Correspondent**

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**NEW DELHI:** Lieutenant governor VK Saxena on Sunday announced that the stretch of the Outer Ring Road between the Kashmere Gate interstate bus terminus (ISBT) and the Chandgi Ram Akhara will be spruced up with sculptures and fountains, adding that the work is a continuation of the beautification drive taken up before the G20 Summit last year.

Last year, the New Delhi Municipal Council had initiated the installation of new sculptures on its major roundabouts and arterial roads to improve the aesthetics of public spaces in run-up to the G20 Summit. Subsequently, Saxena in September had announced that the project will continue in other parts of the city after the completion of the summit.

On Sunday, Saxena posted on X a series of pictures of new installations being added on the major arterial road, writing, "The work of making Delhi visible to local residents and visitors is going on. Many beautiful



**the work is a continuation of the beautification drive taken up before the G20 Summit last year** LG VK SAXENA-X

artworks and fountains are being installed from ISBT to Chandgi Ram Akhara... this work will be completed soon."

He added that during the G20 Summit, he had expressed his "commitment towards the development and beautification of the 'common people's Delhi' outside New Delhi. With your support we will soon achieve this goal."

Saxena had inspected the stretch in April last year, and

subsequently the LG secretariat had said that the 10-km stretch between Metcalfe House and Purana Qila on Ring Road will undergo an aesthetic transformation.

Similar redevelopment and beautification works are in the pipeline for the Ram Manohar Lohia roundabout and the Sardar Patel Marg-Panchsheel Marg intersection in central Delhi, officials aware of the matter said.

## Saibaba defence panel calls for his reinstatement as DU prof

**HT Correspondent**

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**NEW DELHI:** A day before the Supreme Court is set to hear the Maharashtra government's appeal against the acquittal of former Delhi University professor GN Saibaba, the defence committee for his release has asked the top court to reject the plea, according to documents seen by HT.

The committee has also issued a comprehensive set of demands urging the Supreme Court to reject the appeal. Additionally, the committee also called for Saibaba's reinstatement to his position at Delhi University, with retrospective benefits and compensations. They also demand compensation for Saibaba, Hem Mishra, Prashant Rahi, Mahesh Tirki, Vijay Tirki, and the family



**GN Saibaba**

of the late Pandu Narote.

Saibaba was arrested in 2014 and subsequently convicted under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) for alleged links with Maoists. Despite being discharged and ordered for immediate release by the Bombay high court in October 2022, the Supreme Court suspended the order, extending his detention. In April 2023, the case

went to another bench of the Bombay high court and he was acquitted and released on 7 March. Reflecting on the judicial process at a press conference on Friday, Saibaba said: "There was no relief even after a court discharged me. It was like agni pariksha (trial by fire)."

The committee welcomed the Bombay high court judgment acquitting Saibaba and five others, saying, "The fact that the high court found them innocent of all charges is of great legal and political significance," adding that the court's decision "sends a strong message of hope."

Bombay high court's Nagpur bench on Tuesday emphasised that merely accessing content related to communist or Maoist ideologies was not inherently illegal unless there was concrete evidence to specific acts of violence.

# Modi launches expanded T1 at IGI, capacity now at 40mn

**Jasjeev Gandhiok**

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**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated 15 new airport projects across the country virtually on Sunday, which included the new and expanded Terminal 1 (T1) of Delhi's Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport.

The terminal is now expected to undergo a series of trials before being fully operational in May, officials aware of the matter said. Presently, only a portion of T1 is operational, as it has been during the construction which began in 2019.

T1 will continue its domestic operations once fully operational but the shifting of airlines to the new terminal is yet to be decided, the Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) said.

The operational capacity at the expanded T1 has more than doubled — from the existing 17 million passengers per annum (PPA) to around 40 million PPA — also taking the overall capacity of the IGI airport to over 100 million PPA. The new T1 has brought both arrivals (TIC previously) and departures (TID) under one roof, which has more than tripled its total.

The total area of the previous T1 was 55,740sqm, which has been increased to 206,950sqm. The terminal was sliced into two parts with a 19-metre-high facade of puff panel. This facade shielded the operating part of T1 from dust, smoke, and rain during the construction.

"Terminal 1 enhances capacity and redefines the passenger experience while embracing sustainability. The expanded integrated terminal will serve 40 million passengers annually, double its previous capacity. Through this project, we have reimagined a seamless journey facilitated by facial recognition, self-service kiosks, and automated baggage systems. Spacious concourses bathed in natural light, offering a haven of comfort with prayer rooms, yoga areas, and quiet zones are its integral part," said I Prabhakara Rao, group deputy managing

## What's new at Terminal 1

The terminal will now undergo a series of trials before it is made fully operational in May

Facilities	Earlier	Post-expansion
Terminal capacity	17 million passengers per annum	40 million passengers per annum
Total area (departure + arrival)	55,740sqm	206,950sqm

### Other features

- 24 entry points
- Facial Recognition System (DigiYatra) at all entry gates
- 20 Automated Tray Retrieval System
- 108 Common Usage Self Service
- 100 check-in counters including 36 self-baggage drop kiosks
- Multiple F&B and retail outlets, prayer room, yoga area, quiet zone, lounges, charging stations, self-medication room, baby care rooms, and smart washrooms



**Some features of the newly expanded terminal.** Arvind Yadav/HT

director, GMR Group. DIAL is a GMR-led consortium that manages the airport.

Union civil aviation minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said that the new aviation projects have added a new chapter to passenger convenience. In a post on X, Scindia said: "These aviation projects worth ₹9,811 crore will not only connect people and countries but will also develop every corner of the country."

The other projects launched by Modi during an event at Uttar Pradesh's Azamgarh include 11 new terminal buildings of Pune, Kolhapur, Gwalior, Jabalpur, Lucknow, Aligarh, Azamgarh, Chitrakoot, Moradabad, Shrivasthi and Adampur Airports, along with laying of the foundation stone for new terminal buildings of Kadapa, Hubballi

and Belagavi airports. These terminal buildings also have state-of-the-art passenger amenities and are equipped with various sustainability features like double insulated roofing system, provision of canopies for energy saving, LED Lighting, etc.

Sharing details about the new T1, DIAL said passenger facilities were at the forefront of their revamp, which will include facial recognition systems or DigiYatra at all entry points. There will be a total of 24 entry points to the terminal in total.

"There will be 20 Automated Tray Retrieval System (ATRS), Individual Carrier System (ICS), 108 Common Usage Self Service (CUSS), 100 check-in counters including 36 Self Baggage Drop (SBD) kiosks, among others. The seamless journey is comple-

mented by a myriad of offerings, including expanded baggage reclaim carousels, multiple entry gates, and shop and dine facilities," said a DIAL spokesperson, adding that to board the aircraft, T1 also has a smart-apron with 22 contact stands.

The new T1 also has 10 baggage reclaim carousels — each 70 metres long. Earlier, there were eight baggage reclaim carousels, each being 52-metre belts. DIAL said with ample space between two baggage belts, the waiting time should be reduced for passengers.

"The capacity of the Baggage handling system at T1 has also doubled from 3,240 baggage per hour to around 6,000 per hour. The number of check-in islands has also been increased to five against four earlier. These would

help in the easy flow of passengers," the spokesperson added.

The terminal will be connected with the Delhi Metro at both arrivals and departures via the Magenta Line.

DIAL CEO Videsh Kumar Jai-puriar said with the multiplicity of agencies involved, final tests and trials have to be carried out before the new terminal can be operational. "Agencies and personnel have to get used to the new building and the facilities. We expect this to become operational by May. This will continue to run domestic flights, as earlier," he said.

With this expansion, T1 has a capacity of 40 million passengers per annum (MPPA). Terminal 3 (T3) is around 45 MPPA and Terminal 2 (T2) can handle around 15-17 MPPA.

## 24-YEAR-OLD SHOT DEAD, ACCOMPLICE INJURED IN GANG WAR IN NE DELHI

**HT Correspondent**

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**NEW DELHI:** A 24-year-old man was shot dead by unidentified assailants and a 22-year-old man was severely injured in a suspected incident of gang war in northeast Delhi's Seelampur late Saturday night, police officers aware of the matter said on Sunday. The deceased was identified as Arbaaz Khan, and the injured man as Md Abid Khan was a member of the Chennu gang, said deputy commissioner of police (northeast) Joy N Tirkey.

The incident occurred when Khan and Abid were walking home to Jafraabad. A senior police officer said, "We believe the assailants were from the rival Hashim Baba gang. They waylaid the two near a public toilet and fired more than 10-12 bullets. Khan was shot in the head and chest and died on the spot. Abid was shot in the head and waist and was severely injured." HTc

# Take action on drain impacting Delhi's water, NGT tells Hry

**HT Correspondent**

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**NEW DELHI:** The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has given authorities in Haryana 12 months to complete long-term remedial measures concerning drain numbers six and eight — falling in Sonapat — stating sewage and effluents from the former were entering into the latter and eventually impacting Delhi's water supply.

Observing that the quality of raw water entering the Yamuna from drain number eight — being used for drinking water supply purposes — needs to be maintained, the bench has asked the Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB) to oversee compliance and has sought a progress report before September 15, 2024.

HT had reported on March 7 that the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) submitted a report to the tribu-

nal, blaming the improper maintenance of drain number six behind repeated closures of its water treatment plants. It said that drain number six — a drain in the true sense of the word — was littered with garbage, silt, effluents and sludge, while drain number eight was a relatively clean stormwater drain, bringing water that is eventually used for drinking purposes in Delhi, post-treatment.

The submission said drain number six was found to be regularly overflowing and leaching into drain eight, which in turn causes problems in water treatment in Delhi due to high pollutants in the water.

It had said this was particularly affecting the production of water at Wazirabad and Chandrawal — plants that supply potable water to important areas in the Capital, including houses of the President, Prime Minister, Supreme Court, high court and



**Drain six was found to be overflowing into drain eight.** HT

the NDMC among others, adding that despite repeated letters sent to the Haryana authorities, there has been no improvement in the condition of drain number six. High pollutants, particularly ammonia, lead to a temporary closure of water treatment

plants in Delhi.

"There have been no visible improvements in the physical condition of diversion drain number 6 to prevent sewage from mixing with drain number 8. However, regular follow-ups are being conducted with offi-



**File of parallel drains: DJB says Haryana channel impacting Delhi's water supply**

**MARCH 7:** HT reported that DJB, in a submission to NGT, said drain number 6 is choked with garbage, effluents and sludge

cial from the Haryana Irrigation department (HID) and Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB) to ensure necessary action is taken," said DJB's submission, stating that it and HSPCB are conducting joint sampling on a regular basis upstream in the Yamuna.

Observing that HSPCB too submitted a report on March 5, NGT in its order dated March 6, said Haryana has admitted to a problem on their end, with action being initiated. This included repairing an inverted

siphon on drain number six, to prevent mixing into drain number eight and dredging or desilting being done for both drains.

"The Irrigation and Water Resource Department (Haryana) has also proposed conversion of drain number six into a closed conduit pipeline in the bed of diversion drain number eight... This will prevent the intermixing of wastewater from drain number six with raw water from drain number eight. The tender for the same has been opened on 02.03.2023 and financial bids are in the process of approval..." said the submission made by HSPCB.

Noting that it was important to maintain the water quality standards of the raw water reaching Wazirabad, the green court said that long term measures, including the need to construct a long circuit, needed to be done within 12 months from the date of issue of the order.

"We directed respondents to continue to maintain the two drains regularly so that there may not be any occasion of diversion of sewage from one drain to another which may cause pollution. HSPCB shall continue to monitor... and ensure that there should not be any cause of pollution on account of any negligence in maintenance of the drains... from common effluent treatment plants," NGT said in the order.

"HSPCB shall submit a compliance or progress report with registrar general of tribunal of next six months, by September 15, 2024," the tribunal added.

**READ:** DJB says Haryana channel impacting Delhi's water supply



# Delhi WTC to soon be ready for business

Soumya Chatterjee  
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**NEW DELHI:** Over the last few weeks, metallic sheets that shielded a massive construction site at Nauroji Nagar in south Delhi for close to three years have begun to be gradually removed, slowly revealing a first glimpse of the national capital's first World Trade Centre (WTC)—the sparkling glass façade of 12 newly built 10-storey towers.

The site, which is spread across 25 acres of land, have replaced 600-odd residential quarters that housed government employees for close to five decades—one of seven general purpose residential accommodation (GPRA) colonies in the city, along with Sarojini Nagar, Nauroji Nagar, Kasturba Nagar, Netaji Nagar, Srinivasपुरi, Moham-madpur, and Thyagraj Nagar, which has been redeveloped.

The project, licenced by New York's World Trade Centre Association (WTCA), has 3.4 million sq ft in commercial area, and selling space here raises much of the funds required for redeveloping the seven GPRA colonies.

The cost for ₹32,835 crore for the seven GPRA, while the WTC project cost an estimated ₹2,694 crore, officials said.

"As of now, four of the 12 buildings are ready to be occupied. Two Central departments have already started functioning from the complex," an official from NBCC—a public sector undertaking under the Union ministry of housing and urban affairs—said on condition of anonymity.

Senior NBCC officials said the target is to complete the construction of the WTC and the sale of commercial space by the end of the current financial year, with 80% of the space already sold, with some of the successful bidders including HDFC, GAIL, Petronet LNG, and Oil India.

"WTC's accreditation has raised its marketability, and hence, we are confident of finishing the entire sale by the end of the month," the official quoted above said, adding that the proximity of the airport, Hazrat Nizamuddin railway station, Central Secretariat, Bhikaji Cama Place, and the Delhi Metro make it an attractive destination.

## What the new WTC means for Delhi-NCR

WTCA currently has member properties in more than 90



Delhi's World Trade Centre will primarily have the offices of private corporations, government departments, and public sector undertakings.



ARVIND YADAV/HT PHOTOS

countries. Mumbai was the first Indian city to have a WTC, and currently, more than 30 Indian cities have such properties, including two cities in the National Capital Region—Noida and Gurugram.

The foundation stone was laid in May 2018 after WTCA granted NBCC the licence in September 2017.

This space will primarily office private corporations, government departments, and public sector undertakings. In addition, there will be a landscaped retail and food and beverage plaza with terrace gardens, and will have a three-layer underground parking structure with a capacity for 8,000 cars.

In addition, a four-storey school building will be given to the civic body as part of social infrastructure.

Offering a large floor area for offices in the heart of south Delhi makes WTC a "notable development", said realty experts, because in the last decade, noting that many private companies seeking such office spaces have chosen Gurugram and Noida over the national capital. "The strategic location with frontage on Ring Road, with power backup, green design principles, and ample parking solutions collectively make this project an

option worth considering for businesses in search of accessible office spaces," said G Hari Babu, national president of the National Real Estate Development Council (NAREDCO).

Vibhor Jain, managing director at Cushman and Wakefield, said, "Delhi has always been a supply crunch market from a commercial office availability point of view, and this is after a long time that a large floor office is available due to this project."

He said that the location alone cannot guarantee the project's success, but a WTC with the right mix of amenities is a good destination in itself. Referring to the existing Ansal Plaza and Bhikaji Cama complex near the project, he said those properties do not have the qualities to attract top-tier clients and lack the required modern amenities like power backup, centralised parking and civic upkeep.

## How the project will affect traffic on Ring Road

WTC is located right on Ring Road, which serves as a major transportation artery connecting various traffic hotspots such as DND-Ashram, Lajpat Nagar, South Extension, Moti Bagh, Dhaura Kuan, Rajouri Garden,

and Punjabi Bagh, and is located close to two of the Capital's largest medical facilities—Safdarjung Hospital and AIIMS.

In August 2018, the Delhi high court stayed the WTC project for two years, citing environmental concerns, including apprehensions about the traffic situation in the area. The stay was finally lifted in February 2020, after the court was satisfied with no-objection certificates from the concerned departments and the compensatory afforestation promised by the government agencies.

However, experts feel that an increase in traffic volume on Ring Road is unavoidable, given the project's magnitude.

"There might be a need to increase (traffic) capacity for making U-turns below the Bhikaji Cama flyover," Sewa Ram, head of the transport and planning department at School of Planning and Architecture.

Ashok Bhattacharjee, a former director of planning at Delhi's apex traffic and transport body UTTIPEC, said the authorities should ensure there is enough pedestrian access to the WTC campus, and explore how the access to public transport such as the Metro and buses can be made easier for officegoers. In addition, MoHUA and sub-

ordinate departments, Delhi Development Authority plan to build a 14-km elevated corridor from INA market on Aurobindo Marg to the Mahipalpur underpass, which will serve as an alternative route from and to the airport. Sewa Ram said that this should address some of the traffic concerns.

## Green and safety features

The WTC project has an integrated building management system with 100% predictive maintenance of all electrical and mechanical systems. Facility operators can oversee and control all services on one screen. Access to the site and buildings will be restricted via radio-frequency-controlled smart tags for occupants, which will be used for parking, boom barriers, and lifts.

Light poles on the campus will also double as WiFi hotspots and public address systems in times of potential distress. The entire campus will have modern fire detection and response systems. In case of fire, lighting and signage for emergency exits will be automatically turn on, and 10% of the windows will open automatically for smoke extraction. There will be smoke extraction facilities in lifts and lobbies.

Solar panels on rooftops will generate 800 kilowatts of power, and lights in all areas will be sensor-activated to modify energy usage and increase intensity based on requirements. Following the GRIHA-3 energy efficiency rating, the buildings will have a combination of double cavity walls and double-insulated glass, thereby reducing the need for air conditioning.

Officials said the building will follow a zero-waste model for solid waste and water. The facility will have two in-house sewage treatment plants with a combined capacity of 1,800 kilolitres a day. "All used water will be reused for flushing, and the treated sewage will be used for horticulture," a second NBCC officer said.

The basement will have a central waste collection system, in-house compactor facilities, and anti-odour treatment. To capture rainwater, the site has 26 pits, each having a capacity of 66,000 litres.

However, some concerns remain. "The three levels of basements and edge-to-edge construction in the project means that there is no space to plant trees, and the natural water table of the area in a water-stressed city is disturbed," said Vallari Sheel, an environmentalist based in Delhi.



Visitors at Kartavya Path on Sunday.

SANJEEV VERMA/HT PHOTO

## IMD: Warmer days likely ahead, max to hit 30°C on Tuesday

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**NEW DELHI:** After an unusually chilly start to March, Delhi is likely to record a gradual rise in temperature this week, with a western disturbance likely to affect the National Capital Region (NCR) on March 13, officials aware of the matter said on Sunday.

Forecasts also showed that Delhi's maximum will cross 30°C for the first time this year on Tuesday, hovering around the same mark on Wednesday as well.

Delhi recorded a minimum temperature of 10 degrees Celsius (°C) on Sunday, which was four degrees below normal. The minimum was 10°C on Saturday too, while it was 9.6°C on Friday. Forecasts showed the minimum should rise further in the coming days, touching 12°C on both Monday and Tuesday, and hover around 13°C on Wednesday.

The maximum, meanwhile, was 28.4°C on Sunday, which was around normal for this time of the year. It was 26.9°C on Saturday.

According to India Meteorological Department (IMD) officials, the coming western disturbance will likely lead to gusty winds of 25-35 kmph, with isolated parts of NCR also receiving light rain.

"The western disturbance is expected to impact Delhi-NCR on Wednesday. This will mainly lead to gusty winds, but some places in the region may also record drizzle to light rain. Some cloudiness will return due to the

western disturbance and will lead to a further rise in the minimum temperature," said Kuldeep Srivastava, scientist at IMD. Srivastava said now that the cold northwesterly winds have stopped, the maximum is rising again.

"The maximum too dropped briefly and this was because of the cold northwesterly winds, the impact of which is now over. With mostly clear skies being prevalent during the day, we are recording ample sunshine. The maximum should only rise further till Wednesday," he added. Delhi-NCR last saw a western disturbance on March 2 and 3, which brought light rain to the region. In other parts of the northwest India, including the mountains, fresh snowfall was also recorded.

Delhi has been recording unusually low minimum temperature from March 4 onwards, during which it recorded a minimum temperature below 10°C for five consecutive days. The last time Delhi had seen such a streak of five days, when the minimum was lower than 10°C in March, was in 1990, IMD data showed.

In terms of air quality, Delhi's air remained "moderate", but deteriorated marginally in the last 24 hours. The 24-hour average air quality index (AQI) stood at 182 (moderate) at 4 pm on Sunday. It was 145 (moderate) at the same time on Saturday.


Forecasts by the Centre's Early Warning System (EWS) for Delhi showed Delhi's AQI is likely to touch "poor" by Monday, and will stay in this range till Tuesday.



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FROM PAGE 1

## TMC LIST

during a 15-minute speech as she paced across a 300-foot long makeshift ramp built through the centre of the ground.

Meanwhile, Abhishek Banerjee, who will return to contest from Diamond Harbour, said "the Modi ki guarantee" has zero warranty. Only Mamata Banerjee and the TMC keep their promises."

Former MP Mahua Moitra, who was expelled from the Lok Sabha last year in a cash-for-query case, will contest the Krishnanagar seat once again, the party said, even as it dropped sitting MP Nusrat Jahan from Basirhat, where the strife-torn Sandeshkhali village is located, choosing instead to field party MLA Haji Nurul Islam.

The TMC currently holds 22 of the state's 42 Lok Sabha segments, the BJP 17 and the Congress two. The Krishnanagar seat has been vacant since Moitra was expelled from the Lower House of Parliament on December 8 last year.

Sunil Mondal from Burdwan East, Arjun Singh from Barrackpore, Aparupa Poddar from Arambagh and popular actor Mimi Chakraborty from Jadavpur were the other four parliamentarians absent from the party's list, with people aware of the selection process, saying the party leadership wanted "more efficient MPs".

To be sure, Chakraborty asked to be kept out of the contest citing personal reasons and personally approached the chief minister a few days ago.

However, the chief minister indicated that some of the lawmakers not accommodated will find a place in the assembly polls list.

"We have fielded some candidates and dropped some people. Those who have not been nominated again will be accommodated during the assembly polls," she said.

The TMC's list comes exactly a week after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), its principal opposition in the state revealed its first list of 195 candidates for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, including 20 for West Bengal, retaining 11 of its 17 MPs.

Of the TMC's 42 candidates, 12 are women, 10 are sitting MLAs, while four are political newcomers.

The TMC's rebuff will represent the largest pre-poll setback for the INDIA bloc so far, given

that West Bengal has the third largest share of parliamentarians of any state in the country, after Uttar Pradesh (80) and Maharashtra (48).

The INDIA bloc stitched an alliance in UP, even as seat-sharing conversations for Maharashtra continue between the Congress, NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar) and Shiv Sena (UBT).

Congress leader Chowdhury said Banerjee feared Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Mamata Banerjee is worried that if she joins the INDIA Alliance, she will have to face Modi. She is worried that if the ED and CBI start visiting TMC on Modi's orders, it could pose a risk to the TMC party," said Chowdhury, who has launched barbs at the TMC, even as his party made a slew of overtures to see through a seat-sharing plan.

He also said that Banerjee's "main aim is to defeat Adhir Chowdhury at any cost, even if it means BJP winning."

Of the 42 names, Pathan's was the biggest surprise.

"Kolkata always gave me a lot of love. I am grateful to Mamata Banerjee for giving me an opportunity to serve," said the 41-year-old from Gujarat, who was part of India's 2007 T20 World Cup-winning squad.

Pathan also played for the Indian Premier League's Kolkata Knight Riders franchise between 2011 and 2017.

Indeed, the TMC has a history of fielding celebrities during the assembly polls. During the 2014 general elections, for instance, the party handed a ticket to the actor Deepak Adhikari, who won the polls from the Ghatat constituency for two straight terms. He will contest Ghatat for a third term this summer.

Sharmila Sarkar, a psychiatrist who has been fielded from the Burdwan East seat in place of two-time MP Sunil Mondal, is

among the debutants this year. "TMC approached me a few days ago with the offer. I was initially in two minds since I am a practicing psychiatrist. This is a new world to me," she said.

The oldest among the TMC nominees is 76-year-old veteran parliamentarian Saugata Roy, who will contest from the Dum Dum constituency again.

"The contest will not be difficult. It has been my home for 15 years," said Roy.

The youngest candidate is 28-year-old TMC spokesperson Debangshu Bhattacharya, who is making his debut in the elections. He has been fielded from East Midnapore district's Tamluk which is likely to be contested by former Calcutta high court judge Abhijit Gangopadhyay, who resigned from service on March 5, five months before retirement, and joined the BJP on March 7.

Prasun Banerjee, an Indian Police Service (IPS) officer who resigned from his position as inspector-general of Raiganj range last week, has been fielded from the Malda North seat, which BJP wrested in 2019.

Former Indian cricketer Kirti Azad, who left BJP and joined TMC a few years ago, has been fielded from the Burdwan-Durgapur seat in West Burdwan district that BJP's SS Ahluwalia won in 2019.

"I am not new to Bengal. I used to come here to play cricket. I am grateful to Mamata Didi," Azad said.

Opposition parties criticised the TMC for leaning on "people from other states", purportedly a reference to Pathan's candidacy.

BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari said, "The candidate list makes it clear that it has no leader of its own. The party has to borrow people from other states, other fields and even other parties such as BJP."

'RAIL ROKO' New Delhi-Amritsar, Ludhiana-Ferozepur, Ferozepur-Fazilka, Jakhhal-Ferozepur, Khemkaran-Bhagatwala, Ajmer-Amritsar, Ludhiana-Cheratta, and New Delhi-Amritsar routes. In the Ambala division, a total of nine trains were cancelled and 26 others were affected. The Shatabdi was rescheduled for the evening. Amid heavy presence of security forces, the farmers were not able to block the crucial Delhi-Ambala track at Mohra in Ambala Cantonment,

Haryana. The protest remained peaceful and no untoward incident was reported, police said.

Jagjeet Singh Dallewal, convener, SKM (non-political) said: "The response to our rail roko call has been good. Protests were held in more spots than it was announced. We have received reports that rail roko was held even in Tamil Nadu, Odisha, UP, Rajasthan, and Bihar."

The stir was led by KMM convener Sarwan Singh Pandher and Dallewal in Amritsar. Both of them said more protest-related action plans will be carried out in the coming days.

"There are reports of railway tracks being blocked by farmers in various states of the country, including Tamil Nadu (20 places), Madhya Pradesh (3), Punjab (75), Rajasthan (3) and Haryana (5). There are also reports of arrests of farmers by police in Haryana, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry," the farm leaders said in a joint press statement. "If the arrested farmers are not released, it will invite a strong reaction", the statement added.

Dallewal welcomed the support of four SKM organisations. "Though, we have ideological differences, the support of these organisations has given a boost to the fight for farmers' rights. We welcome their support, and other organisations should also join in," he said.

Commenting on his decision to join, Joginder Singh Ugrahan, president, BKU (Ekta Ugrahan), while addressing a protest at Sangrur railway station, said, "We have not joined the rail roko because of Pandher and Dallewal, we are protesting for farmers of Punjab, it is them we are answerable to. Even if Dallewal and Pandher don't want to talk to us, we will continue to protest even if we haven't given any call."

Pandher while addressing a gathering in Amritsar, said, "We are determined and will stay put for the long haul. The Union government should realise that. We will not call off our stir until our main demand — a legal guarantee on MSP — is fulfilled."

So far, Union ministers Piyush Goyal, Arjun Munda and Nityanand Rai have held four rounds of talks with leaders of the protesting farm bodies in Chandigarh, but no breakthrough has been achieved.

His iPhone's pedometer reading is galloping as fast as a bullish stock market index—1,009 steps...1,100... A morning walk is daily life's ordinary aspect. Businessman Arshad Fehmi's 6 o'clock ritual is not so ordinary. For his morning walk unfolds on his sprawling roof, which overlooks an intimate and yet sweeping view of Old Delhi's historic Jama Masjid.

"Purani Dilli is too noisy and crowded, but right now all is silence. See, the gali below is empty. The sky is also empty of pigeons. No kite-fliers either." The slender soft-spoken Arshad points out most Old Delhi wale are asleep for the moment. "Because people here go to bed very late at night." He himself is an exception—he says goodnight to wife and son by 10pm.

Indeed, at this hour, Arshad is the only one to be seen across an array of Purani Dilli roofs. He slowly turns to gaze at the Mughal-era monument, his greying hair stirring lightly in the fresh breeze. "People come from across the world to see the Jama Masjid, I see it daily."

The privilege is partly due to accident of birth—his current house stands where his late father, the eminent scholar Shokat Ali Fehmi, who founded the legendary *Din Dunia* journal in 1921, had built

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Mayank Austen Soofi



## His extraordinary morning walk

On the sense of a Walled City citizen's roof

PRIVATE CAPITAL

His iPhone's pedometer reading is galloping as fast as a bullish stock market index—1,009 steps...1,100...

A morning walk is daily life's ordinary aspect. Businessman Arshad Fehmi's 6 o'clock ritual is not so ordinary. For his morning walk unfolds on his sprawling roof, which overlooks an intimate and yet sweeping view of Old Delhi's historic Jama Masjid.

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the family's original mansion.

Observing the Walled City from this roof gives a privileged view of hundreds of roofs, but conveys no sense of the labyrinthine maze of the darkened streets underneath. These narrow streets are specially precious—for they are among the few walker-friendly places in the entire Delhi region.

Even so, Old Delhi is no place for morning walkers. No truly spacious park exists. Those early birds who do get up for their morning walk are obliged to undertake it at nearby Rajghat. Arshad himself goes occasionally to Mahatma Gandhi's garden-samadhi; it is just outside the Walled City on the banks of Yamuna. Nonetheless, he prefers his vast roof's utmost solitariness.

Here he experiences not only the panorama of his beloved Jama Masjid, but also the mystical smog-cloaked visions of the distant New Delhi landmarks — "That's the New Delhi railway station, that's Lalit hotel, that's the Hindustan Times building on KG Marg..."

Arshad continues to take turns across the roof—from south to north, north to south—in silence, seriously.

After a while, he again speaks. "Each morning when I come to the roof, I realise another day of my life is lost. But I'm still alive to see the start of one more day, and for that I feel thankful to God."



READ: For more stories by Mayank Austen Soofi, scan the QR code

## HT Homage

## In Loving Memory



I.D. Paul

02.04.1928 — 11.03.2003

Your vision, values and ideals will continue to guide us

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Alka & Vidyasagar Paul Sonia & Diwaker Paul

Management &amp; Staff of

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1E/17, Jhandewalan Extn., New Delhi-110055, Ph.: 011-41543333, email: info@klb.in

REMEMBERING  
JAYVANTH  
1969 - 2023

It is one year since you left us shattered and bereft. We remember your voice your jokes and laughter and memories of moments shared. You live in our hearts forever.

Gowri Ishwaran  
Arghanareeswaran  
Ann and John  
Mallika and Neil

You will always be a part of us, in our hearts and our prayers. We will miss you and fondly remember you.



MR. PANKAJ MALIK

Passed Away Peacefully on 08th March, 2024

PRAYER MEET  
11-03-2024 between 3:00 pm to 4:00 pmARYA SAMAJ MANDIR, GREATER KAILASH-1,  
NEW DELHI-110048

In Grief :-

MALIK FAMILY

Rajeev Malik - 9811114930

Ritik Malik - 9999653611

Our beloved



Mrs. LAKSHMI GUPTA

(Wife of Late DR.R.S GUPTA)

Departed for her heavenly abode on 09.03.2024

An elegant & graceful lady, she shall be fondly remembered by family & friends Please join us in Prayer On Tuesday 12.03.24  
4:00 - 5:00 PM Mata ka Mandir  
New Friends ColonyRitu & Prem Gupta, Sanya & Sahil  
Natalsha & Saurabh, Noor & Ayaan  
Dr Neeti & Puneet Gupta  
Neha & Nimish Bajaj  
Dr Pranav Gupta  
Rushma Bagai & GB Bagai  
Guptas & Bhallas

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In Loving Memory of  
SMT. UMA SEHGAL  
02.11.1941 - 11.03.2012

On her 12th Death Anniversary We miss each moment of your loving, caring & affectionate nature. We all love you Mom. May your soul rest in peace. Missed by: Sh. P.C. Sehgal  
(Husband), Daughters, Son-in-laws & Grandchildren

Smt. Raniji  
(Kaushalya Wattal)  
(March 11, 2011)

13 years have passed since you left us, for your heavenly abode. We remember you and miss your presence in every moment of our lives. You will always live in our memories & hearts and shall be remembered for your love, compassion and care. Deeply missed & Remembered by: Kuldeep & Nirmala, Arun & Rajni, Satish & Anilla, Shikha, Shakun, Aditya, Abhishek, Akshay and Ayush. Mobile: 9811058696, 9811054228, 9810222339



State Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology Applied Nutrition, New Tehri (SIHMCT&N)  
(Approved by All Indian Council for Technical Education, Ministry of Education, Govt. of India) Govern by Department of Tourism, Govt. of Uttarakhand

Advt.No.: 3584/SIHM-NT/2023-24

Date: 11 March, 2024

## RECRUITMENT FOR THE POST OF DIRECTOR/PRINCIPAL

As per the instruction of State Govt. of Uttarakhand, applications are invited for the post of Director/Principal for State Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology Applied Nutrition, New Tehri in the pay level-14, entry pay Rs. 144200/-with special allowances of Rs. 6750/- per month, the position shall be of contractual in nature for five years. Essential qualification experiences will be as per All Indian Council for Technical Education, Ministry of Education, Govt. of India. The duly filled application on prescribed format along with relevant documents and application should be sent by registered/speed post to Director/Principal, State Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology Applied Nutrition, 3M&3L, Moldhar, New Tehri-249001, Tehri Garhwal (Uttarakhand) so as to reach on dated 26th April, 2024 till 5:00 pm. Incomplete applications and applications received after the last date will be summarily rejected, for detail visit institute website-[www.ihmtehri.org](http://www.ihmtehri.org).  
Director/Principal

प्रयागराज मेला प्राधिकरण  
प्रयागराज  
Email id - pmamahakumbh2025@gmail.com, Office-0532-2504011, Fax-0532-2500775  
पत्र संख्या 4019 / पन्द्रह-मार्च-2025 (2023-24) दिनांक 09 मार्च, 2024  
**MAHAKUMBH MELA 2025**  
Department of Urban Development,  
Government of Uttar Pradesh  
through  
**Prayagraj Mela Pradhikaran, Prayagraj**  
invites proposals against the following RFPs for  
Tentage & Temporary structures for MahaKumbh 2025

- Request for Proposal for Empanelment of Vendors to Provide General Tentage Items for MahaKumbh 2025.
- Request for Proposal for Empanelment of Vendors to Provide Tin Structures for MahaKumbh 2025.
- Request for Proposal for Empanelment of Vendors to Provide Furniture Items for MahaKumbh 2025.
- Request for Proposal for Provision of Temporary Public Accommodation structures for MahaKumbh 2025
- Request for Proposal for Empanelment of bidder/s for hiring of tractors, trolleys, excavators for land development in Mela area for MahaKumbh 2025
- Request for Proposal for Empanelment of Vendors to Provide Hangars, Pagodas and other temporary structures for MahaKumbh 2025.

Interested bidders can download the documents from the website  
<https://etender.up.nic.in> from 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024 onwards  
Email: [pmamahakumbh2025@gmail.com](mailto:pmamahakumbh2025@gmail.com)  
UP : 205375 Dt.: 10.03.2024 Website: [www.upgov.nic.in](http://www.upgov.nic.in)

प्रयागराज मेला प्राधिकरण  
प्रयागराज  
Email id - pmamahakumbh2025@gmail.com, Office-0532-2504011, Fax-0532-2500775  
पत्र संख्या 4018 / पन्द्रह-मार्च-2025 (2023-24) दिनांक 09 मार्च, 2024  
**MAHAKUMBH MELA 2025**  
Department of Urban Development,  
Government of Uttar Pradesh  
through  
**Prayagraj Mela Pradhikaran, Prayagraj**  
invites proposals against the following RFPs for  
Toilets, Urinals, Liner Bags, Dustbins for MahaKumbh 2025

- Request for Proposal for Empanelment of Agencies to undertake Renting, Operating and Maintaining FRP toilets (septic tank) in community area for MahaKumbh 2025.
- Request for Proposal for Empanelment of Agencies to undertake Renting, Operating and Maintaining FRP toilets (soak pit) in community area for MahaKumbh 2025.
- Request for Proposal for Empanelment of Agencies to undertake Renting, Operating and Maintaining FRP urinals (septic tank) in community area for MahaKumbh 2025.
- Request for Proposal for Empanelment of Agencies to undertake Renting, Operating and Maintaining Prefabricated steel-based toilets (septic tank) in community area for MahaKumbh 2025.
- Request for Proposal for Empanelment of Agencies to undertake Renting of Kanath based toilets (with sub structure) in religious camps for MahaKumbh 2025.
- Request for Proposal for Empanelment of Vendors for Procurement of Liner Bags for disposal of Garbage in Mela area for Mahakumbh 2025.
- Request for Proposal for Empanelment of Vendors for Procurement of Dustbins for disposal of Garbage in Mela area for Mahakumbh 2025.

Interested bidders can download the documents from the website  
<https://etender.up.nic.in> from 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024 onwards  
Email: [pmamahakumbh2025@gmail.com](mailto:pmamahakumbh2025@gmail.com)  
UP : 205375 Dt.: 10.03.2024 Website: [www.upgov.nic.in](http://www.upgov.nic.in)



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**GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA**  
Public Works Department  
Executive Engineer, P.W. (North) Division, Dhule - 424001

**E-TENDER NOTICE NO. 63 / 2023-2024**

Online Tenders (e-tender) in "B-2" form for the 01 (one) works are invited by the Executive Engineer, P. W. (North) Division, Dhule, (Phone no. 02562-288763) or Government of Maharashtra Electronic Tender Management System <http://mahatenders.gov.in> from any bidder who satisfy the qualifying criteria.

As per above tender notice, 01 (One) works, detail tender information will be available at <http://mahatenders.gov.in> and can be download from 11/03/2024 at 18:00 hrs to 18/03/2024 at 15:00 hrs.

Prebid of Above works on 14/03/2024 Time 12.00 Hours in the office of the Chief Engineer P.W. Region, Nashik

Opening of above works On 19/03/2024 Time 11.00 Hours (if possible) in the office of the Superintending Engineer, P. W. Circle, Dhule.

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer  
P.W. (North) Division, Dhule

DGIPR/2023-24/ROC 9588

**INSTITUTE OF HUMAN BEHAVIOUR & ALLIED SCIENCES**  
Dilshad Garden, Delhi - 110095 (India)

**ADMISSION NOTIFICATION**  
M.Phil. (Clinical Psychology) 2023-25

In pursuance to University of Delhi Order No. CB-II/258/M.Phil/IHBAS/78/2024/96 dated 08.03.2024, admission to the M.Phil. (Clinical Psychology) course is being resumed for the session 2023-25. The Director, Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences, Delhi invites applications for admission to the M.Phil. Clinical Psychology course for the session 2023-25. Last date for receiving applications is 31.03.2024.

Details of the Course, Application form and Prospectus may be downloaded from the IHBAS website: [www.iibas.delhi.gov.in](http://www.iibas.delhi.gov.in)

The candidates, who have applied in the year 2022, need not apply again. Their application will be considered for eligibility for the 2023-25 session entrance examination.

Prof. (Dr.) Rajinder K Dhamija  
Director, IHBAS  
On behalf of M.Phil. Committee, D.U.  
DIP/SHABDARTH/CLASSIFIED/0382/23-24

**GOVT. OF MAHARASHTRA**  
Public Works (North) Division, Pune  
New Administrative Building, First Floor, Pune - 411 001.  
e-mail- [northpune.ee@mahapwd.gov.in](mailto:northpune.ee@mahapwd.gov.in) Phone No. 020-26123305

**E-TENDER NOTICE NO. 113 FOR 2023-2024 (Online) (Second Call)**

The Executive Engineer, Public Works (North) Division, Pune - 411 001 (Telephone No.020- 26123305) invites tender in "B-1" Tenders for following work through e-tendering process from contractors who fulfills terms and condition mentioned in bid document.

Bid document can be download from website <https://mahatenders.gov.in> Right to reject any or all online bid of work without assigning any reasons thereof is reserved by competent authority. Conditional Tender will not be accepted.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost Rs.
1	Construction of Minor Bridge and Improvement of Mau Moruche Pathar to Satvaivadi road VR 148 Tal. Maval, Dist. Pune	Rs. 5,27,46,674/-

**E-Tender Time Table**

1	E-tender Document Sale & Bid Submission End Date and Time	11.03.2024 from 10.00 hrs to 18.03.2024 upto 18.15 hrs.
2	Place, Date & Time of Pre-bid Meeting	In the office of the Chief Engineer, P.W. Region, Central Building, Pune on or before dt 12.03.2024 at 12.00 Hrs.
3	Place, Date & Time of Bid Opening of Technical & Financial Bid	Dt. 20.03.2024 at 11.00 hrs. in the office of the superintending Engineer, P.W. Circle, Pune (If Possible)

All Information about e-tender are available in the following web sites  
1) [www.mahapwd.gov.in](http://www.mahapwd.gov.in) (Only Tender Notice)  
2) <https://mahatenders.gov.in>  
(Any change in tender notice will be informed on the web sites)  
3) Notice Board of Executive Engineer, P.W. North Division, Pune  
(Note- Tenderers Bidding Capacity Shall be ascertained as per Post Qualification Criteria)

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer,  
Public Work (North) Division  
Pune 411 001.

DGIPR/2023-24/ROC 9572

**Government of Madhya Pradesh**  
Office of the Engineer-in-Chief, Water Resources Department  
Jal Sansadhan Bhawan, Tulsī Nagar, Bhopal (M.P.)

Email Id : [ceproc.enrcwr.bpl@nic.in](mailto:ceproc.enrcwr.bpl@nic.in) Tel: 0755-2767635, Fax : 0755-2552406

N.I.T. No. 1057/2023-24/E-In-C/e-tendering Bhopal, Dated 05.03.2024

Bids for following works are invited on website <https://www.mptenders.gov.in>.  
Last Date of purchase/download of Bid Document and submission of bid is 22.03.2024, 17:30 hrs. Any amendment/modification can be seen only on the website. Detailed N.I.T. and other details can be viewed on above mentioned website.

S. No.	Tender No.	Work	District	Amount (Lakhs)
1.	2024-WRD-336063	On Turnkey Basis :- Construction of Sitapur Hanumana Irrigation project Beerbal barrage and Pressurized pipe irrigation network (Hose system) as per detail given in scope of work but not limited to that.	Sidhi	329076.88

G-25850/23 Chief Engineer (Procurement)

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एन.एच.एम. भवन, लिंक रोड नंबर 3, पत्रकार कॉलोनी, भोपाल - 462003  
क्रमांक/एन.एच.एम./एच.आर./2024/18467 भोपाल, दिनांक : 05/03/2024

**सूचना पत्र**

राष्ट्रीय स्वास्थ्य मिशन, म.प्र. के मानसिक स्वास्थ्य कार्यक्रम अंतर्गत टेली मानस सेल हेतु सविधा कार्डसलर के 17 रिक्त पदों की पूर्ति हेतु योग्य उम्मीदवारों से एम.पी. ऑनलाइन लिमिटेड के माध्यम से ऑनलाइन आवेदन आमंत्रित करता है।  
ऑनलाइन आवेदन करने की तिथि, दिनांक 22/03/2024 समय 12:00 a.m. से दिनांक 18/04/2024 समय 11:59 p.m. तक सीमित रहेगी।  
विज्ञापन से संबंधित समस्त जानकारी हेतु एम.पी. ऑनलाइन लिमिटेड की वेब-साईट ([www.mponline.gov.in](http://www.mponline.gov.in)) अथवा (<http://ifforms.mponline.gov.in>) पर उपरोक्त तिथियों के मध्य अवलोकन किया जा सकता है।

मिशन संचालक  
राष्ट्रीय स्वास्थ्य मिशन, मध्यप्रदेश  
जी-25848/23

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For any query may contact Dr. Harkaur (Mb. 9417868371).

Librarian  
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**e-Procurement Notice**  
Date 11.03.2024

e-Tender No.: IRCON/2024/JRCL/S&T/PKG-X/A  
e-Tender for and on behalf of Jharkhand Central Railway Limited is invited from bidders meeting qualifying requirements for the work of "Design, Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Electronic Interlocking based Signalling System at Kathaula, Shahpur, Duari and Kharia station in connection with Shivpur-Kathaula New BG track with electrification in Dhanbad division of East Central Railways in the state of Jharkhand, India."

Estimated Cost of the work: ₹ 41,44,94,536 inclusive GST @ 18%

Last Date & Time of e-Bid Submission : 04.04.2024, 15:00 hrs.

For further details, visit website <https://tenders.gov.in/e-procure/app>. Corrigendum, if any, would be hosted only on the website.

IRCON INTERNATIONAL LIMITED  
Sone Bhawan (1st Floor), Daroga Prasad Rai Path, Patna - 800001

**DISTRICT POLICE HEADQUARTERS KISHOTWAR**  
Email: [sspkishtwar@jkpolice.gov.in](mailto:sspkishtwar@jkpolice.gov.in), [dnokishtwar@jkpolice.gov.in](mailto:dnokishtwar@jkpolice.gov.in)  
+911995-259353 (Phone), +911995-261439 (Fax)

**LOOK OUT NOTICE**

As intimated by Dy. Superintendent of Police Hqs. Kishotwar vide letter No. DySP/Hqs/Misc/24/1500 dated 04.03.2024 that one Sanam Kousar W/O Saif Ali R/O Mander Kemi Tehsil Drab Tehsil Drabshalla & District Kishotwar had gone missing since 29.02.2024 from home. On this information a missing report vide DDR No. 12 dated 01.03.2024 got entered in the daily diary of Police Post Drabshalla. The photograph/descriptive roll of missing girl is as under:-

Photo	Description
	Name : Sanam Kousar Parentage/Spouse : Saif Ali Resident of : Mander Kemi Age : 20 Years Complexion : Whitish Height : 5'5" Face : Round

It is therefore, requested that kindly have a sharp look out, if traced or any clue leading to the above said accused, immediate information may kindly be sent on the below mentioned Email Address/Fax/Telephone numbers:-  
Email : [sspkishtwar@jkpolice.gov.in](mailto:sspkishtwar@jkpolice.gov.in)  
Fax : 01995-261439  
Phone : 01995-259353  
PCR Kishotwar : 01995-259193, 9906154100

**Date :- Rdr./CRB/Look Out Notice/24/5812-24**  
**Dated: 06.03.2024**

Sr. Superintendent of Police  
District Kishotwar  
DIP-J-15875-23

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**CHANGE OF NAME**

**PUBLIC NOTICES**

**I. CHANCHAL Rani Taneja** alias Chanchal Rani W/o Umesh Taneja, R/o- 142/170, Anand Park, Delhi-110058, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Chanchal Taneja.

**I. SOPAN** Rathod Father of- No.16026546A Nk Ck (SD) Rathod Jalindar Sopan, R/o- VIII-Devinagar, P.O- Narwadi, Teh- Sonpeth, Dist- Parbhani, Maharashtra- 431516, have changed my name from Sopan Rathod to Sopan Puraji Rathod, vide affidavit dated 09/03/2024 before Notary Public Delhi.

**I. TRISHA** Sharan, D/o Shambhu Sharan R/o Pan Oasis, Sector-70, Noida, Uttar Pradesh-201301, have changed my name from Trisha to Trisha Sharan for all future purposes

**I. HEM** Lata Parashar spouse of 15106347K Ex Havalidar Raj Kumar, resident of 1-88 Krishan Vihar, Delhi-110086 have changed my name from Hem Lata Parashar to Hem Lata Vaidya dated 15/02/2024 before Delhi Notary.

**I. MOHAMMAD** Zubair S/o Sh. Mohammad Hafeez R/o H.No. 20/12A, 4th Floor, Okhla Vihar, Okhla South Delhi-110025 have changed my son's name from Ashif Hafeez to Ashif Zubair for all purposes.

**I. NAGENDRA** Kumar Yadav S/o Ramesh Chandra Yadav R/o D-5, Second Floor, Lalpat Nagar-II, New Delhi 110024 have changed my name from Nagendra Kumar Yadav to Nagendra Yadav for all future purposes

**I. MUKESH** Kumar S/o Sh. Prahlad Rai R/o H.No.1009, Sector-19, Faridabad Haryana have changed my name from Mukesh Garg to Mukesh Kumar for all future purposes.

**I. VIJAY** Mala Mother of- No.16026546A Nk Ck (SD) Rathod Jalindar Sopan, R/o- VIII-Devinagar, P.O- Narwadi, Teh- Sonpeth, Dist- Parbhani, Maharashtra- 431516, have changed my name from Vijay Mala to Vijaymala Sopan Rathod, vide affidavit dated 09/03/2024 before Notary Public Delhi.

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**COMMISSIONER OF GEOLOGY AND MINING, INDUSTRIES & MINES DEPARTMENT**  
GOVERNMENT OF GUJARAT  
Email: [geo-auction-gm@gujarat.gov.in](mailto:geo-auction-gm@gujarat.gov.in)

Ref No: CGM/Major/Block/2023-24/XI Date: March 11, 2024

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**  
"Invitation of bids for grant of Mining Lease for Aluminous Laterite and Limestone Mineral"

In exercise of the powers conferred by Section 10 (B) of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 and in accordance with the Mineral (Auction) Rules, 2015 notified thereunder, the Government of Gujarat has identified 4 (four) mineral blocks containing Aluminous Laterite and Limestone mineral for electronic auction and hereby invites tenders for the purposes of grant of Mining Lease.

Accordingly, Financial bids are invited in digital format only and Technical bids are invited both in digital and physical format from Eligible bidders.

Eligibility conditions, date and time for participating in the electronic auction are provided in the Tender Document. Detailed Tender Documents along with timelines, notifications, updates and other details for the e-auction process for the mineral blocks are available in electronic form only and can be downloaded from the website of MSTC Limited ([https://www.mstccommerce.com/auctionhome/micn/micd\\_listing.jsp](https://www.mstccommerce.com/auctionhome/micn/micd_listing.jsp)).

Interested and eligible bidders can register themselves on MSTC website. On successful registration, eligible bidders will obtain login ID and password necessary for participation in the e-auction process. Model Tender Document and Mineral Block Summary are available free of cost on the website of MSTC Limited ([https://www.mstccommerce.com/auctionhome/micn/micd\\_listing.jsp](https://www.mstccommerce.com/auctionhome/micn/micd_listing.jsp)).

Last date for purchase of Tender Document on website of e-auction platform provider is April 29, 2024 [on or before 17:00 hours (IST)] and the last date for submission of the bids is April 29, 2024 [on or before 17:00 hours (IST)]. The Price of Tender Document per mineral block is ₹2,00,000/- (Rupees Two Lakh) excluding GST and bidders are required to pay applicable GST under Reverse Charge Mechanism.

**List of Mineral Blocks for Auction**

No.	Name of Mineral Block	Village, Taluka, District	Mineral	Mineral Resource (Mineral/Grade wise)	Area (Ha)
1.	Khera Limestone block	Khera, Maliya-Hatna, Junagadh	Limestone	• Cement Grade Limestone- 29,07,651.84 tonnes • Chemical Grade Limestone- 3,26,719.91 tonnes	9.7223
2.	Amrutpura Block-C	Amrutpura, Thasara, Kheda	Bauxite (Aluminous Laterite - Major mineral) and Laterite (Minor mineral)	• Aluminous Laterite: 8,57,144 tonnes • Laterite: 13,35,545 tonnes	5.0000
3.	Amrutpura Block-D	Amrutpura, Thasara, Kheda	Bauxite (Aluminous Laterite - Major mineral) and Laterite (Minor mineral)	• Aluminous Laterite: 17,09,399 tonnes • Laterite: 17,29,796 tonnes	5.0000
4.	Amrutpura Block-E	Amrutpura, Thasara, Kheda	Bauxite (Aluminous Laterite - Major mineral) and Laterite (Minor mineral)	• Aluminous Laterite: 10,26,983 tonnes • Laterite: 14,47,293 tonnes	5.0000

\* In the absence of prices of aluminous laterite published by the Indian Bureau of Mines, the computation of Value of Estimated resources is based on the average sale price of bauxite (non-metallurgical cement grade) as published by Indian Bureau of Mines. All the applicable payments after the notification of royalty rate and sale price of aluminous laterite shall be levied as per notified royalty rate and applicable sale price.

Commissioner of Geology and Mining,  
Government of Gujarat

**CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS**  
OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE

No. COS/CRJ/PUB/E-Tender/19/0162  
Date: 06/03/2024. The following e-Tenders can be accessed under the link [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in). Offers for such e-Tender can be submitted only electronically by accessing the link [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) → login → E-Tender Stores/Supply. Vendors may also contact the following officials to obtain clarification regarding particular tender or IREPS related information if any, Dy.CMM/HQ/CLW/Chittaranjan, 0341-2525594 or SMM/CON/HQ, 0341-2535631. Office Address: Office of the PCMM/CLW/Chittaranjan, Sl. No.-[1]. Tender No.: 75234061A. Brief Description of Item: Bolster Assy. for WAG-9 HC to SPEC. NO. CLW/MS/3/154, Alt.2. [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery]. Quantity: 213 nos. Set. Earnest Money Deposit (Rupees): ₹2000000.00. Tender Closing Date & Time (IST): 28/03/2024 at 11:00 AM.

PR7/343 PCMM/CLW/Chittaranjan  
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## BANKER HELD FOR SIPHONING ₹16CR FROM ACCOUNTS OF BALI WOMAN

**HT Correspondent**  
[letters@hindustantimes.com](mailto:letters@hindustantimes.com)

**NEW DELHI:** Days after a 49-year-old woman from Bali accused a private bank of siphoning off over ₹16 crore from her savings accounts, the Delhi Police said that they had arrested the manager of the bank's Gurugram branch.

The woman, who has been living in Bali with her husband for years, had alleged that the manager along with other bank officials had siphoned off her money and diverted the funds into different accounts without her permission. She and her husband had put all their savings into two accounts.

On the basis of her complaint, an FIR was lodged on February 26. The police investigated the case and found that the accused, Varun Vashist, had "induced" the woman to make huge investments in fixed deposits.

DCP (economics offences wing) Vikram K Porwal said, "Vashist misappropriated the funds using his power as a branch manager."

## NDMC DEPLOYS 6 NEW SWEEPING MACHINES IN CP, KHAN MARKET

**HT Correspondent**  
[letters@hindustantimes.com](mailto:letters@hindustantimes.com)

**NEW DELHI:** The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) has introduced six semi-automatic sweeping machines for cleaning and maintenance of the inner corridors of Connaught Place and Khan Market among other places, civic officials aware of the matter said.

According to a senior NDMC official, the machines would help to improve the hygiene standards of the inner corridor of Connaught Place (CP), Khan Market, Malcha Market, and pavements along VVIP routes.

"These machines are manually operated, and there is no need for electricity or batteries. This will not only reduce the carbon footprint but also minimise operational costs for the council. There is no noise in their operations," the civic body, said in a statement.

Unlike conventional powered sweepers, these do not contribute to noise pollution and air pollution creating a more peaceful urban environment for residents and pedestrians, it added.

## 5 members of Kala Jatheri gang held

**HT Correspondent**  
[letters@hindustantimes.com](mailto:letters@hindustantimes.com)

**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi Police have arrested five men associated with jailed gangster Kala Jatheri from Dwarka in west Delhi, officers aware of the case said on Sunday.

The accused have been identified only by their first names —Rahul, Parveen, Rohtash, Mohan and Sachin. The officers said that the accused, who were nabbed with Italy-made Beretta pistols and China-made Px-30 pistols, were in Delhi to murder a rival gangster who works with the Neeraj Bawana-Himanshu Bhau gang.

The development comes five days before the high-security wedding Jathedi with his girlfriend Anuradha Choudhary, known in underworld circles as the Rajasthani Don or Madam Minz. Police said Jathedi is set to come out of jail on parole and married Choudhary on March 12 in the presence of more than 600 police personnel.

Giving details of the case, police said that a team led by assistant commissioner of police

Sanjay Dutt and inspector Sandeep Dabas received a tip off about the gangsters' presence in Dwarka Sector 16 with illegal weapons. A police team was dispatched on Thursday, which found them in a Hyundai i10 car near the Sector 16 DDA Park.

Deputy commissioner of police (special cell) Manoj C said, "We spotted their i10 car and the team tactfully approached them. We knew they were carrying illegal weapons. They were overpowered and caught in time. We recovered 4 pistols from them."

During the interrogation, police said Rahul, a wine shop owner, revealed that the gangsters were planning to kill a man identified by his first name Ajay.

"Last year, Rahul opened fire outside Ajay's house and for this, he was arrested by the Haryana Police. In Rohtak jail, he was stabbed by Ajay's associates. After his release from jail this year, he planned to kill him and recruited Rohtash, Mohan and Sachin into his gang. Parveen is an old associate. They were provided with highly sophisticated and imported weapons by Kala Jathedi," the DCP said.

## SUBHASH YADAV

The case pertains to tax evasion worth crores and irregularities in sandmining through Broadson Commodities Pvt Ltd, of which Yadav is a director, the people cited above said.

ED's official familiar with the matter told HT that the central agency conducted raids at least eight locations linked to Yadav and his relatives in connection with the sandmining case.

During the raids that went on throughout Saturday, ED recovered ₹2.3 crore in cash and several documents related to illegal properties and investments, the people cited above said.

This raid comes a day after Income Tax officials raided premises linked with another RJD leader and member of legislative council (MLC) Vinod Jaiswal in another case of tax evasion.

Subhash Yadav, who had unsuccessfully contested the 2019 Lok Sabha elections from Chatra in Jharkhand, considered close to Lalu Prasad, Rabri Devi, Tejashwi Yadav and other members of RJD top family. According to family members who asked not to be identified, Subhash Yadav said to be preparing fight parliamentary election from Koderma in Jharkhand.

He is one of the directors of Broadson Commodities Pvt Ltd and Banshidhar Construction Pvt Ltd, while his wife Lalit Devi is the director of Radha Raman Construction and Marketing Pvt Ltd. All such firms are directly or indirectly involved in sand mining.

Yadav's business partner and another director of Broadson Commodities, Radha Charan, was arrested by ED on September 13, 2023, and forwarded to judicial custody in the same case.

ED official said that Broad-

son Commodities had on June 13, 2017, purchased three flats on a single day in Maa Marichia Devi complex for ₹1.72 crore. Of the 18 flats in the complex, which is named after Lalu Prasad's mother, nine are owned by former Bihar CM Rabri Devi.

Officials familiar with the matter said that raids were conducted in connection to probe alleged illegal wealth amassed from sandmining and laundering black money by purchasing properties across the country.

The three firms owned by Subhash were given licences by the Grand Alliance government of RJD, JD(U) and Congress to mine sand in a stretch worth ₹237 crore in Patna, Bhojpur, Saran, Vaishali, Jehanabad and Arwal districts in between March 2016 and July 2017, according to ED officials familiar with the matter.

The search by ED has been underway in Maner, Shahpur,

Gola Raod, Nasriganj, Nariyalghat, Yaduvanshi Nagar, Boring Road and nearby areas since morning. A large number of security personnel have been deployed to the locations where raids are underway.

The Bihar Police has filed 14 FIRs against Broadson Commodities and others under various sections of IPC and Bihar Mineral (Concession, Prevention of Illegal Mining, Transportation and Storage) Rule, 2019; these FIRs form the basis for the money laundering case. Earlier, the IT department had conducted raids at Yadav's premises in connection with a tax evasion case in 2018.

No immediate statement was released by Broadson Commodities Ltd or other related firms.

RJD alleged that the raids were conducted out of political vendetta. "The ruling BJP at the Centre had lost trust in its own leaders and workers," said RJD spokesman Rishi Mishra.

{ FROM PAGE 1 }





# World Class Modern Infrastructure Modi Sarkar ki Guarantee

## Inauguration and Foundation Stone Laying of 114 Road Projects worth over Rs.1 Lakh Crore including **Dwarka Expressway**



by **Narendra Modi** Prime Minister  
(through Video Conferencing)

On 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2024 at 11.30am at Gurugram, Haryana

### Inauguration

<b>Delhi</b>	Urban Extension Road – II (1 Pkg)	<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>	Anandapuram – Pendurthi - Anakapalli Section, NH-16 Gundugolanu - Kalaparru Section, NH-16 (1 Pkg) Vijayanagaram Town Bypass on NH-26 Gurajanapalli – Avanigadda section, NH-216 (3 Pkg) Link road between Murukambattu – Cherlopalle, NH 69 in Andhra Pradesh Devarapalli to Jeelugumilli, NH 516D (1 Pkg)	<b>Jharkhand</b>	Reconstruction of Murgathal – Dhanbad, NH – 218 Reconstruction of Sunderpahari – Dharampur NH-333A Reconstruction of Rupnarayanpur – Jamtara, NH-419 Reconstruction of Gumala - Kolebera, NH-23 Reconstruction of Sultana - Birhu, NH-100 Ranchi Bypass, NH-33 (1 Pkg)
<b>Karnataka</b>	Dobaspet - Hoskote (2 Pkg) Aurad – Bidar section, NH-161A	<b>Maharashtra</b>	Wadpale - Bhogaon Khurd, NH-66 Kashedi Ghat-Parshuram Ghat section, NH-66 Wadigodri – Dhangripimpri, NH-753H Ahmednagar bypass – Kharwandi, NH-61 Rahuri - Sonai - Shani Singnapur, NH-160C	<b>Bihar</b>	Sitamarhi-Jaynagar Section, NH-227 Chapwa to Betiya, NH-727 Construction of RoB in Araria & Thakurganj, NH-327E ROB in Mania and Pranpur, NH-81 Parsoli - Rampur, NH-28B Narenpur - Purnea Section of NH-131A
<b>Kerala</b>	Thalassery - Mahe bypass section, NH-66 Mukkola Junction – Kerala / Tamil Nadu Border, NH-66	<b>Tamil Nadu</b>	Strengthening near Coimbatore, NH-181 Bridge at Villupuram – Puducherry, NH-45A Flyover at Periyanaickenpalayam Junction - Coimbatore Outskirt	<b>Rajasthan</b>	Sangariya - Bikaner (2 Pkg)
<b>West Bengal</b>	Berhampore – Farakka Section, NH-12 Emergency Landing Facility on Balasore - Kharagpur section, NH-16				
<b>Himachal Pradesh</b>	Kiratpur - Nerchowk section of NH-21 (2 Pkg)				
<b>Uttar Pradesh</b>	Lucknow Ring Road (3 Pkg)				
<b>Punjab</b>	Elevated Highway Between Samrala Chowk - Ludhiana Municipal Limit Malout – Abohar-Sadhuwali section, NH-62 & 7 Malout – Mandi- Dabwali of NH-9 Construction of RoB and Bridge on Satluj River, NH 503 Construction of two ROB's Moga - Makhu & Harike - Khalra, NH-703B				

### Foundation Stone Laying

<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>	Bengaluru - Kadappa - Vijayawada Economic Corridor (14 Pkg) Tadipatri to Muddanur, NH-67 B.Kothapalli Junction - Gorantla, NH 716G Somayajulapalli – Dhone Road, NH – 340B Seetharamapuram - Duttaluru Section, NH-167BG Kurnool / Kadapa Border-Jammalamadugu section NH-167K Vodarevu - Chilakaluripet, NH-167A (1 Pkg) Mudireddypalli – CS Puram via Kadapa / Nellore Border, NH-167B (2 Pkg) Mydukur to Badvel Section, NH-67 Kurnool- Mandlem - Atmakur Section, NH-340C (2 Pkg) Chennai-Tirupati (1 Pkg) Puttapparthi-Koduru Section, NH-342	<b>Tamilnadu</b>	Thoppur Ghat section in Dharmapuri - Salem section, NH-44 Tiruvallur to Tamil Nadu / Andhra Pradesh border, NH716 Widening of 11 stretches from Karur – Coimbatore NH 81 Strengthening of 9 stretches from Cuddalore - Virudhachalam, NH 532 Achampathu - Viratipathu, NH-85	<b>Punjab</b>	Ambala Chandigarh with spur to Lalru, NH-205A Beas-Mehta-Batala-Dera Baba Nanak, NH-503D (1 Pkg) Moga - Bagha Purana – Bajakhana, NH-105B Jalandhar Bypass Amritsar-Bathinda (1 Pkg) Ludhiana-Bathinda, NH-754AD (1 Pkg) Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway, NE-05 (1 Pkg)
<b>Karnataka</b>	Belgaum-Hungund-Raichur, NH-748A (6 Pkg)	<b>Haryana</b>	Shamli Ambala, NH-344GM (3 Pkg) Bhiwani – Hansi, NH-148B	<b>Gujarat</b>	Gavadka- Bagasara, NH 351 (1 Pkg) Vav Chokdi- Satlasana - Vrundavan Chokdi, Kheralu NH-58 Narol Junction - Sarkhej junction, NH 47
<b>Uttar Pradesh</b>	Kanpur Ring Road (2 Pkg)	<b>Himachal Pradesh</b>	Hamirpur Bypass Sihuni to Rajol section, NH-154 (1 Pkg) Thanpuri to Parour Section, NH-154 (1 Pkg)	<b>West Bengal</b>	5.2 km Raniganj Bypass, NH 16
		<b>Bihar</b>	Mahanar to Bachhwara, NH-122B Chapra-Manjhi Bypass connecting NH-19 and NH-85	<b>Jharkhand</b>	Pokharia More – Govindpur, NH-419 Giridih town, NH-114A
				<b>Uttarakhand</b>	Rudrapur Bypass

#### Benefits of the Project

- Dwarka Expressway will facilitate smoother Traffic flow between Delhi- Gurugram
- With immensely help in reducing air pollution in Delhi NCR
- Direct connectivity to IGI Airport & Yashobhoomi
- High speed corridor for commercial vehicle, improvement in logistic movement
- Bengaluru Vijayawada Economic Corridor will promote industrial development
- Kanpur Ring Road, Lucknow Ring Road and other bypasses will decongest the urban areas
- Easy market access to produce of local businessmen and farmers

#### In the August Presence of

**Bandaru Dattatraya**  
Governor, Haryana

**Manohar Lal**  
Chief Minister, Haryana

**Nitin Gadkari**  
Minister of Road Transport & Highways

**Rao Inderjit Singh**  
Union Minister of State (I/C),  
Statistics and Programme Implementation, Planning & Corporate Affairs

**General (Dr.) V.K. Singh (Retd.)**  
Union Minister of State, Road Transport &  
Highways and Civil Aviation

and Member of Parliament & Member of Legislative Assembly



# BJP gov't ended politics of appeasement in UP: Modi

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

**VARANASI:** The "poison" of appeasement is weakening as Uttar Pradesh is scaling new heights of development, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday as he laid the foundation stones for projects worth more than ₹34,000 crore across the country from a public event in Azamgarh.

Azamgarh is writing a new chapter of development with people there destroying the "strongholds of families", Modi said in an apparent criticism of the Samajwadi Party (SP), which considered the eastern UP city as a stronghold until 2022, when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) stormed its citadel and won the Lok Sabha bypoll. The people proved this when a young man like (Bhojpuri star) Dinesh Lal Yadav Nirahua broke through the bastion of dynasts, Modi said.

"Today the star of Azamgarh is shining," the Prime Minister said. "There was a time when an event was held in Delhi and (people from) other states attended it. Today, the event is being organised in Azamgarh and people from different parts of the country are attending it."

Asserting that in the past 10 years, eastern Uttar Pradesh has been seeing the politics of development in place of the earlier politics of appeasement and dynasty, Modi said this trend got a new momentum under the leadership of chief minister Yogi Adityanath.

"Purvanchal saw the politics of casteism and appeasement for decades. In the last 10 years, this region has also seen the politics of development, it has picked up pace in last seven years under the leadership of CM Yogi. The people here have also seen mafia raj (rule of criminals) and dangers of extremism, and now, they are also seeing rule of law," Modi said.

He highlighted the state's rising



PM Narendra Modi inaugurates and lays the foundation stone of several development projects, as UP CM Yogi Adityanath, deputy CM Keshav Prasad Maurya and others look on, in Azamgarh. ANI

profile, fuelled by record levels of investment, groundbreaking ceremonies and the rapid expansion of its highways network. Praising Uttar Pradesh's focus on improving law and order and the completion of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, he emphasised how the state's progress aligns with the nation's growth trajectory.

Modi also inaugurated and laid the foundation stones of 15 airport projects across India to be built at a cost of more than ₹9,800 crore, including the expanded Terminal 1 (T1) of Delhi's Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport. Among them, he inaugurated 12 new terminal buildings at Lucknow, Pune, Kolhapur, Gwalior, Jabalpur, Aligarh, Azamgarh, Chitrakoot, Moradabad, Shrawasti and Adampur airports. To illustrate the speed of construction, he said the Gwalior terminal was built in just 16 months.

In his address, Modi stressed that besides strengthening infrastructure like airports, highways and railways, the government is providing a strong push to education, water and environment as well.

Chief minister Yogi Adityanath, deputy CM Keshav Prasad Maurya, BJP state chief Bhupen-

dra Chaudhary were among the leaders present on the occasion.

Accounting for 80 seats in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls – the notification for which is expected to come later this month – UP has the largest share of seats and is thus critical for the larger outcome of the general elections. "For several days, due to time constraints, I am laying foundations, inaugurating several projects every day for different parts of the country from just one place. When people hear that so many IIMs (Indian Institutes of Management), so many railways, so many AIIMS (All India Institutes of Medical Sciences), and so many airports are being launched together, they are surprised," Modi said.

"Sometimes, a few of them try to fit it into the old mindset, saying that this is election season," he added, but remarked that this push for development should not be seen from the prism of the upcoming general elections.

"When we laid the foundation of the projects in 2019, there was the election season, so all that is happening. But today, the country is seeing that Modi dusari mitti ka insan hai (Modi is made of different material)," Modi said. "We didn't

lay the foundation of the projects in 2019 for the elections. All these projects have been inaugurated."

"So please, even today, in 2024, no one should look at this through the prism of elections. This is the campaign of my eternal journey of development," the Prime Minister said. "For the resolution to make India developed by 2047, I am running fast and making the country run fast."

He also took a swipe at the opposition. "Your (people's) love and development of Azamgarh is giving sleepless nights to the INDI alliance people who are dependent on casteism, dynasty and vote bank," he said, referring to the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), which includes the Congress and other parties such as the Samajwadi Party that are trying to cobble together an united opposition against the BJP.

Modi said cities like Aligarh, Moradabad, Azamgarh, Shrawasti, which were ignored as backward areas of Uttar Pradesh, are getting air connectivity due to rapid overall development. Just like welfare schemes, modern infrastructure is moving beyond metro cities to small towns and villages, he added. "Small cities have equal right to airports and good highways as big metro cities," Modi said. "We are increasing the strength of the Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities so that urbanisation continues unabated."

SP national president Akhilesh Yadav, however, hit back. "Elections are near so they (BJP) must show that they have worked. And that by telling someone else's work their own. Azamgarh airport was built by 'Netaji' (SP founder Mulayam Singh Yadav), and it has been inaugurated today. Moradabad airport was built by Netaji, it too has been inaugurated now. When will this government inaugurate any work of its own?," he asked.

## MODI-LED PANEL SET TO MEET THIS WEEK AMID CHURN IN ELECTION BODY

Aditi Agrawal

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**NEW DELHI:** A Prime Minister Narendra Modi led high-level committee is likely to meet on March 15 to select the election commissioner for the position left vacant after the retirement of Anup Chandra Pandey in February, a person aware of the matter said. However, Arun Goel's decision to step down as the poll officer days before the likely announcement of the schedule for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections might prompt the panel to meet at an earlier date as the Election Commission now only consists of chief election commissioner Rajiv Kumar, the person added.

Parliament in December passed a new law to appoint CEC and election commissioners. The selection process now consists of two committees – a three-member search committee led by the law minister and consisting of two government secretaries, and a three-member selection committee headed by the Prime Minister and consisting of a Union Minister recommended by the PM and the leader of opposition. The search committee will recommend five names to the selection committee but the latter is empowered to select commissioners from outside this list as well. The CEC or election then gets appointed by the President.

HT has learnt that senior Congress leader and party's leader in the LS Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury was invited for the meeting on March 15. The invite was sent to him hours before Goel's resignation was notified in the gazette by the law ministry on Saturday and was only limited to fill vacancy left by Pandey's retirement.

Law minister Arjun Ram Meghwal refused to comment on the schedule of the meeting or its agenda.

## AHEAD OF THE LOK SABHA ELECTIONS, TWO OF THE TOP THREE POSTS IN EC ARE VACANT

The Shiv Sena order was used as a precedent in the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) case last

{ OFFICIALS CITE POINTS OF DIFFERENCES }

# A day later, questions persist over Goel's exit

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**NEW DELHI:** A day after the Union law ministry announced election commissioner Arun Goel's resignation, Election Commission (EC) officials were at a loss about what caused the move, with three years left on the officer's tenure and elevation to the position of chief election commissioner (CEC) due in 2025.

Five officials HT spoke to said Goel and CEC Rajiv Kumar had their share of differences, including on routine matters, though that did not explain Goel's abrupt resignation. A key point of difference was over the poll body's February 17, 2023 order on the allocation of the Shiv Sena's party name and poll symbol to the Eknath Shinde faction on the basis of legislative majority, four officials told HT.

In a unanimous order, the poll body relied on the majority principle first used by the EC in the Sadiq Ali case of 1971 and upheld by the Supreme Court subsequently. According to this principle, when there are factions in a political party, to allot the party name and symbol, the poll body must rely on checking for both legislative and organisational majority. In the Shiv Sena order, the poll body relied only on legislative majority, that is, it only considered how parliamentarians and state legislators chose between the Shinde or the Uddhav Thackeray faction.

Though the final order did not have a dissent note, three officials told HT that there was disagreement among the commissioners that was not publicised in the office. Goel is said to have wanted the precedent to be maintained and for the poll body to consider both organisational and legislative majority for the test of majority but the final order relied only on legislative majority.

The Shiv Sena order was used as a precedent in the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) case last



Arun Goel

month. In the NCP order, the EC said it could not determine if elections to party posts had even been held. These two EC orders are the only ones to rely on legislative majority alone instead of both legislative and organisational majority.

"In the Sadiq Ali case and all subsequent cases, the EC examined both legislative and organisational majority. In the Shiv Sena case, it was probably the first time that the EC did not rely on organisational majority as it found that there were no organisational elections and all office-bearers were nominated by the president of the party. That order seemed logical to me," former chief election commissioner SY Quraishi said.

The Uddhav Thackeray faction filed a special leave petition in the Supreme Court challenging the EC order. The EC filed a 10-page counter-affidavit on March 14, 2023, arguing that since the February 17 order was passed in the EC's quasi-judicial capacity, and not its administrative capacity, the EC had become functus officio in this case, that is, it had performed its official function. It argued that there was precedent for quasi-judicial bodies to not have to appear in court if their orders were challenged.

Goel was not kept in the loop about this counter-affidavit, two officials told HT. The document was sent to the EC's advocate on record without being signed by Anup Chandra Pandey (who retired on February 15) or Goel. The deputy election commissioner in charge had sent the counter affi-

davit to Kumar directly for approval instead of first sending it to Goel and Pandey. Goel summoned the DEC in charge of the counter-affidavit and also demanded the file for inspection. Two officials told HT that the original file had not been found and the legal department instead had to start a "part file".

Three officials said the dissent was not recorded in any file. Two of them said routine disagreements between Goel and Kumar were never included in any file notings or orders.

Quraishi said this is a common practice. "We had decided that even if there is internal disagreement, it must be sorted within the four walls of the commission's meeting room. Any difference of opinion among the commissioners was not to be made public because of the controversy it could generate. We used to meet for half an hour alone before the officers were called in," he said.

Other points of difference, officials said, included Goel's view that renovation of parts of the EC's headquarters, the Nirvachan Sadan, were a waste of taxpayers' money, and his discomfort over "VIP culture" in the poll body manifested in the "kingly" treatment given to EC officials during their tours to polling states. He is also said to have raised concerns over how state election officials were not following the due process for search and seizure by seizing goods before the imposition of the model code of conduct.

While much has been made of Goel skipping the press conference in Kolkata on March 5, all five officials HT spoke to said nothing happened there that could have caused him to resign. "In the meetings with political parties and officers, there was no friction between the CEC and EC. Both were supportive of each other," one of the officials said, a view corroborated by the others. His absence at the conference was attributed to health reasons.

## 'Mamata afraid of PM': Cong as TMC decides to go solo in Bengal

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**KOLKATA:** West Bengal Congress chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury on Sunday accused chief minister Mamata Banerjee of being fearful of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, hours after the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) announced its list of candidates for all 42 Lok Sabha constituencies in the state, ending months of speculation over if the INDIA bloc members will be able to set aside their differences and contest jointly in the state.

"Mamata Banerjee is worried that if she joins the INDIA Alliance, she will have to face Modi. She is worried that if the ED and CBI start visiting TMC on Modi's orders, it could pose a risk to the TMC party. So, by distancing herself from the alliance, Mamata Banerjee is sending a message to Modi's office: Don't be upset with me; I'm not part of the alliance and I won't compete with the BJP," Chowdhury told reporters.

The TMC's rebuff will represent the largest pre-poll setback for the INDIA bloc so far, given that West Bengal has the third largest share of parliamentarians of any state in the country, after Uttar Pradesh (80) and Maharashtra (48).

Talks on seat sharing among INDIA group partners ran into a stalemate months ago when the Communist Party of India (Marxist), or CPI(M), and West Bengal Congress leaders said they could never have the TMC as an ally in the state since both have fought against it, as well as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in all elections after the 2011 assembly polls that ousted the Left Front government.

During her speech at the TMC rally in Kolkata where the list was announced on Sunday, the Bengal chief minister said: "We will contest all 42 seats in West Bengal against BJP, Left and Congress. We will contest one seat in Uttar Pradesh in tie-up with Samajwadi Party. I had a word with Akhilesh (Yadav). We are an opposition party in Meghalaya. We will contest there, and in Assam as well." Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, too, hit out at the TMC.

"The Indian National Congress has repeatedly declared its desire to have a respectable seat-sharing agreement with the TMC in West Bengal. The Indian



Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury

National Congress has always maintained that such an agreement has to be finalised through negotiations and not by unilateral announcements," Ramesh posted on X.

"The Indian National Congress has always wanted the INDIA group to fight the BJP together," he added.

Chowdhury also hit out at the TMC for nominating former Indian cricketer Yusuf Pathan from Murshidabad district's Berhampore seat that he has been winning since 1999.

An agitated Chowdhury told the media that TMC chief Banerjee fielded Pathan in view of the demographic structure of the district. "Mamata Banerjee knows very well that Murshidabad has the highest Muslim population. That's why she fielded Yusuf Pathan. Couldn't she find someone else in Bengal? A person had to be brought from Gujarat. If she wanted to felicitate Pathan in some way then she could have moved the INDIA group to spare a seat in Gujarat or offer him a Rajya Sabha seat instead," he said. Murshidabad has Bengal's highest Muslim population of 66.28% according to the last 2011 census.

"There is still time. Mamata Banerjee may still move the INDIA group to make an alternative arrangement for Pathan," Chowdhury added.

TMC spokesperson Santanu Sen hit back at Chowdhury, saying: "Chowdhury had done everything to help the BJP in Bengal. The Left parties did the same. These parties are in no position to talk on alliance."

## In Raj, Cong to assign areas of responsibility to top leaders

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**NEW DELHI:** Out of power in Rajasthan, the Congress high command is expected to assign areas of responsibilities to its top leaders in the state for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections in a plan that also aims to bring together its faction-ridden state unit.

In a screening committee meeting on March 6 to shortlist candidates for Rajasthan, both former chief minister Ashok Gehlot and former deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot were present.

The list of possible candidates would be taken up at the party's central election committee meeting on Monday.

But even before the poll panel decides the 25 candidates for Rajasthan, the top leadership has started assigning the responsibility of districts to leaders.

Under the plan, Gehlot will be in-charge of election management in Jodhpur, Nagaur, Bikaner and Pali districts. Pilot, who left the Gehlot cabinet in 2020, will handle Dausa, Tonk and Dhalpur districts.

State unit chief Govind Singh Dotasra is set to be given responsibilities of Sikar and Jaipur districts. Former assembly speaker CP Joshi has been assigned responsibilities of Udaipur, Rajas-



Ashok Gehlot and Sachin Pilot

mand and Bhilwara districts.

"Our responsibilities would include intensive campaigning for the party candidates, devising strategies for the area and mobilising the supporters and the voters," said one of the leaders who declined to be named.

On Monday, the party's election committee is expected to decide the candidates of Rajasthan, Goa, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, among other states.

For the past 10 years, Lok Sabha elections in Rajasthan had been a big challenge for the Congress. In both 2014 and 2019, it failed to win a single seat in the state and the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance bagged all the 25 Lok Sabha seats in both the general elections.

While the BJP won 25 of the 25 seats in 2014, one of its allies, Hanuman Beniwal of Rashtriya Loktantrik Party, won a seat in 2019. Rajasthan, Gujarat, Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal

Pradesh, Nagaland, Tripura, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh are among the states where the BJP swept the seats. In Delhi, the BJP bagged all seven seats.

Even as the party is in power in three states, Congress strategists point out how it has lost vital ground in north India as it conceded defeat to the BJP in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh last year. This loss in assembly polls has created a larger problem for the largest opposition party: It has faltered when it needed to drastically improve its strike rate against the BJP.

"The biggest problem for the opposition is that the Congress is not able to grow in states where it faces the BJP. In other areas, it plays a second fiddle to strong regional parties," a non-Congress leader said, seeking anonymity.

For the past two years, a number of Congress strategists pointed to this factor during internal meetings. "Our focus has remained on improving our strike rate in north India. If only we can expand our presence in north, we have a better chance to tackle the BJP nationally," said a Congress leader familiar with the matter.

In north India, the Congress now has only one chief minister, Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu in Himachal Pradesh. It is also in power in Karnataka and Telangana.

## Hry MP quits BJP over 'political, ideological differences', joins Cong

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**ROHTAK:** Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s Haryana MP Brijendra Singh quit the party citing "political and ideological differences" on Sunday and joined the Congress within a few hours. He later also resigned from the Lok Sabha.

Singh, a former IAS officer, took voluntary retirement after 21 years in service and joined the BJP ahead of the 2019 general elections. He defeated Jannayak Janata party leader Dushyant Chautala by 314,000 votes.

Announcing his decision on X, Singh said: "I have resigned from the primary membership of BJP, due to compelling political reasons. I extend gratitude to the party, National president JP Nadda, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amit Shah for giving me the opportunity to serve as the member of Parliament for Haryana."

In another post, he said: "I have also resigned from the membership of Lok Sabha. I am grateful to the people of Haryana for giving me the opportunity to represent them and raise their demands."

Hours later, Singh reached Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's residence in the national capital and joined the party.



Brijendra Singh

"I quit the BJP and joined the Congress because of political and ideological differences. From farmers' issues to Agniveers to the wrestler's protests – I differed on many things. I am very happy to join the Congress family," he said.

"The BJP-JJP alliance was also another major reason behind my unease in the BJP," he added.

Reacting to the development, JJP leader Dushyant Chautala said that he does not know with what planning Singh had quit the BJP.

"He can reveal better about his planning. For the last one year, he (Brijendra) was trying to leave the BJP and finally he left the party and joined the Congress. Will see whether he will contest from Haryana parliamentary seat or Sonapat," he added.

## PANEL TO OVERSEE COORDINATION IN HIMACHAL CONG

**NEW DELHI:** The Congress party has formed a six-member committee for better coordination between the government and the organisation in Himachal Pradesh.

According to an official release, the committee includes CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, state party president Pratibha Singh, Deputy CM Mukesh Agnihotri, Congress leader Kaul Singh Thakur, Dhani Ram Shandil and Ram Lal Thakur.

"Congress president has approved the proposal to constitute a coordination committee as follows for better coordination between the government and the Organisation in Himachal Pradesh, with immediate effect," the statement said. On Saturday, a total of 11 Himachal Pradesh MLAs arrived in BJP-ruled Uttarakhand amid the turmoil within the Congress party in the state, whose government is led by Sukhu. AGENCIES

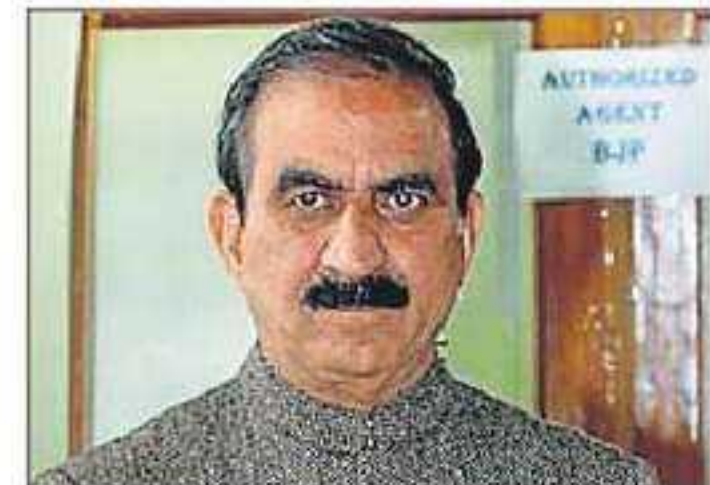
## Himachal Congress rebel's father, independent MLA booked for 'electoral offences' in RS polls

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**SHIMLA:** The Himachal Pradesh police on Sunday booked an independent MLA and the father of a Congress rebel on charges of "electoral offences", almost two weeks after the ruling Congress faced a crisis because six of its legislators, along with three independent members, cross-voted in the Rajya Sabha elections.

The Boileuaganj police registered as case against Himachal Pradesh's independent MLA Ashish Sharma and former Uttarakhand chief secretary Rakesh Sharma, father of Congress's Gagret MLA Chaitanya Sharma, based on a complaint filed by Manali MLA Bhubaneswar Gaur and chief parliamentary secretary and Arki legislator Sanjay Awasthi. Both Awasthi and



Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu-led government faced a crisis after 6 Congress and 3 independent MLAs cross-voted in RS polls.

Rajya Sabha elections. Rakesh Sharma connived to facilitate the six rebels, including his son Chaitanya Sharma, they said.

Rakesh Sharma allegedly used his influence for the transportation of the rebel MLAs, the complainants said. Police should also track who facilitated the Pawan Hans choppers for ferrying the nine MLAs, they said. The BJP arranged for the transportation and lodging of the MLAs, they alleged in their complaint.

Awasthi said: "I have registered a complaint as a public servant. They used unfair means in the elections..."

The case has been registered under sections 171E (bribery), 171C (interfering with elections), 7A (taking undue advantage to influence a public servant by corrupt or illegal means or by exercise of per-

sonal influence) and 120B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code. "There is enough evidence with the police. We have collected video footage from CCTV camera," said Shimla superintendent of police Sanjeev Gandhi.

The rebel MLAs, meanwhile, remained defiant. "Any kind of pressure tactics will not work," said Ashish Sharma, who is amongst the nine MLAs now lodged at the Taj Hotel near Rishikesh in Uttarakhand.

In a joint statement issued on Sunday, these MLAs said they are fighting a battle of self-respect and questioned the mindset of the CM, who is approaching them for compromise and also issuing statements like black snakes. "With this attitude, the CM should be ready to face the consequences," said Rajinder Rana, one of the rebels.

## ED REGISTERS CASE AGAINST EX-DMK LEADER IN DRUG TRAFFICKING CASE

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**CHENNAI/NEW DELHI:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Sunday registered a money laundering case against expelled Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) functionary and movie producer Jaffer Sadiq, a day after he was arrested by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) in connection with the ₹2,000 crore drug trafficking racket busted last month.

Sadiq, who held the post of Chennai West-NRI Wing deputy organiser in the DMK, was dismissed by the party in February after his name and purported links to the drugs network were mentioned by NCB. As per NCB, Sadiq (36), who was the deputy head of the DMK's NRI wing in Chennai district, is the "kingpin and mastermind of the India-Australia-New Zealand international drug trafficking network".

Based on a bunch of first information reports (FIRs), including NCB's case, filed against Sadiq, ED on Sunday booked the former DMK functionary under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). "We have taken up probe in the drugs smuggling case involving Sadiq to investigate it from money laundering aspect and unearth international linkages," a senior ED official, who didn't want to be named, said.

On February 24, NCB announced that it had busted a cartel based on tip-offs from New Zealand customs authorities and Australian police.

NCB's deputy director general of operations, Gyaneshwar Singh, had said: "He is the kingpin and mastermind of the India-Australia-New Zealand international drug trafficking network."

Meanwhile, Sadiq's arrest triggered a political slugfest in Tamil Nadu, with the Opposition demanding an explanation from chief minister M K Stalin.

AIADMK general secretary Edappadi Palaniswami has called on Governor RN Ravi seeking an independent probe in the case. "The functioning of the police and State government is suspicious and a full fledged enquiry is necessary," he said.

TN law minister S Regupathy, however, maintained that DMK was not aware of Sadiq's activities. "All required action will be taken... We will bring him before the law and ensure he is punished," the law minister said.



# India, EFTA ink key trade pact

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**NEW DELHI:** India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), comprising Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland, on Sunday signed a trade deal securing duty-free access for Indian rice to the bloc, easy services exports and a "binding commitment" on investments of \$100 billion and creation of a million jobs over 15 years.

The Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) will also ease imports of high-value wine, chocolates and watches from the four countries. Swiss chocolates and watches of famous brands such as Rolex, Omega and Cartier are set to become cheaper for Indian consumers.

India will give duty concessions on chocolates, watches and wine, but wine costing below \$5 won't enjoy concessions to protect local manufacturers, a commerce ministry official said requesting anonymity. Basmati and non-basmati rice from India will get duty concession in EFTA countries without any reciprocity, he said.

In a statement, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called the signing of the deal "a watershed moment" and said that "the global leadership of EFTA countries in innovation and R&D across diverse spheres" will open new doors of collaboration.

He pointed to foreign direct investment (FDI) opportunities for the European bloc in India's growing sectors such as digital trade, banking, financial services, transport, logistics, industrial machinery, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, food processing and clean energy.

Commerce minister Piyush Goyal said, "For the first time in history of FTAs [free trade agreements], a binding commitment of \$100 billion investment and one million direct jobs in the next 15 years has been given." The commerce ministry said in a statement: "For the first ever time in the history of FTAs, a legal commitment is being made about promoting target-oriented investment and creation of jobs."

Norway's trade minister Jan Christian Vestre told a media briefing the four states aren't



Union minister of commerce & industry Piyush Goyal addresses the media on the signing of the India-EFTA deal along with his counterparts in New Delhi on Sunday.

deciding where private companies should invest, and investments "won't be guaranteed by the TEPA" because the private sector decides on FDI.

"It's up to the private sector, private companies and private businesses. We can't make any guarantees on their behalf but the goal is \$100 billion," he said.

If this figure isn't reached in 15 to 20 years, both sides will sit down and "look at different mechanisms to make sure it happens", Vestre said. Both sides have a concrete action plan to follow up on this issue by creating the right framework conditions and matchmaking, including establishing an office in India to promote investments.

Two officials with direct knowledge of the matter said the figure of \$100 billion for FDI from the bloc—\$50 billion in the first 10 years and another \$50 billion in the next five years—was arrived at after thoroughly considering all economic factors, and India can proportionately withdraw tariff concessions in case EFTA fails to meet the commitment.

"Hence, it is a legally binding commitment and part of the deal," one of them said. The FDI commitment is based on India's rapid economic development in the past two decades, when the country's annual nominal GDP growth rate was around 9.5% in US dollar terms. There is a 13% annual increase in FDI flow from the EFTA countries into India during this period, totalling \$10.7 billion in 2022.

"The agreement, however,

excludes sovereign wealth funds from FDI promotion obligations, but investments of an EFTA entity routed through other countries will also be counted in the \$100 billion obligation," the second official said. Both officials requested anonymity as they are not authorised to talk to the press.

The agreement envisages that India will also create an environment conducive to increased investment flows and technology collaboration, which excludes technology transfer. Both parties have agreed to establish a sub-committee on investment promotion and cooperation for this purpose, the officials said.

Switzerland alone accounts for almost 80% of the investments of \$10.7 billion by the private sector from EFTA. The four countries have also created about 150,000 jobs in India so far. Norway's sovereign fund alone has invested \$17 billion in India and its climate fund is eyeing large investments in the country.

Speaking about the TEPA, Goyal said it will boost "Make in India" and "provide a window to Indian exporters" to access large European and global markets. The pact comprises 14 chapters focused on subjects such as market access for goods and services, rules of origin, trade facilitation, trade remedies, investment promotion, intellectual property rights and trade and sustainable development. The agreement will come into force after formal ratification in all the countries.

Goyal and EFTA ministers

said both sides acknowledged and respected each other's sensitivities, particularly on agriculture. Hence, sectors such as dairy, soya, coal and sensitive agricultural products were kept in the exclusion list. India's interests in generic medicines and concerns related to evergreening of patents have been fully addressed, he said.

According to the deal, EFTA is offering 92.2% of its tariff lines that cover 99.6% of India's exports, which includes 100% of non-agri products, and tariff concession on processed agricultural products (PAP). India is offering 82.7% of its tariff lines that cover 95.3% of EFTA exports, of which more than 80% is gold.

"The effective duty on gold remains untouched," a commerce ministry official said, adding that sectors covered under production linked incentive (PLI) scheme such as pharma, medical devices and processed food have also been protected.

"The deal is particularly beneficial for Indian services sector as easy mobility is secured for professionals providing IT services, business services, education services and audio-visual services. India will be treated at par with MFNs (most favoured nations) barring EU for easier visa," he said, adding India's services exports are larger than merchandise exports to EFTA. India's annual services exports to EFTA is around \$4 billion, he added.

According to government data, India's exports to EFTA in January-December 2023 was \$1.87 billion, but its import from the group was in excess of \$20.45 billion, where Switzerland's share was \$19.65 billion due to purchase of gold.

The FTA also has provisions for mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) in professional services such as nursing, chartered accountants and architects, which will enable these professionals to work in EFTA countries, the commerce ministry official said.

TEPA was signed by Goyal, Swiss federal councillor and head of the federal department of economic affairs Guy Parmelin, Iceland's foreign minister Bjarni Benediktsson, Liechtenstein's foreign minister Dominique Hasler and Norway's trade minister Jan Christian Vestre.



Helene Budliger Artieda

## MUTUAL RESPECT MADE TRADE DEAL POSSIBLE, SAYS TOP SWISS OFFICIAL

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**NEW DELHI:** India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) bloc were able to stitch together a trade deal after negotiations spread over just a year because both sides respected each other's sensitivities and aimed for a balanced agreement, a top Swiss official said on Sunday.

The Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) signed by India and the bloc comprising Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland is set to facilitate easy services exports and allow scaling up of cutting-edge technologies in the large Indian market. It includes a commitment by the four countries on investments of \$100 billion and creating a million jobs in India over 15 years.

The Swiss state secretary for economic affairs, Helene Budliger Artieda, who met commerce minister Piyush Goyal 10 times in less than a year, said in an interview that the clear definition of ground rules and principles after the two sides resumed discussions on the trade deal last year helped drive the negotiations.

Both sides "wanted to have a balanced deal" and to "respect each other's sensitivities", and India's evolution in the handling of intellectual property rights (IPR) in recent years also facilitated discussions, she said.

Artieda referred to the commitment on investments and job creation in the TEPA and said this was part of efforts to create a balance between the market of 1.4 billion people in India and the market of about 15 million in EFTA states. "The four of us are large FDI net exporters...we just never did the pledge in a free trade agreement," she said.

Agencies  
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**WASHINGTON DC:** As the Russia-Ukraine conflict raged in 2022, the United States started "preparing rigorously" for a potential nuclear strike by Moscow against Kyiv, in what would have been the first nuclear attack since the US dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki nearly eighty years before, CNN reported citing two senior administration officials.

The report stated that outreach from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other countries also played an important role in averting the crisis.

The Biden administration was specifically concerned Russia might use a tactical or battlefield nuclear weapon, the officials said. Amid the fears, the US sought to enlist the help of non-allies including India, to discourage Russia from such an attack, as reported by CNN.

"One of the things we did was not only message them directly but strongly urge, press, encour-

## REGARDING THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT, INDIA HAS ALWAYS CONDEMNED CIVILIAN KILLINGS AND CALLED FOR A RESOLUTION

age other countries, to whom they might be more attentive, to do the same thing," the senior administration official said.

US officials say that outreach and public statements from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and others helped avert a crisis.

"I think we believe showing the international community the concern about this, particularly the concern from key countries for Russia and the Global South, was also a helpful, persuasive factor and showed them what the cost of all this could be," CNN quoted a senior administration official as saying.

"I think the fact that we know, India weighed in, China weighed

in, others weighed in, may have had some effect on their thinking," the senior administration official added. "I can't demonstrate this positively, but I think that's our assessment."

Regarding the Russia-Ukraine conflict, India has always condemned civilian killings and called for a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

In a major statement, PM Modi told President Putin that "this is not the era of war" on the sidelines of the SCO summit in Uzbekistan last year. The statement even made to the G20 communicate under the presidency of India.

During this period from late summer to fall 2022, the National Security Council convened a series of meetings to put contingency plans in place "in the event of either a very clear indication that they were about to do something, attack with a nuclear weapon, or if they just did, how we would respond, how we would try to preempt it or deter it," the senior administration official said.

## Kota electrocution: Boy succumbs to injuries

HT Correspondent  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**JAIPUR:** A 12-year-old boy, who was electrocuted during a Mahashivratri procession in Kota district of Rajasthan, succumbed to his injuries on Sunday, a police officer familiar with the matter said, adding that the condition of four others remains critical.

A total of 18 children sustained burn injuries on March 8, when a group of nearly 100 children, between the ages of 7 and 15, was marching through the Kali Basti area of Kota district as part of a "Shiv Baraat" procession.

"During the procession, a boy was carrying a flag hoisted on an iron rod which came in contact with a high-tension wire causing electrocution. Other children sustained burns while trying to rescue him," superintendent of police (Kota), Amrita Duhan, had

said. According to police, five of the children were shifted from Kota's MBS Hospital to Jaipur's SMS Hospital in critical condition.

"Of these five, Shagun Nayak (12), who sustained 90% burns in the incident, succumbed to his injuries on Sunday. The condition of the remaining four, who sustained 50% burns, remains critical," an officer familiar with the matter said.

Chief minister Bhajan Lal Sharma has announced ₹100,000 compensation for the families of the deceased and the four children in critical condition, while ₹50,000 each will be given to the families of 12 others injured in the incident.

On Saturday, the police had lodged a first information report (FIR) against three organisers of the event under sections 304A, 308, 337, and 34 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

## 3 BOOKED IN RAJ AS RAPE SURVIVOR ATTEMPTS SUICIDE

**BHARATPUR:** A 14-year-old girl allegedly attempted suicide after she was raped by three men in the Bharatpur district of Rajasthan, police officers familiar with the matter said on Saturday. The girl's condition was currently stable, they added.

According to the FIR filed by the Class 10 student's father, three of their neighbours were harassing his daughter and last Monday they raped her by forcefully entering their house.

"The accused harassed my daughter so much that she was forced to attempt suicide. The accused also threatened us against approaching the police," the man said in the FIR, a copy of which HT has seen.

Brijesh Singh, Halena police station in-charge said the three men — Guddu Singh, Pravin Kumar and Anurag Singh have been booked under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections 354D (stalking), 376 (rape), 506 (criminal intimidation) and the relevant sections Pcoso Act. HT

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## Golden Opportunity for New Paragliding Operators in Uttarakhand

Exemption in license fee for 3 years for new paragliding operators in Uttarakhand.

FEE EXEMPTION APPLICABLE AT THESE SITES

District	Place
Dehradun	Dudhli village near Bhadraraj
	Sangaon Near Thanoo
Tehri	Timli village near Shivpuri
	Kuttha Pratap Nagar
Pauri	Barkholu, Rautela Gaon
	Maason
Champawat	Jhoomadhuri, Lohaghat
	Karnakarayat near Badasur ka Qila
Pithoragarh	Garuda near Mostamaanu
	Jeeval, Gangolihat
Bageshwar	Nael
	Jaulkaande
	Vinaai (Dooni) Kapkot
Almora	Jhandidhaar (Jaalekh) Kapkot
	Binta
Nainital	Mangoli



For exemption, send application to official e-mail: [adventureingutdb@gmail.com](mailto:adventureingutdb@gmail.com)  
For more information visit department's website: [uttarakhandtourism.gov.in](http://uttarakhandtourism.gov.in)

Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board

[uttarakhandtourism.gov.in](http://uttarakhandtourism.gov.in)



# Champhai government to p Abua Awas to 20 lakh fami

A new saga of reform and welfare activities began when Champhai Soren took over the reigns of the government. The innumerable reforms and beneficial schemes so assiduously conceptualized and initiated by the Hemant Soren government have started reaching fruition earning laurels and accolades from one and all.

**A**fter assuming office on February 2 this year, Chief Minister Champhai Soren declared that he would carry forward the reforms initiated by the erstwhile Chief Minister Shri Hemant Soren. An active member of Jharkhand movement, Soren hails from a humble background. The housing scheme named Abua Awas Yojana, a dream scheme of Hemant Soren became his mission to empower the impoverished by providing them housing facilities. He envisioned a Jharkhand where all eligible homeless people would be given residence and there will be no discrimination based on caste, creed and religion. Champhai Soren who has promised to work under the guidance of Dishom Guru Shibu Soren in a short period of time, besides Housing Scheme, moved rapidly towards implementation of other welfare schemes like Gram Gadi Yojna, etc. The law and order situation has also improved considerably. He has directed to speed-up investigation of all pending cases particularly that of murder, women harassment and POCSO Act. He also stressed on maintaining strict vigil on jails so that the crimes committed and perpetrated from there could be nailed. Chief Minister Champhai Soren has also focused on proper training and purchase of modern equipments and gadgets to make the system efficient and effective.



Chief Minister Champhai Soren has also emphasized on improving the health sector. The absence of doctors has become a serious issue regarding which Soren has directed all the doctors to be present on duty in hospital. He has warned that absence would result in stern action. The poor and needy must get timely proper medical attention.

As far as paying attention towards the progress of farmers is concerned, the Champhai Soren government has also started working in that direction. He has directed to release the amount for purchasing paddy. Apart from this he has also given direction to give grains to green ration card holders every month.

Other focus areas include appointment of tribal and regional language teachers, distribution of Guruji Credit Card, repairing of roads, formation of Sido-Kanhu Club, expediting the construction work of medical colleges in Ranchi and Bokaro, expansion of 325 block level schools of excellence, process of appointment of professors in universities and colleges.

Chief Minister Champhai Soren is also concerned about the naxal problem in the state. He has expressed deep grief over the martyrdom of two soldiers in an encounter with Maoists in the border area of Jori and Berio police stations of Chatra district. Describing the incident as unfortunate, he said that the government is taking all necessary steps to control Naxalite activities.

Soren said that police operations against Naxalites will continue. He promised that under no circumstances the morale of the security forces be allowed to fall. He directed the Home Department and the Director General of Police to take action against the Naxalites.

His government also took initiative for mining in the mineral rich state. He has directed to start mining soon in the 10 mineral blocks already allotted and to complete the auction process of major and minor mineral blocks soon.



- Special Focus of the Champhai Soren Government is seen on education, health and transportation system.
- Zero tolerance on crime across the state with special focus on Ranchi, Dumka, Dhanbad, Giridih, Jamshedpur and Hazaribagh.
- Police operations against Naxalite to continue.

## Specialties of Abua Awas

- Three-room pucca house with clean kitchen and washroom
- Area of the House-31 square meters
- Provision of financial assistance of Rs 2 lakh to the eligible beneficiary and wages for the construction work of his house under MNREGA.

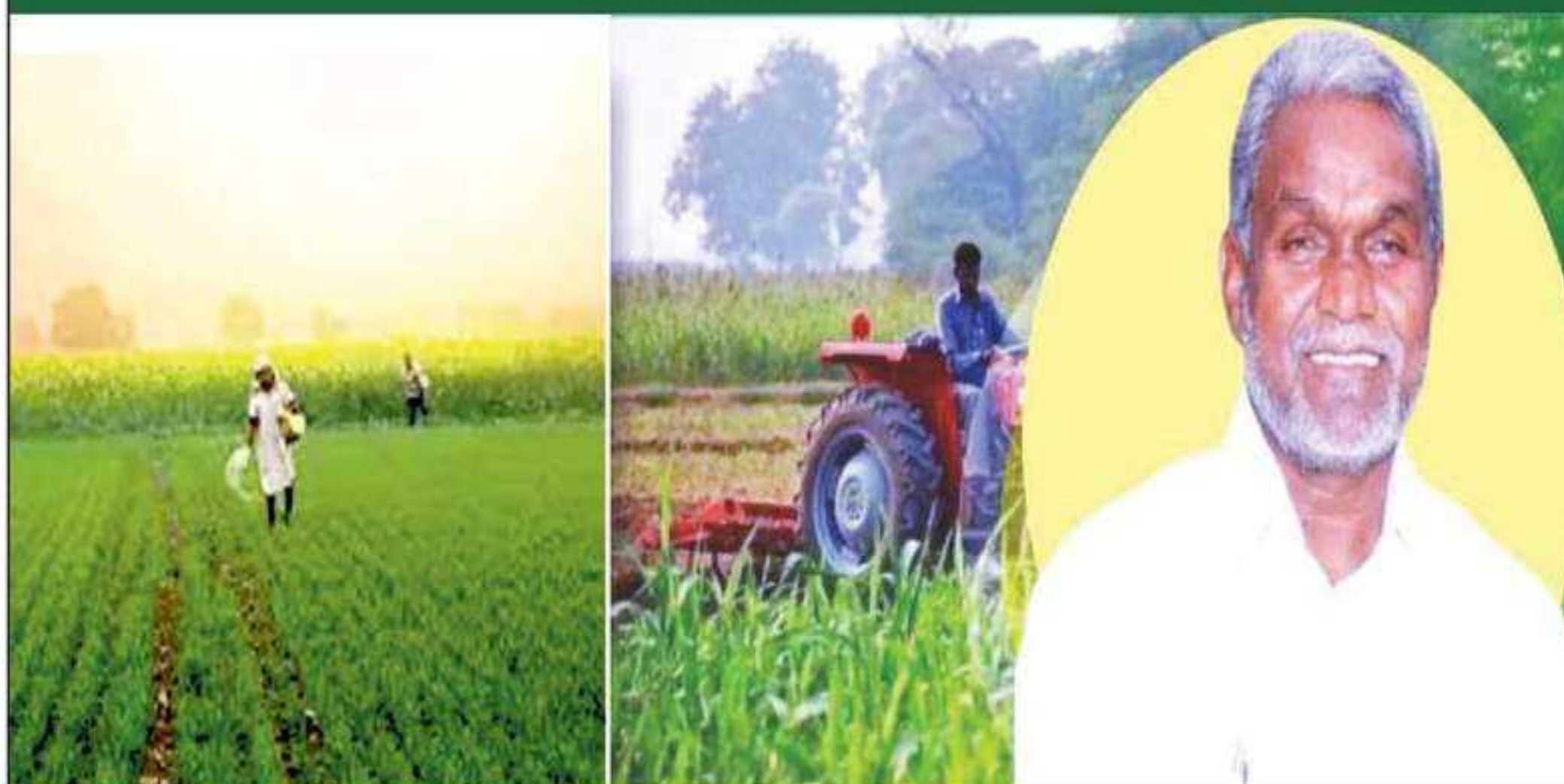
## Jharkhand govt waives farmers' loan, increases loan waiver limit to 2 Lakh

**I**n the financial year 2024-25, the loan waiver limit will be increased from Rs 50,000 to Rs 2,00,000 and farmers holding NPA accounts will also be included under this scheme. The priority of the Champhai government is to free the farmers from debt, provide relief from drought and most importantly to increase their income. Loan worth Rs 1858 crore of more than 4.62lakh farmers has been waived through Jharkhand Agricultural Loan Waiver Scheme.

Scheme has been implemented in the financial year 2023-24 and seeds have been distributed on subsidy, covering about 2,10,000 farmers.

- Loan worth Rs 1858 crore of more than 4.62 lakh farmers has been waived through Jharkhand Agricultural Loan Waiver Scheme

## Jharkhand Agricultural Loan Waiver Scheme



## Free electricity limit increa families get benefit

**A**fter chief minister Champhai Soren assumed power, he increased the free electricity limit to 125 units which during the Hemant Soren term was 100 units. In this way he took forward the revolutionary step of former Chief Minister Shri Hemant Soren had taken in 2022. While 100 unit free electricity benefitted 19,20,224 people, 125 unit free electricity scheme will benefit 30 lakh families.

The government is also developing Giridih district as a model solar city in the financial year 2024-25. Farmers will be given 20,000 off-grid solar pumps. The process of setting up a 4000MW super thermal power plant in Patratu is going on. In Koderma, Chandil, Balliapur, Gomia, and Devipur grid substation construction is underway. In Simaria, Barkagaon, Gola, Dugdha, Mahuda, Nirsra, Gaona, Putki, Ramgarh, Vishnugadh, Petarwar, and Huntergan grid substation-related work is underway.

- The government is going to develop Giridih into model solar city in the financial year 2024-25.



# provide lies



## EMERGING JHARKHAND



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### Sarvjan Pension Yojna benefit to 23.50 lakhs

People up to 60 years old are covered by the Chief Minister Sarvjan Pension Yojna. However, people with disabilities, people from primitive tribes, poor women, people with HIV/AIDS, transgender, and all EWS who are 50 years of age or older are also covered. All women who are economically disadvantaged as well as members of Scheduled Tribes and Castes who have reached the age of 50 are eligible to receive pension payments. A total budget of Rs 3,107.40 crore has been provided for financial year 2024-2025 under the scheme.



### 2,500 Anganwadi centres to have their own building

Every Anganwadi centres will have a building of its own, thanks to the state government's efforts. By 2025, the government intends to develop 2,500 Anganwadi centres buildings at the centres running without their own building. 38,432 centres are in operation as of now in the state.



### Financial assistance of Rs 8,247 crore to women SHGs

The Champai Soren government is striving to advance everyone in a respectful manner. It is providing complete support to the female self-help groups (SHGs). The government has undertaken the task of giving the sisters of 50,000 women's SHG a financial contribution of Rs 8,247 crore. There have been numerous attempts to create employment opportunities for Jharkhand women in order to help them become self-sufficient. Girls from class 8 to class 12 would get between Rs 2,500 and Rs 5,000 under the Savitribai Phule Kishori Samridhi Yojana, which aims to encourage girls towards higher education, outlaw child marriage, and stop female foeticide. Under the Mukhyamantri Kanyadan Yojana, a total of Rs 468 crore has been set aside for one-time financial support of Rs 20,000 to adolescent girls and Rs 30,000 upon the marriage of girls.



### Maternity kit will be distributed among six lakh women

Six lakh beneficiaries would receive a Rs. 1,500 maternity kit, which includes necessities for the mother's and child's health and cleanliness. For this, the state government has provided budget of Rs 90 crore for the upcoming year. The maternity pack will come with a variety of items, including a bucket mug, oil, soap, clothes for the mother and infant, and a mosquito net.



### 15000 KM road construction work under progress

The state government is currently building 15,000 kilometers of roads in different parts of Jharkhand. The goal of the government is to build a solid road network that will link the district and block headquarters with the rural areas. The state administration is constantly working to increase the road connectivity between rural and urban areas. The government's goal for the upcoming fiscal year 2024-2025 is to reinforce 5,000 kilometers of roads.

## Jharkhand government to spend Rs 4,831 crore for Abua Awas in the FY 2024-25

The government's ambitious Abua Awas Yojana has been started keeping in mind those needy people who are not able to get the benefits of the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awas Yojana despite their eligibility. It will provide pucca houses to the poor families of the state. Under the scheme, financial assistance of Rs 2 lakh is given to the beneficiaries in five instalments. Keeping in mind the huge number of applications, the Champai Soren Government changed its action plan and increased the size of the budget. Now a target has been set to provide Abua Awas to 20 lakh families.

**After food and clothing the government is now providing pucca houses**

### Eligibility criteria for Abua Awas

- Families living in kutcha houses
- Homeless
- Destitute families
- Families belonging to PVTG
- Families victims of natural calamities,
- Legally released bonded labourers
- Families not provided financial assistance by the State Government or the Central Government.
- Those who have not been given the benefit of housing scheme run by the Central Government like Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Rural / Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar Awas Yojana / Birsa Awas Yojana / Indira Awas Yojana etc. will get it.

## Jharkhand govt gifts Mukhyamantri Gram Gadi Yojana



### Salient features

- Free transportation to Senior Citizen (above 60 years), Students, Women covered under widow pension by the state government, Government recognised Jharkhand Andolankari and Specially abled (more than 40%)
- Priority to ST, SC and Other Backward Classes in selection of beneficiaries
- 5% annual interest subsidy on purchase of new vehicle for beneficiaries for 05 years
- Road Tax – 100% exemption
- Permit Fee, Registration Fee for New Vehicle, Fitness Test Fee and Permit Application Fee - ₹1 (Rupee One)
- Citizens/Vehicle owners willing to avail the benefits of the scheme can contact the District Transport Officers of their respective districts.

Launched by former Chief Minister Sri Hemant Soren, the Mukhyamantri Gram Gadi Yojna will help connect rural areas with sub divisions and districts. Under this scheme as many as 83 buses have been flagged off. Soon more than 250 vehicles will start running in rural areas. This will provide free transportation to students, Jharkhand Andolankari, disabled, elderly people and widows.

## osed to 125 units, 30 lakh Mother tongue-based teaching in 259 schools



**T**he state government is working on a plan to start operation of all 325 block level leader schools in the academic session 2024-25. Also, a target has been set to develop 4,036 Panchayat level schools as model schools in the next two years. For the first time in the financial year 2023-24, the mother tongue-based teaching process was started on an experimental basis in 259 schools of the state. In view of its positive results, a target has been set to implement it in 1,000 primary schools in 07 districts of the state in the financial year 2024-25. With the aim of increasing enrolment of female students in the institutions of higher learning, the State Government launched the Manki Munda Scholarship Scheme. It provides financial aid to female students enrolled in undergraduate and diploma programmes in technical educational institutions of the State. Under the plan, diploma-level recipients will receive financial aid of Rs 15,000 annually, and degree-level recipients will receive Rs 30,000 annually. It will be put into effect in 2024-2025 fiscal year. A State-wide Learning Management System (LMS) is being developed to enable online learning of students. The LMS will facilitate students' online classes, assessment, proctoring and grading. It will also conduct UGC and AICTE approved courses online to enhance the knowledge of students.

- 4,036 Panchayat level schools will be developed as model schools





With the stage set for the ultimate electoral contest, a look at the key factors that may dictate the outcome

# Can tech reshape the poll campaign?

Technological change is moulding election campaigns. But online campaigning is best utilised as a complement, rather than as a substitute or adjunct, to old-fashioned retail politicking

Shahana Sheikh

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India epitomises the global communication technology revolution. In the early 1990s, there were only an estimated six landline phones for every 1,000 Indians and waiting times were measured in months. Today, smartphones can be purchased over the counter within minutes and their presence is ubiquitous. This transformation is further enabled by India's cheap mobile data rates. By the end of 2022, roughly two-thirds of Indians were using smartphones, and by 2026, India will have an estimated one billion smartphone users. India's political parties have increasingly turned to social media and the messaging app WhatsApp in their campaigns, leading observers to characterise the 2019 parliamentary elections as "the WhatsApp election".

However, alongside the proliferation of smartphone usage, which allows for low-cost party-voter communication, India's parties continue to conduct mass in-person campaign rallies during election season. For instance, prior to India's 2019 national general elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi each addressed around 140 in-person rallies during the official two-month campaign. These were accompanied by even more rallies featuring other star campaigners.

The ongoing prevalence of mass campaign rallies in the digital age motivates a broader question about modern campaigns in India. Why do expensive, labour-intensive, and time-consuming in-person mass campaign rallies persist when there are cheaper ways for parties to conduct more targeted outreach online? More specifically, how are internet-based communication technologies shaping party campaigns in India today?

## Continued importance of in-person campaigning in India

An analysis of parties' self-reported campaign expenditures reveals that during the 2014 and 2019 parliamentary elections, both the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC or the Congress) spent between one-quarter and one-third of their total campaign expenditure on in-person campaigning, with a substantial share spent on rallies. Nationally representative surveys conducted by Lokniti-CSDS reveal that, during campaigns from 1999 to 2019, the share of voters attending election meetings or rallies has remained stable at about 20%.

A face-to-face survey I conducted with approximately 4,000 voters in Uttar Pradesh in 2022 revealed that voters consider in-person campaigning to be of high importance for voter outreach. In the survey, each voter was asked to rank the importance of five campaign activities of a party in its voter outreach efforts: Door-to-door canvassing, mass campaign rallies, campaigning on social media, party advertisements on TV and radio, and party advertisements on roadside public posters and billboards. For smaller, regional-level parties, 73% of surveyed voters considered in-person campaigning — such as door-to-door canvassing and mass campaign rallies — to be the most important campaign activity for voter outreach. Even for

large, national-level parties — such as the BJP and the Congress — nearly 54% of the surveyed voters considered in-person campaigning to be of greatest importance. Given how highly voters rank in-person campaigning, it is unlikely to be displaced.

## Innovation or normalisation?

Existing scholarship on how the growing use of the internet will affect party campaign strategy is divided into two schools of thought. The first, innovation hypothesis, posits that the internet can reform politics and holds that as internet use becomes widespread, party campaigns conducted on social media platforms will substitute traditional campaigns. Proponents of this theory expect digital technologies to fundamentally upend campaign politics, rendering physical campaigning obsolete. This prediction implies that a party can potentially run a successful campaign entirely online.

On the other hand, the normalisation hypothesis asserts that, even as internet use increases, a party's online campaigns will supplement — rather than replace — traditional, in-person campaign activities. This logic holds that in-person campaigning is expected to remain central to party strategy, ultimately resulting in "politics as usual." This theory suggests that in the future, parties may merely live-stream their in-person campaign events on social media.

However, evidence from recent election campaigns in India does not easily align with either of these hypotheses.

## Content-complementarity during party campaigns in India

In modern Indian political campaigns, parties strategically leverage content-complementarity — a two-way relationship between online and in-person campaigning.

Social media creates a perpetual demand for parties to produce online content, with campaign rallies being particularly valuable. Scholars have found that rallies achieve a range of purposes, such as solving asymmetric information within a party and enabling clientelistic exchanges between parties and voters. In addition, in the digital age, rallies provide parties with online material, which boosts their importance. The demand for online content also shapes how parties conduct mass campaign rallies.

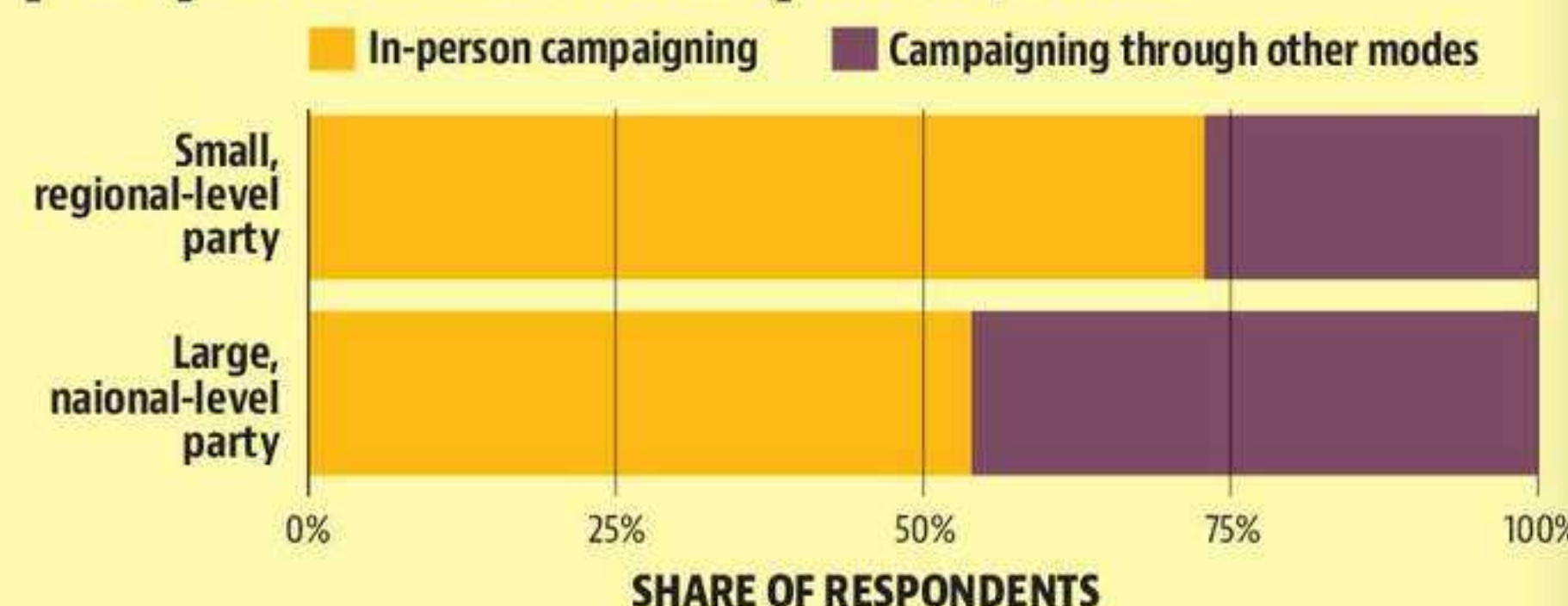
Before an upcoming rally, a party will broadcast information about it on social media platforms — such as X (formerly known as Twitter), Facebook, and WhatsApp — to mobilise lower-level party functionaries and voters. After the rally's conclusion, the party will select specific photographs, speech excerpts, sound bites, and displays of enthusiasm from the rally to share on social media. Voters see real-world evidence from rallies as vital in evaluating a party's fit with their interests and prospects for electoral success.

A party's concurrent use of different campaigning modes extends the rally's shelf life, giving it a pre-life and afterlife on social media. The rally-organising party can bypass mainstream media, disseminating rally content on social media. For the rally-organising party, the benefits of the event are no longer limited to reaching those who physically attend it. Rather, through content circulated on social media, a rally's effects travel to voters' phones, transcending the rally's time and place. Social media content from in-person rallies can simultaneously influence voter perceptions of the rally-organising party and mobilise voters for the party's future rallies.

Content-complementarity manifests most explicitly in content about rally crowds. Because rally crowds provide ready-made content for parties' online

CHART 1

## Voter perceptions of the most important party outreach activity in UP, 2022

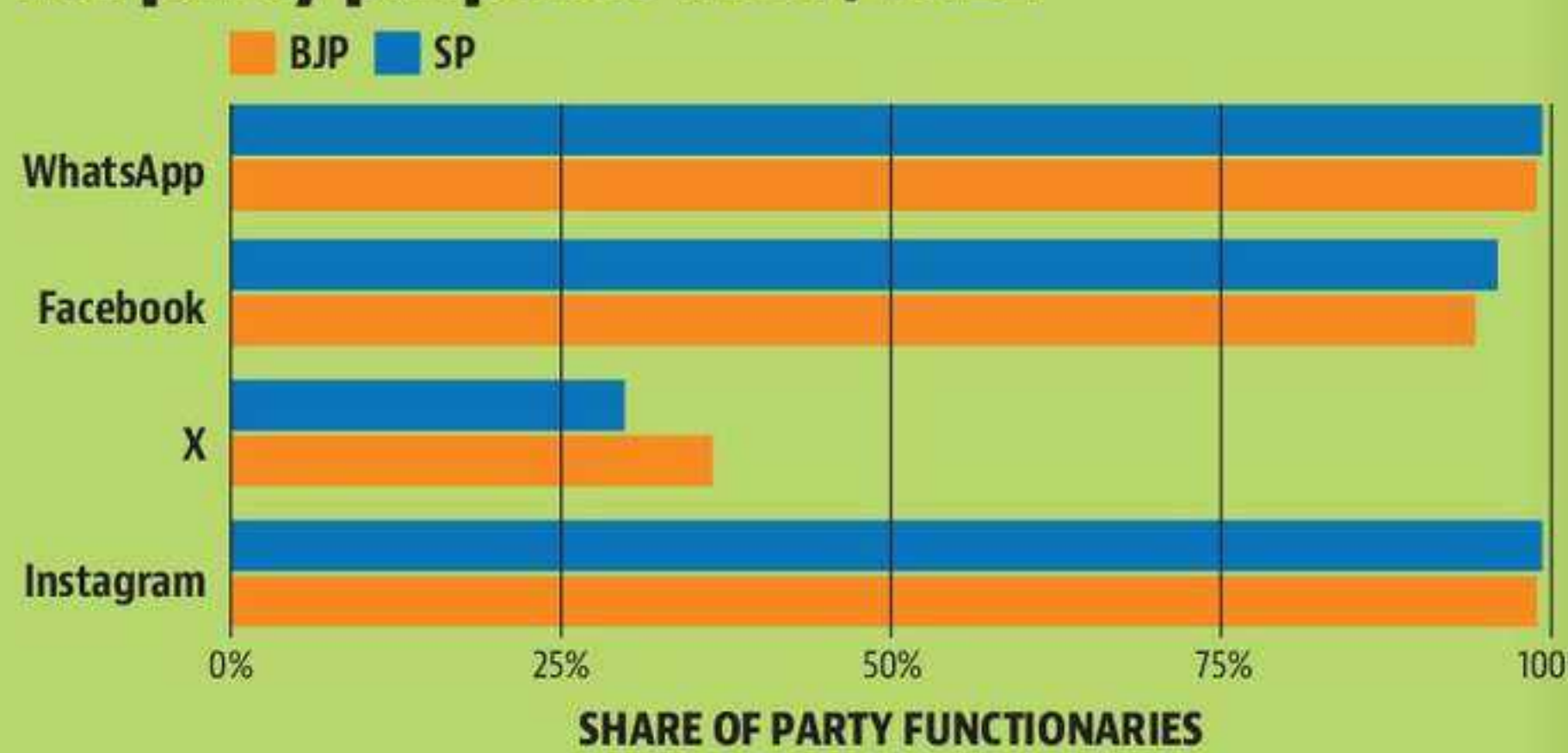


Note: 'In-person campaigning' includes door-to-door canvassing and mass campaign rallies. 'Campaigning through other modes' includes campaigning on social media, party advertisements on TV and radio, and party advertisements on roadside public posters and billboards.

Source: Author's voter survey in Uttar Pradesh, 2022.

CHART 3

## Party functionaries' use of smartphone apps for party purposes in UP, 2022



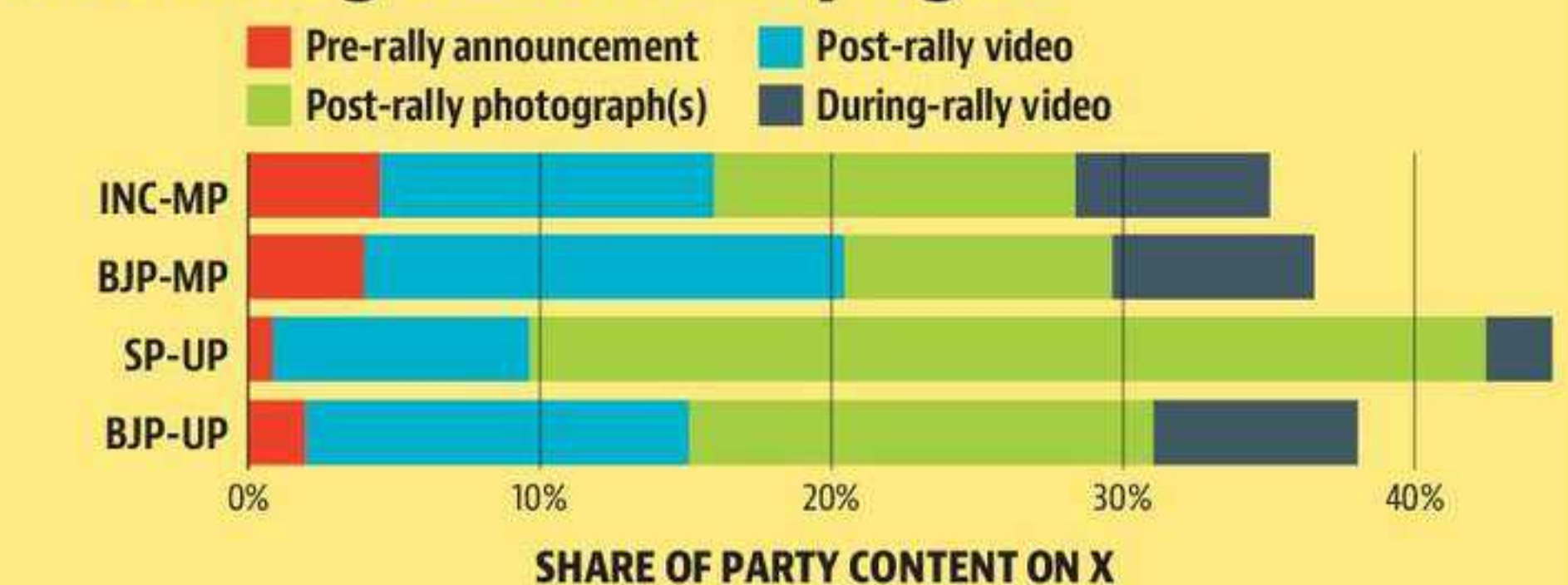
Abbreviations: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Samajwadi Party (SP)

Note: Response to survey question: Do you use [name of smartphone app] for party purposes?

Source: Author's survey of party functionaries in Uttar Pradesh, 2022.

CHART 2

## Party use of rally content for online engagement on X during election campaigns

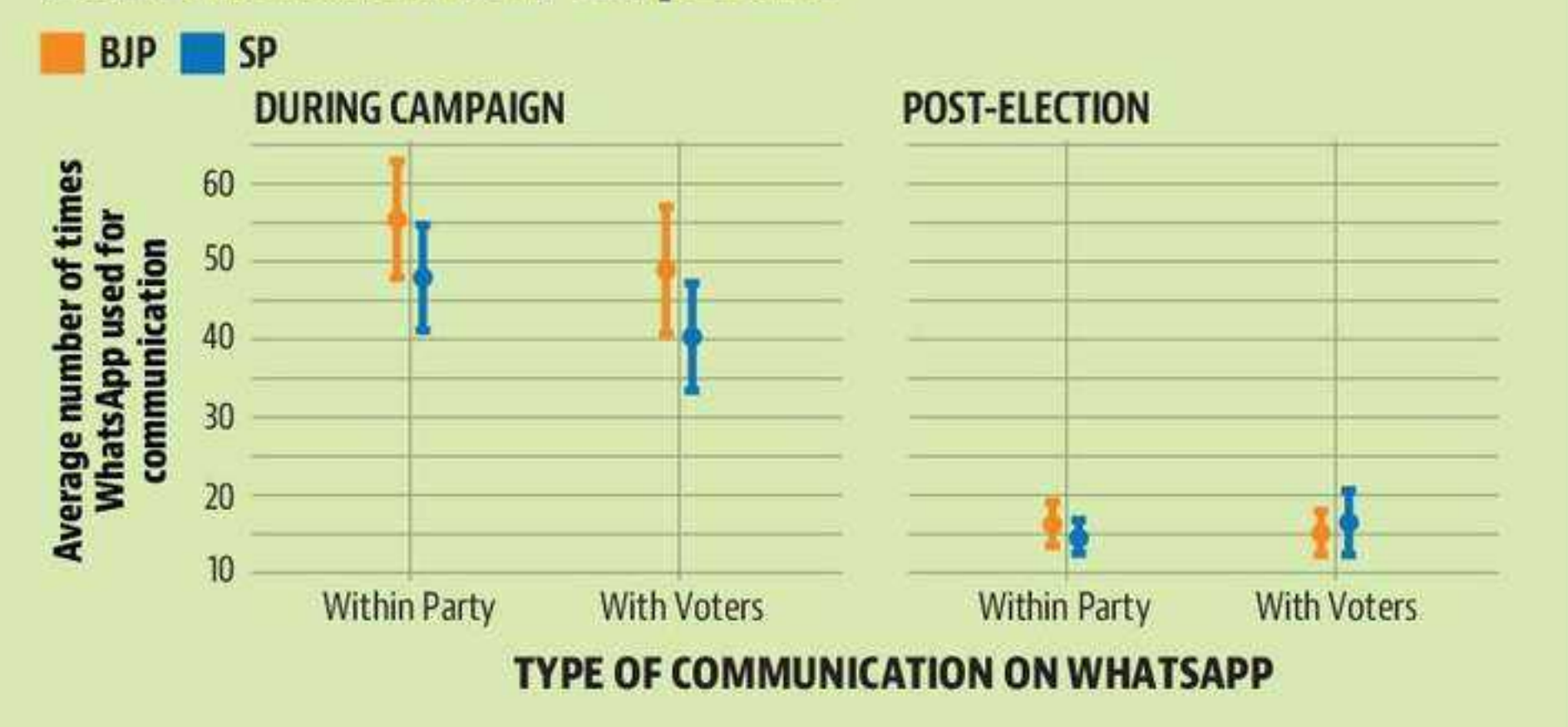


Abbreviations: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Samajwadi Party (SP), Indian National Congress (INC), Uttar Pradesh (UP), and Madhya Pradesh (MP)

Source: Author's analysis of X data

CHART 4

## Daily use of WhatsApp by party functionaries in UP, 2022



Abbreviations: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Samajwadi Party (SP)

Note: Bars indicate 95 percent confidence intervals. Data is only considered for those party functionaries who reported using WhatsApp fewer than 300 times per day for communication either within their party or with voters, which reduces the sample size by approximately 10 percent.

Source: Author's voter survey in Uttar Pradesh, 2022.

engagement, they are high-stakes endeavours, laden with great risks (if they flop) as well as great rewards (if they succeed). Photographs and videos revealing low turnout are fodder for an opposition party to exploit on social media to mock the rally-organising party for its apparent lack of support. This can negatively impact voter perceptions about the rally-organising party and demobilise voters from participating in its campaign.

On the other hand, if a large crowd turns out for a rally, the rally-organising party can boast about the crowd turnout on social media. This can positively influence voter perceptions and mobilise voters to participate in its campaign.

## Party-voter linkages: Evidence from party campaigns

To test the parties' use of content-complementarity, I examined partisan tweets during recent state election campaigns in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. For Uttar Pradesh, I investigated content on the official X handles of the BJP in Uttar Pradesh and the Samajwadi Party (SP), which were the two most competitive parties in the 2022 state elections. A content analysis of nearly 9,300 tweets that appeared from these handles during the campaign period revealed that around 40% of partisan tweets included rally content. For both the BJP and the SP, among tweets that contained rally content, at least 75% included post-rally content.

For Madhya Pradesh, I examined content on the official X handles of the state units of the BJP and Congress. A content analysis of around 3,100 tweets that appeared from these handles during the 2023 state elections campaign uncovered a similar pattern. Around 35% of tweets contained rally content, and of those, almost 70% included post-rally content.

A remarkable percentage of partisan X data contained rally content, and a

striking proportion of this was post-rally content, which typically consisted of photographs of the rally crowd and the party's campaigner and videos from the campaigner's rally speech.

On X, parties boasted about "historic" crowd sizes at their rallies. For instance, in one post, which included an accompanying video with visuals of large rally crowds, @BJPUP said: "jan sailab phir se itihaas likhne jaa raha hai, UP mein phir se kamal khilne jaa raha hai" ([this] flood of people is going to write history, the lotus is going to bloom again in UP). In another post, which included a video with a speech excerpt that referred to the large crowd gathered at the rally site, @samajwadiparty said, "Aitihasyik jansamarthan bata raha hai badlaav hone jaa raha hai" ([this] historic people's support is telling us that change is going to happen).

Party circulation of post-rally content is not limited to X. Among the approximately 400 party functionaries from the BJP and the SP who I surveyed in Uttar Pradesh in 2022, 90% said that they posted photographs and/or videos from their party's rallies on WhatsApp and/or Facebook. Moreover, among the nearly 2,000 voters surveyed in Uttar Pradesh in 2022 who were smartphone users, 53% reported having seen photographs and/or videos of campaign rallies on their phones at least once a day in the lead-up to the elections. This exposure to rally content has the potential to influence voter perceptions and voter mobilisation, especially among smartphone users.

## Intraparty Linkages: Evidence from party organisation in India

In addition to leveraging content-complementarity for party-voter linkages, parties also utilise this complementarity for building and maintaining intraparty linkages. Each of India's major parties has an organisational vertical — variously referred to as the party's IT and

social media cell, department, team, or wing — dedicated to generating and circulating fresh social media content. Content creation and dissemination are among the core functions of these verticals, which operate from a party's top level (the national or state level) down to its lowest tier (the polling booth level).

The demand for intraparty online content raises the importance of in-person party events and shapes how they are conducted. Online content associated with in-person party events fosters intraparty online engagement between party elites, party functionaries across hierarchy levels, and grassroots party workers.

To disseminate online content, political parties attempt to establish robust networks online. My survey of party functionaries in Uttar Pradesh found that almost all functionaries of the BJP and the SP made use of smartphone apps for party purposes, especially WhatsApp and Facebook. 66% of surveyed party functionaries reported forming new political WhatsApp groups during the 2022 Uttar Pradesh elections. Among them, roughly 70% reported that they had mostly included their party's workers and supporters in these groups, while the remainder reported that they had mostly included voters in these groups.

To understand how often party functionaries communicate over WhatsApp for party purposes, I asked them how many times in a day they used WhatsApp for intraparty communication and how many times for voter communication. On average, during the 2022 state elections campaign in Uttar Pradesh, BJP functionaries said that they used WhatsApp to communicate with other party functionaries and workers around 55 times a day. For SP functionaries, this number was slightly lower at 48 times a day. Both BJP and SP functionaries used WhatsApp to communicate with voters during their campaigns around 40 to 50 times a day on average. In the months

following the elections (when the survey was administered), the average number of times per day these functionaries used WhatsApp for political communication reduced to around 15, one-third as much as during the campaign. This implies that even without an upcoming election and associated campaigns, party functionaries used WhatsApp about once every waking hour for intraparty communication and voter communication.

Equipped with organisational resources as well as online networks that span across a party's levels, together with a steady stream of content — a significant share of which is linked with party events — parties engage in continuous social media messaging. Through messages that they circulate among their functionaries and workers as well as supporters throughout the day, parties reinforce their partisan inclination and keep them in a state of constant mobilisation.

## Conclusion

Technological change is shaping election campaigns and party organisation in India. The BJP has been the leading party in the online space, but other parties are catching up, investing in IT and social media units to build their digital presence. These investments can bear fruit, but party leaders must recognise the limits of online-only campaigns. In the 2024 election — and likely beyond — online campaigning is best utilised as a complement, rather than as a substitute or adjunct, to old-fashioned retail politicking.

(Shahana Sheikh is a PhD candidate in the Department of Political Science at Yale University. In the months ahead, the Carnegie-HT "India Elects 2024" series will analyse various dimensions of India's upcoming election battle — including the role of foreign policy, the strength of partisan ties, and the impact of welfare schemes.)

## UDDHAV'S CLOSE AIDE SWITCHES TO SHINDE-LED SENA

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

MUMBAI: Shiv Sena (UBT) MLA Ravindra Waikar, who is being probed by the Enforcement Directorate in connection with alleged misuse of a civic plot to build a luxury hotel, on Sunday joined the Shiv Sena led by chief minister Eknath Shinde.

Waikar, the MLA from Mumbai's Jogeshwari area, was a close aide of Uddhav Thackeray since and was present in a meeting with the former in the Mumbai North West parliamentary seat a day earlier.

Waikar joined the Shinde-led group at 'Varsha', the official residence of the chief minister in Malabar Hill. Waikar is a former standing committee chairman of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, a four-time corporator and has been MLA from Jogeshwari for four terms.

## 5 cheetah cubs born in MP



Cheetah Gaminji on Sunday gave birth to five cubs in Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh's Sheopur district, taking the species count in the country to 26.

# NMC considers making it a must for hospitals to link health IDs of patients

Rhythm Kaul

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The National Medical Commission (NMC) — country's apex medical education regulator — is contemplating making it mandatory for hospitals to link Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) number of all patients so that it can track the flow of patients in individual health facility, people familiar with the matter said.

The move, according to health experts, will essentially tackle issues pertaining to patient data fudging as hospitals, especially private ones, tend to inflate their patient load particularly during NMC inspections.

"The move will be help in authenticating clinical load of hospitals," Dr BN Gangadhar,

NMC chairman, said.

As of now, the NMC has issued an advisory to all hospitals to link ABHA health ids of patients for transparency purposes, he said.

"There is a team of experts from the department concerned looking into the prospect of making it mandatory as creation of ABHA number is a voluntary process. Once the team gives its approval, considering all relevant angles, the NMC will move towards making it mandatory for hospitals to comply," Gangadhar added.

ABHA number is a 14-digit number that will uniquely identify an individual as a participant in India's digital healthcare ecosystem. According to a government statement, benefits of ABHA number include establishing a strong and trustable

identity for Indian citizens that will be accepted by health care providers across the country.

"It will bring seamless sign up for personal health records applications such as Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, and health data sharing across clinical establishments," read the government description of the process on ABHA website.

In addition, NMC officials said the move is also going to benefit patients in the long run.

"To have an ABHA health id means that the health records of a patient are readily available for the treating team for quick reference that will especially come handy during a medical emergency," Dr Aruna V Vanikar, president, under graduate medical education board (UGMEB), said. "In cases of road

traffic accident, for example, when time is of essence, it will benefit the patient if their doctor is able to take a look at their medical records online."

Newly appointed NMC secretary B Srinivas said their focus is to "bring transparency in the way medical education is regulated in the country".

Gangadhar also said the commission is aiming for inspections with minimum human interface.

In addition, to keep track of faculty attendance in medical colleges, the commission has made it mandatory for them to start Aadhaar-enabled biometric attendance system, which, NMC members said, will help cut the chances of duplication of faculty in different medical colleges so that same faculty cannot be in any other medical

college.

According to the new attendance system, each faculty member will have to be available for teaching for at least 75% of the overall working days in a calendar year.

The NMC is also in the process of launching a portal to put all data related to a medical college and associated hospital — department-wise faculty and other staff strength, infrastructure such as bed strength, ICUs etc. — out in public domain for patients and students to make an informed choice.

"The idea is to make the entire process as transparent as possible and if everything is digitally recorded then chances of fudging data are removed, be it documenting patient details or faculty and student attendance," Gangadhar added.





Govt. of Haryana

“केंद्र और राज्य में डबल इंजन सरकार की ताकत हरियाणा को तेज़ी से आगे बढ़ा रही है। कोई भी सेक्टर हो, जैसे ही उसमें सामूहिक शक्ति जुटती है, सबका प्रयास नजर आने लगता है, तो परिवर्तन की गति भी बढ़ जाती है।”  
- नरेन्द्र मोदी



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**Prime Minister**

**Sh. Narendra Modi**

Will

**Lay the Foundation Stone of**

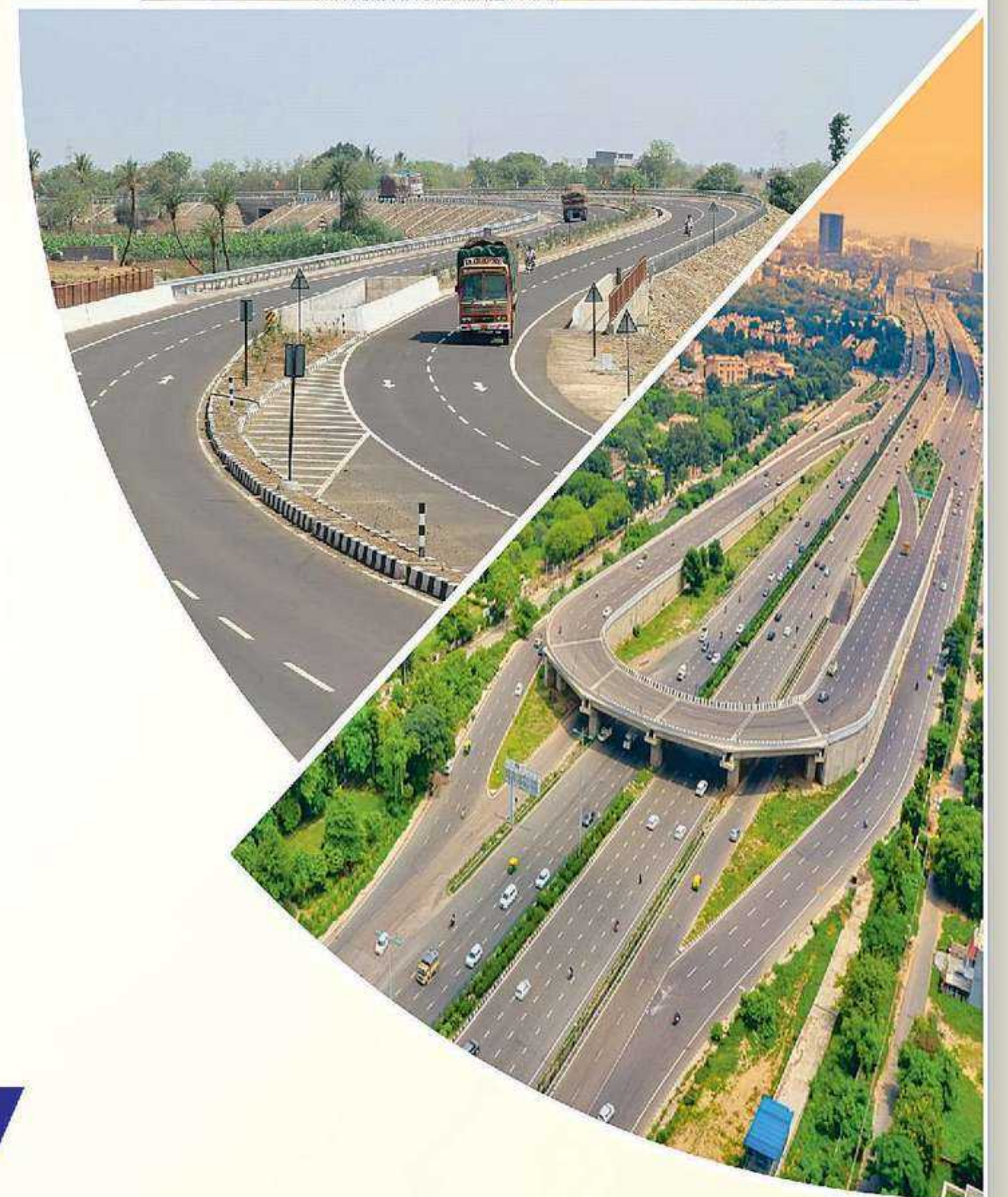
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**Bhiwani- Hansi National Highway**  
(Length- 43 Kms Cost- Rs. 1330 crore)

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# Hunt for B'luru bomber gathers pace, NIA team reaches Kalaburagi

HT Correspondent  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**BENGALURU:** A 10-member National Investigation Agency (NIA) team is pursuing the prime suspect in the Bengaluru cafe blast case in north Karnataka's Kalaburagi, said officials aware of the matter, who added that the anti-terror unit is scaling up operations to bring in the man who has now been at large for 10 days.

NIA officials on Friday said the suspect had been spotted in Ballari district, roughly 310km away from Bengaluru. A senior officer on Sunday said the man had then been sighted at a bus stand in Ballari, likely to Kalaburagi, which is a further 300km north.

The officer cited above said

they received information that two unidentified individuals were seen interacting with the suspect at the bus stand, adding that a specific Karnataka Road Transport Corporation bus is under the scanner.

"Bus KA-32-F-1885 set off from Kalaburagi Depot No 1," said the officer.

"Two unreserved seats on this bus were occupied by individuals who alighted at Ram Mandir Circle and the Central Bus Stand respectively in Kalaburagi late on March 1," said the officer.

Additional NIA teams have procured surveillance camera footage from Kalaburagi Railway Station and its surrounding areas, including Ballari and Humnabad.

Kalaburagi police chief R



The image of the accused that was released by NIA. PTI

Chetan confirmed that the NIA team had arrived in the district, but said the team had not shared any information about the investigation with the local police.

NIA took over the probe into the blast at the Rameshwaram Cafe on March 4, three days after the low-intensity explosion rocked a branch of the

popular restaurant in eastern Bengaluru's Brookefield.

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

The anti-terror agency has also released four new images of the suspect as part of attempts to help identify the man. These images, captured at Ballari bus stand, depict the suspect without a cap, unlike previous images.

NIA has offered a ₹10 lakh reward for credible information that may lead to the suspect's arrest.

Further, in light of concerns that the suspect may attempt an escape via coastal routes, NIA has sought heightened

security in coastal areas. It has also begun checking boats to prevent potential escape attempts.

Karnataka home minister G Parameshwara earlier said the prime suspect changed his clothes after the incident and travelled by bus. He said the suspect first headed towards Tumakuru town by bus.

Earlier, the Bengaluru police had registered a case under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and Explosives Substances Act.

Meanwhile, eight days after it was shattered by the blast, the Rameshwaram Cafe started serving its loyal customers once again on Saturday, throwing open the eatery to the public with heightened security measures.

# Social justice to development: Tracing shift in Dalit politics

HT Correspondent  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** Over the last several decades, there have been monumental changes in the social, economic, and political lives of Dalits, who have historically been one of the most oppressed groups in all of South Asia. A new volume edited by three leading scholars of India — Dalits in the New Millennium — examines these changes, interrogates their impacts on Dalit lives, and traces the shift in Dalit politics from a focus on social justice to a focus on development and socio-economic mobility.

One of the co-editors of this volume, D. Shyam Babu, expanded on this subject on last week's episode of Grand Tamasha, a weekly podcast on Indian politics and policy co-produced by HT and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Shyam Babu, who along with Sudhai Pai and Rahul Verma, is one of the co-editors of this new book also serves as a Senior Fellow at the Centre for Policy Research in New Delhi. For years, he has researched the political, social, and economic realities of Dalits across India, collaborating with well-known Indian scholar

Devesh Kapur and Dalit writer-activist Chandra Bhan Prasad.

On the show, Shyam Babu told host Milan Vaishnav that a re-examination of Dalit lives was needed in light of the dramatic rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and what looks like the terminal decline of Mayawati's Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP).

On the BJP's growing appeal among Dalits, Shyam Babu said it was always incorrect to think of Dalit politics as antithetical to Hindutva politics. "A predominant number of Dalits still remain as Hindus. So, when you appeal to the Hindu religion, [Dalits] find some resonance there," he

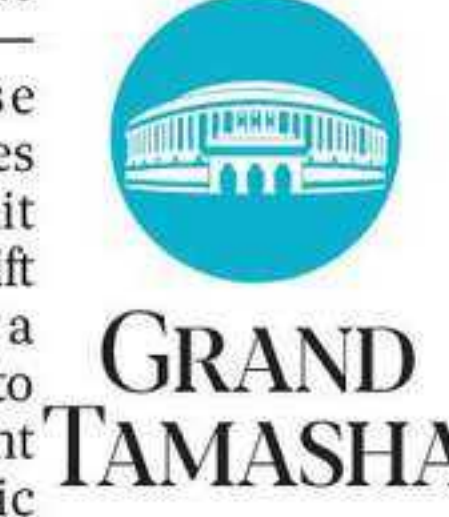
explained. "Dalits tend to identify with not only the Hindu religion and co-religionists, but they also tend to see Muslims as the 'other.' It's a sad fact, but it's a fact. So, the idea that Dalit politics was somehow not in tune with Hindutva politics, I would say it is completely misplaced. That's what we're seeing now."

On the question of how the BJP has navigated a large and diverse Dalit community, Shyam Babu emphasized the party's efforts to exploit internal divisions among Dalits. Among many caste groups, including Other Backward Classes (OBCs), he said that

numerically significant subcastes are not big supporters of the BJP. "Take Andhra Pradesh, the Redys and Kammas — they have their own political parties. Ditto in Tamil Nadu. In Karnataka, it's a bipolar order. [dominant castes] play the BJP to their own advantage. Take Uttar Pradesh, Yadavs, Kurmis, Jats—all of these larger castes are not 100% with the BJP," he explained. According to him, the BJP's success has been in reaching out to numerically very insignificant castes across a range of states. "It's like a chit fund," he said. "[The BJP] gathers votes here and there and makes it work."

Asked about the critique that the BJP has branded itself as the party of Dalits and yet Dalits are not adequately represented in the party leadership, the veteran scholar said this is nothing new. "That was true of Congress also. In 1977, after Babu Jagjivan Ram left the party, the party never had a Dalit face. There were ministers of course, you get some kind of quota system there. But they were all insignificant."

On the question of how the BJP has navigated a large and diverse Dalit community, Shyam Babu emphasized the party's efforts to exploit internal divisions among Dalits. Among many caste groups, including Other Backward Classes (OBCs), he said that



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## Lokpal chair takes oath



President Droupadi Murmu administers oath of office to Justice Manikrao Khanwilkar as the chairperson of Lokpal at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

## SIX OF FAMILY DIE AFTER CAR HITS TRUCK IN U.P.'S JAUNPUR: POLICE

Press Trust of India  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**JAUNPUR:** Six members of a family from Bihar died when their car was hit by a speeding truck in Jaunpur of Uttar Pradesh in the early hours of Sunday, police officers familiar with the matter said.

Superintendent of police (SP) Ajay Pal Sharma said the car was headed for Prayagraj when the accident occurred on the Karjag-Kerakat road in the Gaura Badshahpur police station area around 2:30 am.

Three other members of the family are undergoing treatment at a hospital in Varanasi, police said.

According to an officer aware of the matter, the deceased have been identified as Gajdhar Sharma (60) and his son Anish Sharma (35), Jawahar Sharma (57) and his 17-year-old son, Sonam (34) and Rinku (32), all residents of Sitamarhi district in Bihar.

Police have launched an investigation into the matter, the SP said.

{ GREEN PIECE }

## B'luru water crisis: An alarm for other cities

Bharati Chaturvedi  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** Bengaluru's water crisis today can easily be the reality for much of urban India tomorrow. For years, Bengaluru was in the news because its Belandur lake was on fire. Many others were built over. Sewage is still discharged into water sources. Water recycling and harvesting isn't popular. Borewells have caused groundwater to almost dry up. Inadequate rainfall exacerbating the situation. Instead, swaths of people now depend on water tankers, which are expensive and unsustainable, because they are bringing someone else's water to thirsting Bengaluru.

Many Indian cities are heading in the same direction. With the vagaries of climate change, and unpredictable rainfall, reduced water availability is possible. One would expect widespread concern and action. We are far from this. Only about 28% of the total sewage is treated. And wet-

lands from the famous Haryana's Basai to Delhi's Horseshoe Lake are lost for all ecological purposes, while lakes Wular in Kashmir to Chilka in Orissa have lost surface area.

The central government must step in, treating this as an emergency. We need a rapid water mission that ensures there is clean water in every tap, just like we are now getting a tap in every home. Only the central government can ensure that the haves don't monopolise more water than their fair share via incentives and disincentives. Silly gimmicks like free water should be buried. Learning from Swachh Bharat Mission, the Centre must successfully create competition among cities so they treat water as gold from the skies, stored, recharged and kept uncontaminated. India should avert a water war internally.

Bharati Chaturvedi is an environmentalist and writer. She is the founder and director of Chintan Environmental Research and Action Group.

## K'taka, Kerala ink pact to curb man-animal conflict: Officials

HT Correspondent  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**BENGALURU:** In order to contain the increasing number of human encounters with wildlife, the forest departments of Kerala and Karnataka on Sunday inked an interstate agreement to collaborate closely to mitigate the challenges posed by wild animals encroaching into human settlements, according to officials aware of the development.

The agreement focuses on several key aspects, including identifying the root causes of human-wildlife conflicts, delineating conflict zones, streamlin-

A COORDINATION COMMITTEE HAS BEEN FORMED TO SPEARHEAD EFFORTS IN RESOLVING THE ISSUE IN 2 STATES

ing intervention processes to minimise delays, facilitating rapid information exchange and sharing resources and services, they said, seeking anonymity.

The signing ceremony took place during a meeting convened at the Bandipur Tiger Reserve, which was attended by Kerala

forest minister AK Saseendran, Karnataka forest minister Eshwar Khandre and several top foresters from both the southern states.

The meeting took place on the back of a man killed by an elephant in the Wayanad district of Kerala on February 10. Following this, Kerala had requested Karnataka to pay compensation since the elephant that was captured in Karnataka had strayed into Wayanad in the neighbouring state.

The two departments have also formed a coordination committee to spearhead efforts in resolving the issue.

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## Political row erupts over BJP lawmaker's Constitution remark

HT Correspondent  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**BENGALURU:** Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Anantkumar Hegde on Sunday stoked a controversy as he called for amendments to the Constitution to "prioritise" the interests of the Hindu community, prompting the Congress to accuse the ruling party at the Centre of disrespecting the tenets of the Constitution. The BJP distanced itself from Hegde's remarks and sought a clarification from him.



Anantkumar Hegde

Addressing a gathering in Siddapur, the Uttara Kannada MP said the BJP needs a two-third majority in both Houses of Parliament and sweep state assemblies to amend the Constitution and "set right the distortions and unnecessary additions made to it by the Congress".

"You all must help BJP to win over 400 seats [in Lok Sabha elections]. Why does the BJP need 400+ seats? Congress leaders in the past made changes to the Constitution in a way that didn't put Hinduism at the front. We need to change it and save our religion," he said.

He added: "With a two-thirds majority in Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and in state assemblies, amendments can be made [to the Constitution]".

Hegde's statements drew a sharp criticism from the Con-

gress, which accused the BJP of trying to destroy the Constitution.

"The Modi government, BJP and RSS secretly desire to impose a dictatorship, whereby they will impose their 'Manuvaadi mindset' on the people of India," party chief Mallikarjun Kharge said in a post on X.

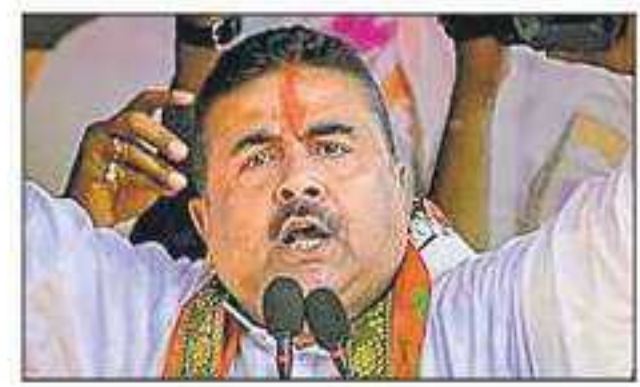
Amid the political row, the BJP called Hegde's remarks as a "personal opinion".

"MP Shri Anantkumar Hegde's remarks on the Constitution are his personal views and do not reflect the party's stance. BJP reaffirms our unwavering commitment to uphold the nation's Constitution and will ask for an explanation from Shri Hegde regarding his comments," party's Karnataka unit posted on X.



### CISF recovered ₹63.8-cr lost properties of passengers at 68 airports in April-Jan 2023

**NEW DELHI:** The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) recovered lost property of passengers worth ₹63.80 crore at 68 airports across the country between April 2023 and January, the paramilitary force said on its 55th raising day. Items reported lost by passengers at 66 airports in 2022 showed that these were left behind at the Delhi airport (worth ₹10.1 crore), followed by airports in Mumbai (₹8.8 crore), Hyderabad (₹4.6 crore) and Kolkata (₹2.2 crore), a HT analysis of the shared data showed. In 2022, the force had recovered lost items worth ₹56.11 crore from 66 airports. Such items are returned to the passengers upon verification or handed to airport operators.



Suvendu Adhikari

### 'PM spoke against Sandeshkhali atrocities, CM didn't

**KOLKATA:** Stating that Prime Minister Narendra Modi protested against atrocities on women at Sandeshkhali from all four rallies he addressed in West Bengal recently, BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari on Sunday claimed that chief minister Mamata Banerjee did not find it necessary to visit the place. Claiming that the entire country is with the people of Sandeshkhali, Adhikari said, "PM Modi protested atrocities on the women of Sandeshkhali at all his public meetings in the state." Stating that Modi has saluted the struggle of the people of Sandeshkhali, Adhikari said that taking strength from the PM's exhortations, the state BJP will hold a rally at Nazat in Sandeshkhali on Sunday.

### Cop trying to stop fight stabbed to death in Rajasthan

**JODHPUR:** A constable who was trying to de-escalate a clash between two groups in Saroopganj area in Sirohi district was stabbed to death, police said on Sunday. Enraged by the constable's intervention, some men allegedly assaulted the cop, stabbed him before fleeing from the spot, they said. Three of the accused were later arrested and police were trying to nab the rest, they added. Sirohi SP Anil Kumar said that the arrested men are being interrogated. Constable Niranjan Singh was posted at Saroopganj police station and was on duty at a fair being held in Lautana village, Kumar said. "A dispute arose between two groups of men at the fair at about 1 am," Kumar said. As per the information, he attempted to intervene and held one person to take him away to de-escalate the situation, the SP said. However, some other men began stabbing him, he said, adding Singh was later declared dead by the doctors.



- Maharashtra leads in attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). In the financial year 2022-23, a total of Rs. 1,18,422 crore FDI was attracted, whereas, in a period of 9 months, i.e. from April 2023 to December 2023, a sum of Rs. 1,00,112 crore of investment was attracted in Maharashtra which will contribute to 30% of the Nation's FDI.
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to the tune of Rs. 3.73 lakh crore was signed at Davos in 2024 for investment in the sectors of Steel, IT, Green Energy, agriculture, logistics and electronics in the state. This will generate employment opportunities for 2 lakh persons.
- 12,326 loan cases were approved in the year 2022-23 through the Chief Minister Employment Generation Program. Whereas loans of Rs. 342 crore were approved for 14822 Entrepreneurs in the year 2023- 24. Millions of youths have been provided with employment opportunities with these moves.
- The cabinet Sub-committee approved projects worth Rs. 1,27,675 crores in the state. This will further generate 1,62,500 employment opportunities.
- A Memorandum of Understanding is sign with 7 companies for producing Green Hydrogen. Rs. 2,76,300 crore of investment in this program will generate 64,000 employment opportunities.
- Export Policy of Maharashtra - 2023 and integrated sustainable Textile policy for the state is announced.
- New Information Technology Enabled Services Policy approved. This will attract Rs. 95,000 crore of investment.
- Maharashtra Industry, Trade and Investment Facilitation Cell (MAITRI), will enable 119 facilities for industries providing ease of access and faster services.
- 6 Logistic Parks will be installed in Maharashtra.
- Maharashtra is leading in defence manufacturing. Maharashtra is the first-ever state in the country to create a defence and aerospace policy. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) worth Rs. 1358 crore in the defence manufacturing sector was signed at the Defence Expo.

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Union Minister for Rural Development & Panchayati Raj

**Arjun Munda**

Union Minister for Tribal Affairs & Agriculture and Farmers Welfare

**Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya**

Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare and Chemicals & Fertilizers

**Time:-** 10:00 am, 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024

**Venue:-** C. Subramaniam Auditorium, PUSA, New Delhi

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## OPINION

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OUR TAKE

## NDA opening for BJP in Andhra

Alliance may help the party win seats in a state where it has minimal presence

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has found a footing in Andhra Pradesh (AP), where assembly elections are due along with the general elections soon. On Saturday, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) returned to the NDA, which it quit in 2018, and negotiated a seat-sharing deal with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Jana Sena. This opens up the political field in AP, which has become a bipolar polity, dominated by the ruling YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) of chief minister Jagan Mohan Reddy and the TDP led by Chandrababu Naidu. The appointment of Reddy's sister, YS Sharmila, as the state chief has infused life into the Congress party — in oblivion since the bifurcation of AP in 2014.

The revival of the NDA is interesting for multiple reasons. One, it may allow the BJP a foothold in a state where it has minimal presence: Its vote share in the 2019 general and assembly elections was less than 1%. Naidu, the leader of the NDA in Andhra, has been magnanimous in offering five Lok Sabha seats (of a total of 25 seats) to the BJP besides six assembly seats (out of 175). This is an arrangement similar to the coalition arithmetic that the Congress has had with the Dravidian parties in Tamil Nadu since the 1970s: The leader of the coalition, the DMK or AIADMK, would contest most of the assembly seats while allotting a significant number of Lok Sabha seats to the Congress, disproportionate to the latter's base. This arrangement helped the Dravidian major and the Congress to do well in most elections. Naidu expects that an alliance with the BJP, and especially the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a campaigner, will act as a force multiplier for the TDP, which has been entangled in corruption cases.

The BJP's AP strategy also follows its template for states where it lacks organisational clout. For instance, in states such as Maharashtra, Bihar and Assam, it tied up with a regional player, allowing the latter to dominate state politics. The combined strength helped the BJP to do well in elections and expand its organisation over time. In all three above-mentioned states, the BJP is now in a pivotal position (also proving the theory that the Congress weakens when it is in alliance and the BJP becomes stronger). The political dynamic of AP, like Tamil Nadu, is very different, but the NDA's performance in AP will be keenly watched, as it will test the BJP's capabilities to expand in southern India, where its influence is confined mostly to Karnataka.

## It takes more than Bazball to win in India

India's innings and 64-run victory over England in Dharamsala completed a 4-1 rout in the five-Test series. It was India's 17th consecutive series win at home and took the team to the top of the 2023-24 World Test Championship table. But India's biggest takeaway from the series is that their inexperienced batting lineup held firm. In the absence of top stars Virat Kohli and KL Rahul, India refused to take a step back and recall veterans Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane. In their absence, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Sarfaraz Khan, Dhruv Jurel and Devdutt Padikkal stepped up: Jaiswal (712 runs) became only the second Indian after Sunil Gavaskar to score more than 700 in a Test series; Khan made a sensational debut with a counter-attacking 50 in Rajkot; Jurel's game-changing knock in Ranchi and his partnership with Kuldeep Yadav has pretty much sealed his place as a keeper-batter in the Test side; and, Padikkal made a solid 65 in his debut Test in Dharamsala.

The second biggest takeaway was that it answered a two-year-old question: Will Bazball work in India? The answer is no: Not with this England lineup, not with the skills at the disposal of their current team, and definitely not with their inexperienced spinners.

Test cricket is a complex game and needs a nuanced tactical approach depending on the pitch, climatic conditions, and the opponents. England's ultra-attacking approach was unidimensional. England batters, except for Joe Root, lacked the skills to survive the Indian spinners. What Ollie Pope did by sweeping and reverse-sweeping his way to 196 in Hyderabad helped England go 1-0 up in the series. What it also did was force the Indian spinners to alter their length. So, lacking defensive skills and with the sweep going out of the equation, the English batters were left with just intent. That wasn't enough and the team lost four Tests on the trot.

STRAIGHTFORWARD

Shashi Shekhar



## High standards for people in high office

Pakistan SC's rethink on its ZA Bhutto verdict raises questions about the integrity of those holding public office

The Supreme Court of Pakistan has finally acknowledged that late Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto did not receive the justice he deserved — that the seven-judge panel, responsible for sentencing him to death more than four decades ago, deviated from lawful procedures. What does this decision indicate?

It clearly reveals a collusion between the judiciary and the political class. Observers of Pakistani politics in the 1970s talked a lot about General Zia-ul-Haq, the country's then military dictator, wanting to eliminate Bhutto at all costs. He believed it was appropriate to take the legal route because if he had taken any direct action, it could have ignited a rebellion. *Saamp bhi mar jaye aur laathi bhi na toote* (kill the snake without breaking your own stick) is an old Hindustani proverb. This was Zia-ul-Haq's standard policy. I want to give you a quick rundown of everything that happened in

those days.

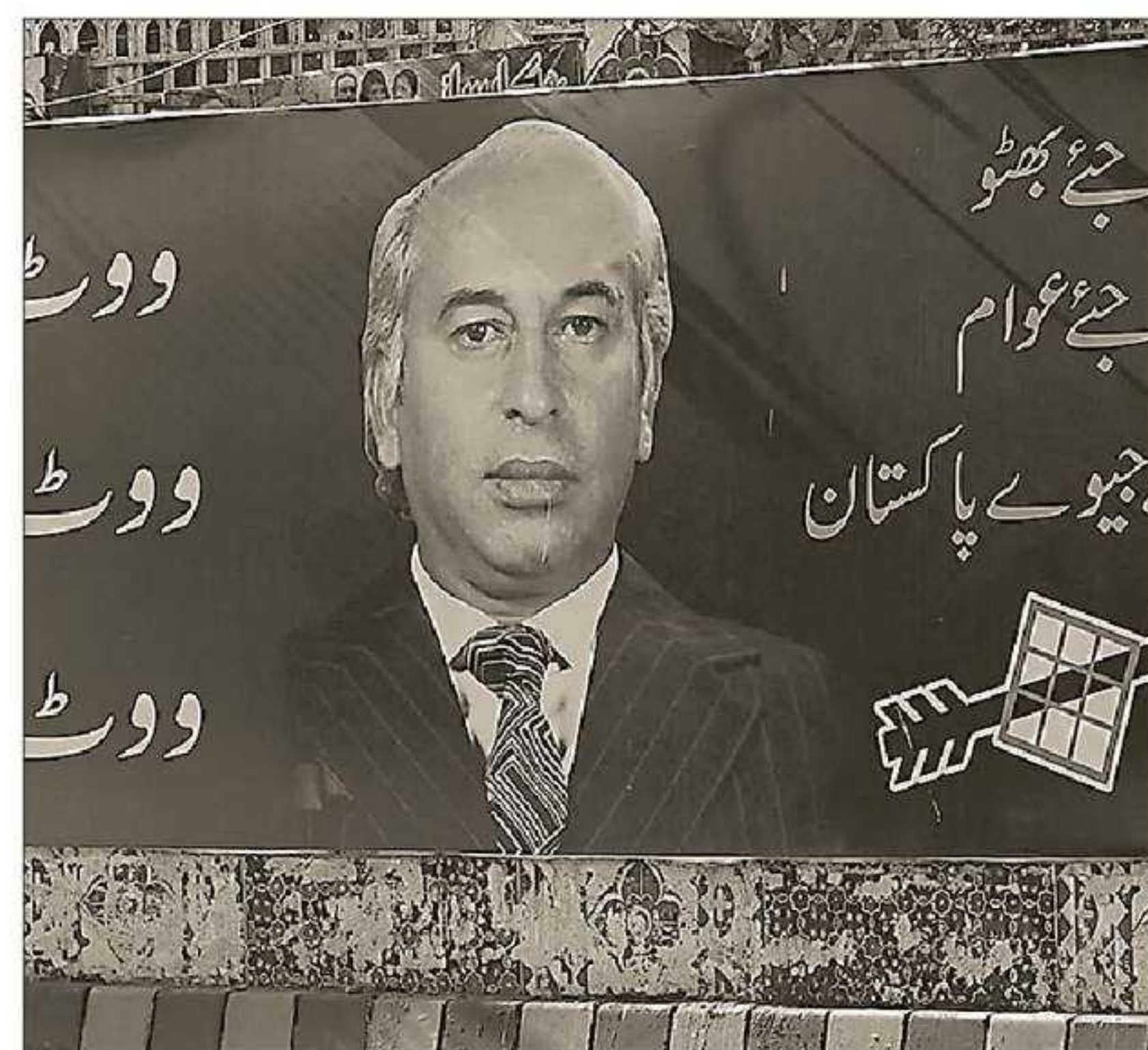
In 1977, General Zia seized power by deposing his former boss Bhutto, who was arrested, then charged with orchestrating the murder of Nawab Mohammad Kasuri. Zia, who was exceedingly crafty in both practice and malpractice, realised that he could not carry out his intentions through democratic means. This was why he declared martial law.

As soon as martial law was declared, the trial of Bhutto gathered momentum. Within two years, a seven-member Supreme Court bench sentenced the former head of State to death. On the morning of April 4, 1979, this sentence was carried out in Rawalpindi jail. Later, an officer who carried out the process of capital punishment stated that Bhutto used to say in jail that he was innocent. When he was led to be hanged, he clutched onto his bed and repeated this. He had to be forcibly taken to the gallows.

Asif Ali Zardari, the son-in-law of Bhutto, took over as president 32 years later. He filed a petition before the Supreme Court in 2011 requesting a review of the death sentence to Bhutto. According to the Constitution of Pakistan, the President can request a higher court to consider or provide an opinion on any issue pertaining to public interest. The

Supreme Court's nine-member bench delivered its verdict on the issue last Wednesday. This ruling has given rise to many questions, with the paramount concern centring around the preservation of judicial integrity. A crucial question arises: In a scenario where courts lack independence and judges are not impartial, how can the common man receive justice? The focal point of this deliberation was the most highly influential figure of his time, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Throughout his tenure, Bhutto left an indelible mark on the Indian subcontinent as one of its most charismatic leaders. It is perplexing that such a prominent leader could fall victim to injustice and an unfair trial. If a leader of his stature could face such circumstances, what hope is there for justice for the common man?

Incidentally, similar questions are currently being raised in India as well. Just a day before Bhutto's verdict, Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay of the Kolkata High Court resigned and announced his intention to join the Bharatiya Janata Party. There is speculation that he will contest the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Previously, when Ranjan Gogoi became a member of the Rajya Sabha after retiring as the Chief Justice of India, similar objections were raised. The



A campaign poster of the Pakistan Peoples Party in Karachi in January 2024, featuring Zulfikar Ali Bhutto

Indian Constitution makes no mention of what judges, high-ranking Army officers, and persons holding constitutional positions should do or not do after they retire. This implies that anyone is free to do anything they want after their tenure is completed. But any position with enormous authority is incomplete without morality. I'm not suggesting that joining politics entails being immoral. However, persons in constitutional positions should set moral standards for themselves.

The unfolding of events surrounding the death of Bhutto serve as a stark reminder that without morals, power becomes anarchic, and the Constitution becomes a tool for that anarchy. That's dangerous.

This noble task of balancing power and responsibility can only be accomplished when society and politics collaborate. Politicians must

become responsible and accountable to do this, yet they are doing the just opposite. Today, Trinamool Congress (TMC) leaders who are questioning the morality of Abhijit Gangopadhyay's action should look within. Sheikh Shahjahan, the perpetrator of the terror regime in Sandeshkhali, used to be a key regional leader for the party. Why did the party turn a blind eye to his misdeeds? Why is the TMC trying to cover up his actions, even today?

There is undoubtedly no more opportune moment than the present to seriously ponder these questions. With the general elections round the corner, why don't voters and those seeking votes take advantage of this opportunity and reflect on these issues?

Shashi Shekhar is editor-in-chief, Hindustan. The views are personal

## Making sense of Aaron Bushnell's immolation

Aaron Bushnell's self-immolation as an act of protest against Israel has many dimensions. Firstly, it was a protest against the growing horrors of the Israeli military attacks against Palestinians. Secondly, he felt responsible for the attacks as he was an active member of the United States Air Force. So this act was not merely one of protest but also an expression of complicity in an unethical act. Thirdly, his act was not merely a protest (such as shouting slogans) but a protest that demanded a price of himself. While it can be classified as suicide, the implicit morality behind that action elevates it to something more.

As is well-known, self-immolation as protest is not a new phenomenon. Over history, there have been many instances of such acts. In the context of modern wars, the act of self-immolation by a Buddhist monk during the Vietnam war catalysed massive protests. Buddhist monks have continued this form of protest against the Chinese oppression in Tibet. A similar act is often cited as the catalyst for the Arab Spring. In India, there is a long history of self-immolation that ranges from protest against unjust political acts to suicides by farmers. There are three aspects to this action. First is the act of voluntarily killing oneself, second is the mode of killing oneself, and third is the expression of protest.

In the majority of cases, suicides are related to tangible problems of the individual such as a farmer's debt or unrequited love. This is not the case when the motivating action behind suicide is protest. In this case, it is about performing an act on behalf, and for the benefit, of others. There are many who find something heroic about this act of sacrificing oneself for the sake of others. Martyrdom is often of this kind. Soldiers sacrifice themselves, although under orders, when they fight a war to protect a nation.

But there is one important difference between soldiers who die in war and persons who immolate themselves in protest against a war. This lies in the idea of autonomy, the independent decision behind the act. In the case of soldiers who die while on duty, their death is not due to their autonomous decision but is only a consequence of the orders of their higher ups. There are two elements of autonomy in self-immolation: The decision to kill oneself and choosing to be in extreme pain while doing so. Modern societies, which have come to privilege autonomy over many other aspects of being human, do not know how to deal equanimously with death and pain. That is why the idea of killing oneself is

so troubling in our societies today since suicide exhibits the limit point of autonomy.

Modern societies go to great lengths to protect this particular idea of the individual as one who is defined by her autonomy. Our justice system, as well as major theories in ethics, are built on this value. However, we should remember that this view of an individual is a particular one associated with the modern era. For example, in India, an individual's autonomy is always regulated by ties to the family, and by the community to which they belong.

The focus on framing the concept of the individual entirely through the idea of choice and rights has led our justice system to over-emphasise concerns with individual crime and punishment. An influential reason for this is the inability to understand the social as more than its individual members. Such a limited view poses serious challenges for the possibility of social justice.

Paradoxically, while autonomy is valued as the essential character of an individual, nobody has complete autonomy. Autonomy is always limited and in most cases has to be granted by others. What is allowed in the name of autonomy is only that which is tacitly allowed by those in power. Choice is disguised as autonomy, but it is not.

There is never a totally free choice but only the feeling of choice between a small set of possibilities. A mall seems to be a paradise of choice but all those choices are carefully chosen by others. Such consumerist choice is not the definition of autonomy although most often we tend to this reduction.

Bushnell's act of immolating himself to protest what is happening in Gaza is a choice, but is not the same as consumerist choice. It is truly an expression of his autonomy since the act of killing oneself is the final frontier of autonomous action. This act is not a consumerist choice for one's gratification. This act highlights the fact that while he died out of choice, the civilians in Palestine are dying out of no choice of theirs.

The act of self-immolation also has an important element of "showing". It shows the process of dying painfully. It is not about the state of death as much as it is about the process of dying. We cannot experience death but can experience the act of dying. Self-immolation's significance lies in the hope that when the living see the painful process of voluntarily dying, it will trigger moral consciousness within the viewer. Self-immolation as protest can be seen as a desperate act to awaken the moral conscience of the people.

Thus, achieving death is not the ultimate end of the act of self-immolation. It is only a means to provoke the question: How much pain are we willing to endure to protest against what is wrong? It is a question that asks us how we should live in the midst of so many injustices to others around us. It is a question about what our response should be when we recognise that we are complicit in being part of systems that are unjust and unethical wherever we live. The self-immolator's pain is a way to provoke us to embrace what pain we can in the task of becoming a moral individual.

Sundar Sarukkai is the founder of Barefoot Philosophers and author of the novel, *Following a Prayer*. The views expressed are personal



Bushnell's portrait displayed at a protest against Israel's attack on Palestine

{ JOE BIDEN } US PRESIDENT

I'm not a young guy. That's no secret. But here's the deal. I understand how to get things done for the American people

## Getting the youth to engage with elections

The age of 18 is the "adulthood point" for budding citizens — the age of consent. They can earn the licence to drive, open a bank account by themselves, and get their own PAN card. In 1989, the 61st amendment to the Constitution brought down the voting age from 21 to 18. It signalled India's trust in the maturity of its youth and keenness to empower them in decision-making. It was as revolutionary a step as entrusting ordinary Indians with the franchise in 1950.

First-time voters — the 18-19 age group — currently estimated at 19 million, are those who are on the electoral rolls by just becoming eligible. Youths in 18-29 age group number over 200 million — more than a fifth of the total electorate — and certainly can influence the contours of the 18th Lok Sabha. Importantly, this group is free of the baggage of the past and looks occupied with shaping the next century. Political parties need to reinvent themselves to catch up. But for this, the youth must exercise their choice, and make their voices heard.

Following an analysis after the 2009 general election, among electors found chronically short in participation were youth, women, and city dwellers, apart from people in difficult conditions. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has intervened since, with the proactive Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) programme. In the last dozen years, voter turnout has been on the ascendance. The most spectacular progress has been among women, which shot past male turnout in the 2019 general elections. More recently, election managers have focused on tribal communities in difficult terrains and on voters of older age, the sick, and those with disabilities, with encouraging results in their participation. However, apathy among the urban population and the youth has only been partly addressed, a major reason behind nearly 300 million missing voters.

The ECI has initiated a series of youth-centric campaigns to address this. The strength of colleges and higher educational institutions is being harnessed. Democracy Rooms are coming up at senior schools. Sachin Tendulkar and Rajkumar Rao are the latest icons leveraging social media to get the youth to register and vote. Gone are the days when youngsters saw voting as an activity for the elderly who had time to spare, and polling day as a potential holiday. In recent polls, youngsters have been flaunting inked fingers on social media.

An amendment of the Representation of the People Act in 2022 gave three additional dates — April 1, July 1, and October 1 — to register on

the electoral roll instead of only January 1 earlier. This has reduced waiting time for young voters. The ECI has also undertaken a big reform by allowing 17-year-olds to file advance applications for registration.

It is not surprising that Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi has thrown his weight behind the ECI campaign to get first-time voters to vote. Modi's belief in the power of communication to effect change and in social and civic campaigns has been amply demonstrated in his politics for the last ten years. The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), led by him, is a standout example. SBM, technically the largest sanitation programme anywhere, turned out to be the largest behaviour-change movement in the world. To make sure that a communication-based campaign remained its soul, Modi would call it Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. The mission picked up some of the nuances of SVEEP profitably. The PM's considered appreciation for SVEEP and for the celebration of January 25 as National Voters' Day dates back to his tenure as chief minister of Gujarat, much before other politicians or leaders could take proper note of these interventions.

Urging first-time voters to vote in record numbers in his last *Mann Ki Baat* programme before the Lok Sabha polls, Modi hoped that the 18th Lok Sabha will be "a symbol of youth aspiration". He called upon influencers from all walks of life to engage in the campaign. Picking up from the EC, the government has upscaled the campaign *Mera Pehla Vote: Desh Ke Liye* (my first vote — for the country), which, by extension, should induce all young voters to exercise their voting rights. It will help the cause if leaders cutting across party lines join the campaign to push voting by the youth, irrespective of whoever they wish to vote — *desh ke liye*. The country needs more such campaigns to organise the vast energy of the youth. Like *swachhata*, this is everyone's business.

Home to the largest youth aggregate in the world, and with half its population below 25 years, India deserves better from its youth. They must be torchbearers of electoral democracy through interested participation, and not disengaged bystanders. This summer will be the first big chance for new voters to experience the joy and pride of casting their first vote, the sensation of Nothing Like Voting, to use an ECI tagline. It is hoped that they grab it.

Akshay Rout is former director general, Election Commission of India, and former director general, Swachh Bharat Mission. The views expressed are personal



{ U.S. PREZ POLLS } BATTLEGROUND STATE OF GEORGIA

# Biden, Trump trade barbs over immigration and age

Agence France-Presse  
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WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden and presumptive White House challenger Donald Trump traded barbs on Saturday on the key topics of age and immigration, as they targeted the battleground state of Georgia.

Biden, hoping to ride the momentum from a feisty State of the Union speech on Thursday, went to the state's capital of Atlanta to mobilise Black and Hispanic voters. He once again attacked his Republican predecessor, who has vowed to be a "dictator" for one day.

"When he says he wants to be a dictator, I believe him," Biden told a rally, highlighting US economic strength while promising action to cut costs in areas such as housing, health and education.

In an interview with MSNBC aired on Saturday night, Biden said he regretted using the term "an illegal" when referring to the killer of a nursing student last month in Georgia.

"I shouldn't have used 'illegal,' it's 'undocumented,'" said Biden, who has been criticised by progressives and members of his own party for using terminology more commonly employed by Republicans.

Trump, who is pledging a crackdown on illegal immigration as a key plank of his campaign, talked at length during his rally on Saturday about the slain student.

"Laken Riley would be alive today if Joe Biden had not willfully and maliciously eviscerated the borders of the United States," he told a crowd of supporters in Georgia's Republican-leaning northwestern corner.

He slammed Biden for backtracking on his use of the word "illegal" to describe the Venezuelan suspect in the crime, saying, "Biden should be apologising for apologising to this killer."

At his rally, Trump also pretended to be a stuttering Biden,



First Lady Jill Biden speaks at a campaign event for President Joe Biden at Pullman Yards in Atlanta, Georgia, on Saturday.



Donald Trump speaks during a campaign event in Rome, Georgia, on Saturday.

mocking his 81-year-old opponent.

Biden's campaign launched a TV ad on Saturday in which the president directly addresses his advanced age, a major concern among voters.

"Look, I'm not a young guy. That's no secret. But here is the deal. I understand how to get things done for the American people," he says in the spot.

Trump's team quickly responded with a video message that starts with Biden's statement, followed by clips of the president stumbling, falling or

looking confused.

Georgia was so closely divided in the 2020 election — carried by Biden by fewer than 12,000 votes — that Trump infamously phoned a top state official to ask him to "find" a few thousand extra votes.

Among his many legal woes, Trump faces criminal charges in Georgia of working to overturn the state's election results.

The twin appearances in Georgia come days after Trump nearly swept the key Super Tuesday primaries, forcing out his last Republican rival, Nikki Haley.

Biden dominated in his own party's nominating contests. He and vice-president Kamala Harris plan to visit all the battleground states in coming weeks, his campaign said.

Georgia was long reliably Republican but has become more competitive.

Recent polls show Trump holding an edge there — as they do in most of the swing states that may determine the outcome of the November election.

Biden's campaign announced a \$30 million "buy" of television commercials in the closely divided states of Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Georgia, Nevada and North Carolina.



Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa (right) administers the oath of the office of the President of Pakistan to Asif Ali Zardari, at the Presidential Palace in Islamabad, on Sunday.

# Pakistan: Asif Ali Zardari sworn in as 14th president

Agencies  
letters@hindustantimes.com

ISLAMABAD: Asif Ali Zardari on Sunday took oath as Pakistan's 14th President, a day after the veteran politician staged a remarkable comeback when he was overwhelmingly elected as the only civilian president of the coup-prone country for a second time.

Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa administered the oath to the 68-year-old Zardari in a small yet formal ceremony at Awan-e-Sadr, the Presidential Palace.

Zardari replaces Dr Arif Alvi, who stayed in office for five months after completing his five-year term in September 2023.

The swearing-in ceremony was attended by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir and Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Sahir Shamshad Mirza among other senior army and civilian officials and diplomats.

The outgoing president Alvi, a senior member of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, also attended the oath-taking ceremony.

dari and Bakhtawar Bhutto Zardari and other family members were present on the occasion.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has congratulated Zardari on his election as the president for the second term.

**Nawaz Sharif directs PM to form Cabinet quickly**

The ruling coalition of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is set to finalise the Cabinet soon with the PML-N deciding to request its prime supporter PPP to join the Cabinet.

A meeting chaired by the PML-N supremo and three-time former premier Nawaz Sharif and attended by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif besides other leaders decided that the PPP should be approached again with the request to join the federal Cabinet.

**2 killed as bomb planted on motorcycle goes off**  
A motorcycle packed with explosives went off in the northwestern Pakistani city of Peshawar on Sunday morning, killing two people and severely injuring another, police said.

# PORTUGAL VOTES AS CENTRE-RIGHT POISED TO OUST THE SOCIALISTS

Agence France-Presse  
letters@hindustantimes.com

LISBON: Voters in Portugal went to the polls on Sunday in an early election that could see the country join a shift to the right across Europe after eight years of Socialist rule. Final opinion polls published on Friday put the centre-right Democratic Alliance (AD) narrowly ahead of the Socialist Party (PS) but short of an outright majority in parliament, which could make the far-right Chega the kingmaker for a coalition government.

But analysts warned the results of the election, Portugal's second in two years, remained wide open given the large number of undecided voters. "These elections represent a possible change, there would be little point in doing otherwise," Pedro Resende, a 56-year-old security officer, said at a polling station in Telheiras, a modern, upper-middle-class neighbourhood in northern Lisbon.

The AD has campaigned on promises to boost economic growth by cutting taxes and to improve public services.

{ BANKSY } LAWSUIT FILED IN UK OVER THE AUTHENTICITY OF AN ARTWORK

# Mysterious graffiti artist may be forced to reveal his identity

HT Correspondent  
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NEW DELHI: A lawsuit filed in the UK may force graffiti artist Banksy to reveal his real name.

Two art collectors are suing Pest Control, the graffiti artist's firm, for refusing to confirm the authenticity of the artwork Monkey Queen, in which a jewelled primate wears a royal crown against a red, white and blue backdrop.

The collectors, Nicky Katz and Ray Howse, say they have waited three years for Pest Control to confirm that the artwork was made by Banksy, without which its value would be substantially undermined. The artwork was made to mark then monarch Queen Elizabeth's 60 years on the throne.

The collectors point to the graffiti artist's official website

# Netanyahu's approach to war 'hurting' Israel: Biden

31,045 Palestinians have been killed since October 7 in Israel's military offensive on the Gaza Strip

Agencies  
letters@hindustantimes.com

WASHINGTON/GAZA STRIP: Joe Biden said Benjamin Netanyahu's approach to the war in Gaza was "hurting Israel more than helping Israel" in an interview aired on Saturday, as the US leader's impatience with his Israeli counterpart grows increasingly visible.

With Gaza's humanitarian crisis growing more dire and Biden's left flank in uproar, the US president made contradictory remarks as to the question of a "red line" over Israel's threatened offensive on Rafah in southern Gaza.

Netanyahu "has a right to defend Israel, a right to continue to pursue Hamas", Biden said, but added that "he must pay more attention to the innocent lives being lost as a consequence of the actions taken".

"In my view he is hurting Israel more than helping Israel," he said.

As to Israel's potential invasion of Rafah, where some 1.5 million of the territory's 2.4 million residents are now crammed, Biden was ambiguous.

"It is a red line," the 81-year-old Democrat said, immediately adding: "I am never going to leave Israel. The defence of Israel is still critical. There is no red line (in which) I want to cut off all weapons so they don't have the Iron Dome (air defence system) to protect them."

He then once again countered that there were in fact "red lines... You cannot have 30,000 more Palestinians dead".

**Israeli PM rejects Biden's comments on Gaza war**

The Israeli prime minister on Sunday rejected US President Joe Biden's comments that Israel's approach to the war in Gaza was "hurting Israel more than helping Israel".

"If he meant by that I'm pursuing private policies against the majority, the wish of the majority of Israelis, and that this is hurting the interests of Israel, then he's wrong on both counts," Netanyahu said in an interview with Politico.

At least 31,045 Palestinians have been killed and 72,654 have been wounded since October 7 in Israel's military offensive on the Gaza Strip, the enclave's health ministry said on Sunday.

**Israel-Hamas war rages in besieged Gaza**

Deadly fighting raged on in Gaza on Sunday, with no truce in sight on the eve of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and a dire humanitarian crisis gripping the besieged Palestinian territory.

A Spanish charity ship carrying food aid was expected to soon set sail from the Mediterranean island-nation of Cyprus to help alleviate the suffering in the coastal Gaza Strip, now in its sixth month of war.

The Catholic leader had fuelled anger in Kyiv after saying in an interview published on Saturday that Ukraine should negotiate with Russia, which has seized large swathes of its territory during the war.

"Our flag is a yellow and blue one. This is the flag by which we live, die, and prevail. We shall never raise any other flags," Ukraine's foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba said on social media.

While battling its bigger neighbour, Ukraine has vowed



Protesters carry placards during a gathering called for by the relatives of Israeli hostages held in Gaza since the October 7 attacks by Hamas militants, in Tel Aviv on Saturday, amid the ongoing battles between Israel and the Palestinian militant group.

the non-governmental group Open Arms said its boat would carry 200 tonnes of food, which its partner the US charity World Central Kitchen would then unload on the shores of Gaza where it had constructed a basic dock.

As famine looms in parts of besieged Gaza, the United States and Jordan carried out a new airdrop of humanitarian aid to Gaza's Palestinians on Sunday, parachuting in more than 11,500 meals, the US military said, but UN agencies warn this falls far short of the needs of its 2.4 million people.

**Egypt talking to Hamas and Israel for ceasefire**

Egypt was in contact with senior Hamas and Israeli figures as well as other mediators on Sunday in an effort to restart negotiations for a truce in the Gaza Strip during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which begins on Monday or Tuesday, two Egyptian security sources said on the condition of anonymity.

**Ukraine vows 'never' to surrender to Russia, slams Pope's negotiations call**

Kuleba called on the elderly pontiff to stand "on the side of good" and not put the opposing sides "on the same footing and call it 'negotiations'".

He also appeared to reference some of the Catholic church collaborating with Nazi forces during World War II.

"At the same time, when it comes to the white flag, we know this Vatican strategy from the first half of the 20th century," Kuleba said.

He also thanked Pope Francis for his "constant prayers for peace" and said Kyiv hoped the cleric would visit Ukraine.

"We continue to hope that after two years of devastating war in the heart of Europe, the Pontiff will find an opportunity to pay an Apostolic visit to Ukraine to support over a million Ukrainian Catholics, over five million Greek-Catholics and all Ukrainians," Kuleba said.

**A Ukrainian serviceman fires a mortar towards Russian positions at the front line, near Bakhmut, Donetsk region.**

not to give up its territory.

The Pope fuelled anger by saying: "When you see that you are defeated, that things are not working out, to have the courage to negotiate."

# US, UK, French military shoot down Houthi drones in Red Sea

Reuters  
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CAIRO: US, French and British forces downed dozens of drones in the Red Sea area overnight and on Saturday after Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis targeted bulk carrier Propel Fortune and US destroyers in the region, the US military said in a statement.

The Houthis have been attacking ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden since November in what they say is a campaign of solidarity with Palestinians during Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza.

The group's military spokesman Yahya Sarea said in a televised speech on Saturday they had targeted the cargo vessel and "a number of US war destroyers at the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden with 37 drones".

US Central Command said the US military and coalition forces had downed at least 28 uncrewed aerial vehicles (UAVs) over the Red Sea in the early hours of Saturday.



Smoke billowing from a bulk carrier following an attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels, in Gulf of Aden.

# NEPAL'S PREMIER EXPANDS CABINET, PLANNING VOTE OF CONFIDENCE

Press Trust of India  
letters@hindustantimes.com

KATHMANDU: Nepal's Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' on Sunday expanded his Cabinet for a second time by inducting two new members, days after dumping the Nepali Congress and forging a new alliance with the CPN-UML.

Prachanda inducted senior Madhesi leader and chairman of the Janata Samajwadi Party (JSP) Upendra Yadav as the minister for population and health and Koshor Shah, also from JSP, as minister for forest.

With this, the number of ministers, in the Council of Ministers led by Prime Minister Prachanda, has reached 22.

Meanwhile, the PM is planning to seek a vote of confidence in parliament by March 13.

# 'Sunak points to welfare curbs for future tax cuts'

LONDON: UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is considering curbs to welfare spending to fund the government's ambition of further tax cuts, according to The Sunday Times.

The prime minister said that Britain's welfare system "isn't working properly", pointing to the almost 2.5 million working-age people that have been signed off as unfit to work, three times as many as a decade ago.

**10 jihadists killed in anti-IS ops, say Iraqi authorities**

AL MIQDADIYAH: Iraqi forces have killed 10 jihadists during an operation against Islamic State (IS) group remnants in a vast desert area northwest of Baghdad, authorities said on Sunday.

An Iraqi security source said the operation was "a pre-emptive measure" to thwart attacks allegedly planned for the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, which starts in the coming days.

**At least 3 dead, several injured in shooting in US**

ARKANSAS: At least three people were killed and several others injured in an early morning shooting on Sunday in Arkansas, police said. Officers found multiple gunshot victims when they arrived at the scene near Jonesboro's downtown area around 5am on Sunday, Jonesboro police said.



Gallery assistant Sophia Shim holds a limited edition print of Monkey Queen at a gallery in Mayfair, London.

have any paperwork that would confirm its collecting history, so Katz and Howse sent it to Pest Control for authentication, it reported.

The collectors estimate the artwork is now worth between \$95,000 and \$121,000. "We're in no man's land, and it's a lot of money," Katz, 65,

told The Guardian. "They claim to be the official validators of this artist's work. But this has been going on for three years. They're just sitting on the fence — they won't say whether it's right or wrong. We have had our tails pulled for the whole three years."

Katz said Pest Control was paid \$86 to validate the artwork. "I am very disappointed with Banksy," The Guardian quoted Katz as saying.

"He has made it impossible for anyone to validate a piece of his work without his certificate. That affects the value of his work dramatically."

Recently, police in Spain have dismantled an art forgery ring suspected of selling artworks falsely attributed to the British street artist Banksy, with some pieces fetching prices of \$1,640 or higher.



# Incentives pool for chips to get deeper

Minister says India to have pride of place in semicon ecosystem

**Guulveen Aulakh**

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**NEW DELHI:** The government plans to boost chip sector incentives from the current ₹76,000 crore, as it expects a mushrooming of chip fabs and testing units in the country in the years ahead.

India will emerge as one of the top five semiconductor ecosystems in world in the coming five years, IT minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said in an interview. This will be backed by investments by global majors that are increasingly considering India for setting up fabrication or other units, the minister said.

"In the coming five years, India is expected to witness about 4-6 more fabs, 6-10 compound semiconductor fabs, 1-2 display fabs, and 8-10 ATPM units. The entire design, fab and ATPM value chain will get established here in Bharat. In the coming five years, Bharat will emerge as one of the top five semiconductor ecosystems in world," said Vaishnaw, who also holds the portfolios of telecom and railways.

ATPM refers to assembly, testing, monitoring and packaging of semiconductor chips, whereas fabs are fabrication units that make wafers from which integrated circuits or semiconductor chips are produced.

"With the good success in very short time, we will work on India Semiconductor Mission 2.0 in the coming months. Yes, more funds will be required for taking forward the semiconductor programme," he added.

The India Semiconductor Mission is the nodal body implementing India's \$10-billion semiconductor manufacturing programme.

On 1 March, the Union cabi-



Ashwini Vaishnaw, Union IT minister

net approved three chip sector projects with expected investments of ₹1.26 trillion, with the Tata group leading two of them. Tata Electronics Pvt. Ltd and Taiwan's Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. will build a ₹91,000 crore semiconductor fab in Gujarat's Dholera, while Tata Semiconductor Assembly and Test Pvt. Ltd will set up an ATPM unit in Assam's Morigaon for ₹27,000 crore.

Separately, CG Power Pvt. Ltd will build an ATPM unit in Gujarat's Sanand at an investment of ₹7,600 crore, along with Japan's Renesas Electronics. Last year, US-based Micron began work on its ATPM unit in Gujarat's Sanand. All projects taken together entail an investment of around ₹1.48 trillion.

"Our Prime Minister has mandated us to prepare a roadmap for 20 years. Accordingly, India's semiconductor mission is prepared to methodically develop the semicon industry over the next 20 years. The focus is to develop the entire ecosystem in India," he said.

Vaishnaw said approvals for the new units will be done at the same pace as US-based Micron's plans were approved, which is scheduled to deliver the first packaged chips from its Sanand facility by the year-end. Its plans were approved mid-last year and ground-breaking done in September.

"The pace at which Micron got all approvals and started construction gave a lot of confi-

dence to the global semiconductor industry. The same pace will be demonstrated in the case of the three projects approved now. Global semiconductor companies are now seriously considering India as their next destination for semiconductor investment," he added.

On the ₹10,372 crore India AI Mission that the Cabinet approved last week, the minister said its compute pillar is aimed at creating AI compute infrastructure of at least 10,000 GPUs or graphics processing units, which will be built through public-private partnerships. "Nvidia is supporting our AI Mission. Details will be worked out," Vaishnaw added, when asked about the involvement of large technology firms. GPUs are the bedrock of AI as they provide high-speed compute power required for deep learning models that are needed for development of AI.

The government will also set aside a ₹1,900-crore corpus for an AI Startup financing pillar specifically to handhold nearly 1,000 deep-tech and AI startups under the AI Mission, the minister added.

While the mission also provides for an AI marketplace designed to offer AI as a service and pre-trained models, an AI datasets platform will also be set up, which will create a privacy-protected mechanism enabling collaboration of datasets owners with startups, thus benefiting innovation.

# India not to tailor policy for Tesla, laws to encourage all EV cos: Min

**Press Trust of India**

feedback@livemint.com

**NEW DELHI:** India will not tailor its policies to suit US EV maker Tesla, and its laws and tariff rules will be formulated to attract all-electric vehicle manufacturers from across the world to set up a base in the world's fastest-growing economy, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said.

Tesla has been seeking an initial tariff concession that would allow it to offset 70% customs duty for cars priced less than \$40,000, and 100% for cars of higher value.

In an interview with PTI, Goyal said the government recognises the need for a vibrant EV ecosystem as greater use of battery-run vehicles will cut carbon emissions as well as the staggering oil import bill.

But for this, it will not tailor policies that suit any one company and would rather frame ones that will encourage all electric vehicle manufacturers

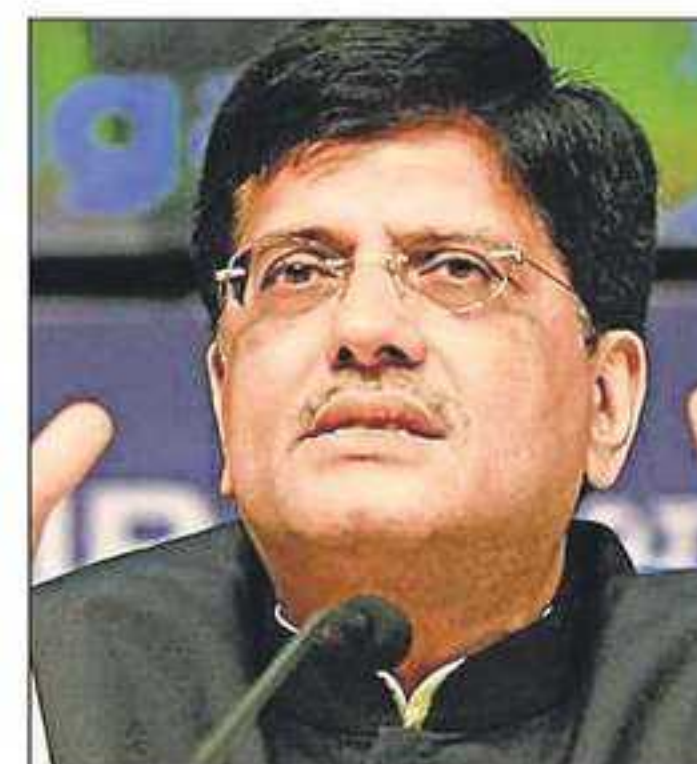
from across the world to set up shop in India, he said.

"We are working on several initiatives where we are having inter-ministerial (consultations) and a dialogue with the stakeholders, with potential investors from across the world from Europe, from the United States, from the Far East, from Japan, from Korea," he said.

Tesla made the concession demand a precondition to build a plant in India. High tariffs on motor vehicles, meant to boost local production, have been a lingering issue for foreign car-makers too.

"Government does not tailor policy for any one individual company or its interests. Everybody is free to make their demands. But that does not mean that the government will necessarily take a decision (based on) what you demand," he said.

Goyal was replying to a question about whether the government is looking at giving any concessions to Tesla for setting



Piyush Goyal, Commerce and Industry Minister.

up a manufacturing facility in India.

The Indian factory, as and when it happens, would be Tesla's sixth vehicle plant.

At present, cars imported as completely built units (CBUs) attract customs duty ranging from 60% to 100%, depending on engine size and cost, insurance and freight (CIF) value less or above \$40,000.

The world's largest electric car producer Tesla Inc's chief

Elon Musk met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June last year in New York. Musk, after meeting the Prime Minister, said he plans to visit India in 2024.

"We recognise that India must have a vibrant electric mobility ecosystem. We recognise that it has multifarious benefits to grow towards electric mobility. Not only will it help us in our fight against climate change, it will also improve the environment and lower pollution levels, particularly in cities, which largely suffer because of the ICE (internal combustion engine) or the petrol-diesel fumes that are thrown out," Goyal said.

"So, it has so many multifarious benefits which will impact not only the country's environment but will also impact the country's economy, it will add to our economic output. It will save foreign exchange, reduce our trade deficits, help us in our fight against inflation, thereby helping us in reducing interest rates," he added.

# MOBILE PHONE MANUFACTURING JUMPS 21-FOLD IN 10 YEARS

**Press Trust of India**

feedback@livemint.com

**NEW DELHI:** Mobile phone manufacturing in value terms jumped 21-fold to ₹4.1 lakh crore in India in the last 10 years as government policy measures like PLI played a critical role in attracting global players to boost local production, industry body ICEA said in a statement.

India now produces 97% of its total mobile phone demand locally and 30% of the total production in financial year 2024 is meant for export, the India Cellular and Electronics Association said.

"Mobile phone production surged from ₹18,900 crore in 2014-15 to an estimated ₹4,10,000 crore in FY24, registering an increase of 2,000%. In 2014-15, mobile phone exports from India were a mere ₹1,556 crore. The industry expects to end FY24 with an estimated export of ₹1,20,000 crore. This would mean a 7,500% increase in exports over a decade," ICEA said.

According to a note on manufacturing, in the field of smartphones, Apple and Samsung, have played a crucial role in boosting mobile phone exports from the country.

India manufactured devices are being exported in large volumes to the UK, Netherlands, Austria, and Italy besides Middle East and North Africa and South American markets, the note said.

"30% of production in FY24 will now be meant for exports. The industry expects to end FY24 with an estimated export of ₹1.2 lakh crore. Driven by this export growth, mobile phones have now become India's 5th largest export as an individual commodity," the industry body said.

In May 2017, the Indian government announced the Phased Manufacturing Programme (PMP) to promote the domestic production of mobile handsets. This initiative helped build a robust indigenous mobile manufacturing ecosystem in India and incentivized large-scale manufacturing.

# Rejig at Viacom18 ahead of RIL-Disney merger

**Gaurav Laghate**

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**MUMBAI:** Reliance Industries Ltd-owned Viacom18 has brought its entertainment businesses under two top executives in a significant organisational overhaul ahead of its \$8.5-billion merger with Disney's India unit.

As part of the new structure, Kiran Mani, who joined the company as chief executive of digital business (Jiocinema) in November last year, will lead the digital and sports businesses, while the entire content business will be under Kevin Vaz, who joined as CEO-broadcast entertainment in July last year.

Vaz will oversee content clusters for both linear TV and digital, including general entertainment, English youth and music, kids and live events. He will also oversee the movie studio busi-

ness, housed under Viacom18 Studios.

Mani's overall mandate will include digital product, subscriber management, adtech (payment discovery), monetization, P&L (except entertainment content), and influencer marketing, in addition to the sports business. Interestingly, sales of linear sports channels will also be under Mani's ambit.

Anil Jairaj, CEO of Viacom18 Sports, who earlier reported to the board, will now report to Mani under the new structure. Mint has seen a copy of the office communication regard-

ing the changes.

"There is a new structure in place, with both Kiran and Kevin working together as two co-CEOs. While Kiran is in charge of digital, tech and sports, all content is with Kevin. This has clearly ruffled some feathers and not all leaders are happy with the new structure. Already, the original leadership team of Viacom18 has seen massive changes over the last year," said a senior executive at Viacom18, requesting not to be identified.

An email query sent to a Viacom18 spokesperson remained unanswered till press time.

Viacom18's leadership structure has seen several changes in the past four years.

After Sudhansu Vats, now MD-designate at Pidilite, left as MD and Group CEO in April 2020, Rahul Joshi, MD, Network18, was again additional

charge. In September 2021, Jyoti Deshpande was appointed as Group CEO of the company, in addition to her role at JioStudios.

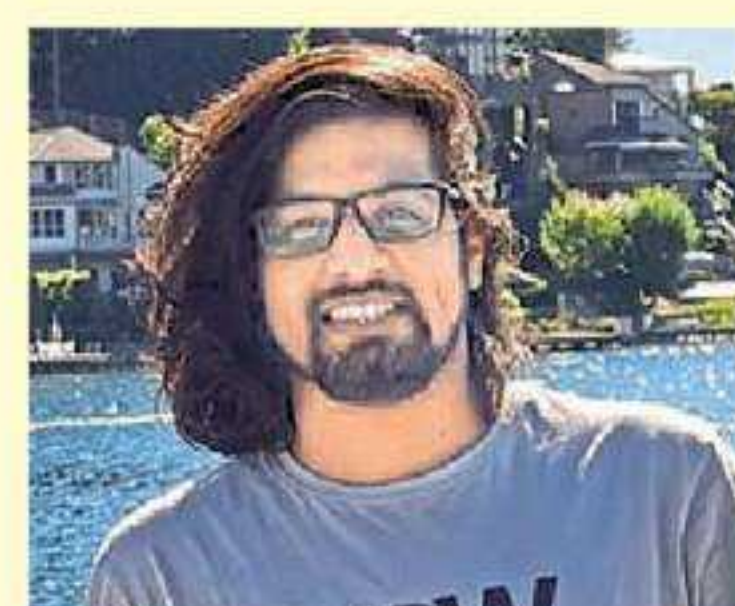
Last year, when Bodhi Tree, a joint venture of Uday Shankar and James Murdoch's Lupa Systems, picked up close to 15% stake in Viacom18, Deshpande went back to JioStudios, while Kevin Vaz, a confidant of Shankar, joined Viacom18 as CEO-broadcast entertainment, from Disney Star. Vaz also brought along Alok Jain from Disney Star, in the role of president-general entertainment.

This led to the exit of a few leadership team members of Viacom18, including Manisha Sharma (chief content officer, Hindi mass entertainment), Ravish Kumar (head - regional entertainment - Kannada and Marathi clusters), and Nina Elavia Jaipuria (head of Hindi and kids TV network).

## Buy your car with credit card, save 4-11% on costs

Most car dealers accept payments with credit cards and even allow buyers to make the full payment with it. However, the process is a little more complicated. From the car dealer charging an extra 1-2% for credit card payments to a possible impact on your CIBIL score, there are several things to consider before swiping the plastic. Use of credit cards for car purchases is beneficial only when the buyer has enough cash to clear the dues within the billing cycle. Also, the rewards may not always be in the form of cashback or air mile points so the user should not confuse the potential benefits through this payment method to a discount on the purchase price.

Compiled by Shipra Singh  
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**GAURAV NISHANT**  
31, RANCHI

Car cost ₹12.3 lakh  
Credit card share ₹7 lakh

**How he earned**  
On using Axis Atlas, he earned...

14,000 edge miles on regular spends ₹28,000 as air miles  
15,000 milestone edge miles ₹30,000 as air miles

Total ₹58,000

8.2% reward rate



**BHUSHAN TALEKAR**  
34, MUMBAI

Car cost ₹10.5 lakh  
Credit card share ₹10.5 lakh

**How he earned**  
Used Axis Airtel, HDFC Infinia, SBI Octane, IDFC Select

**He earned...**  
₹32,300 as rewards, cashback  
₹15,000 in fee waiver  
₹500 welcome bonus

Total ₹47,800

4.5% reward rate



### UPSIDES

- Helps achieve milestone spending
- Fulfills annual spending limits, hence saving renewal fee
- Can earn reward return of 4-11%

### WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR

- Extra 2-4% fee charged by dealer. It can be negotiated
- Clear dues before statement is generated to avoid high credit utilisation ratio being reported to credit bureau
- Use only if enough liquid cash available to clear dues
- Don't finance with credit card as it has higher interest over auto loans

Graphic: Paras Jain/Mint

## CCPA HELPS RECOVER ₹1,453 CR FOR AIR TICKETS

**Dhirendra Kumar**

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**NEW DELHI:** The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has helped facilitate refunds totalling ₹1,453 crore for air tickets booked during the covid-19 pandemic from travel aggregators, including Yatra, MakeMyTrip, ClearTrip, EaseMyTrip, Ixigo and Thomas Cook, two persons aware of the matter said. Only ₹3 crore remains to be refunded after CCPA, a regulatory authority of the consumer affairs ministry, took up the issue of long delays in refunds by travel aggregators, the persons cited above said.

The travel aggregators on their part have been blaming airlines, the first among the two persons cited above said. The CCPA engaged with travel platforms in 2021 and issued notices against six online travel aggregators—EaseMyTrip, Yatra Online, MakeMyTrip, HappyEasyGo, ClearTrip and Ixigo under the Consumer Protection Act 2019.

In the notices, the CCPA alerted travel aggregators to refund booking amounts to consumers affected by covid-19, the first person said. In addition to aggregators, notices were also issued to tour and travel agencies such as Thomas Cook, Neem Holidays, Mango Holidays, and Kesari Tours, asking them to refund fares for cancelled flights, the second person said.

# Spotify bets on artiste-driven, independent tracks

**Lata Jha**

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**NEW DELHI:** Film music dominates consumption on Spotify, making for 70-90% of all listening in India, but artiste-driven, independent tracks that aren't part of movies and created by singers in collaboration with labels alone are growing at a faster pace than film songs, the Swedish audio-streaming service said.

"We would love to see a 50:50 balance between film and independent music, but that shift is happening gradually. When we came to India, we realised it's a market of 1.3 billion people, but



Non-film music is growing at a faster pace than film songs. REUTERS

there aren't enough artistes in the country because film music remains the barometer of success. This country has a huge

musical heritage and opportunities for user-generated content have opened up in the last few years," Amarjit Singh Batra,

managing director, Spotify India, and general manager, SAMEA (South Asia, Middle East, Africa), said in an interview. In 2023, the most streamed song on Spotify in India, Maan Meri Jaan by King and Saurabh Lokahnde, with over 275 million streams, was not part of a movie.

The trends vary across languages. Batra pointed out. In Punjabi, for example, non-film music accounts for 90% of all consumption, whereas in Hindi, Tamil or Telugu, where film music is big, the figure hovers near 70-80% for movie tracks.

Over the past year, names like AP Dhillon, King, Anuv Jain

and Kamishk Seth have emerged as fan-favourites in the non-film category, Spotify said.

The company has invested in Spotify for Artists, a programme that shares data regularly with artistes on their listener base and consumption habits of the audience that follows their work. "They can know who is listening to them or who else those people are listening to, which could impact how collaborations happen and give artistes an opportunity to tap into other people's audiences, besides giving them insights on where the fans are located, so they can go hold events," Batra said.

## { THE CROSSWORDS }

### CRYPTIC CLUES

- ACROSS**
- Opera in F perhaps (8)
  - One thing I met on the way back (4)
  - Hope to find one well? (5)
  - Acts as executioner. Some teachers want to! (7)
  - The key to a high state of readiness? (7,5)
  - Cover article in duplicate (6)
  - A holiday is needed to make it safe (6)
  - Spokesmen? (12)
  - Find use in a way that's inspired (7)
  - Consent to having a foreigner tailed (5)
  - Left the last word to the auctioneer (4)
  - It supports one who is lying (8)

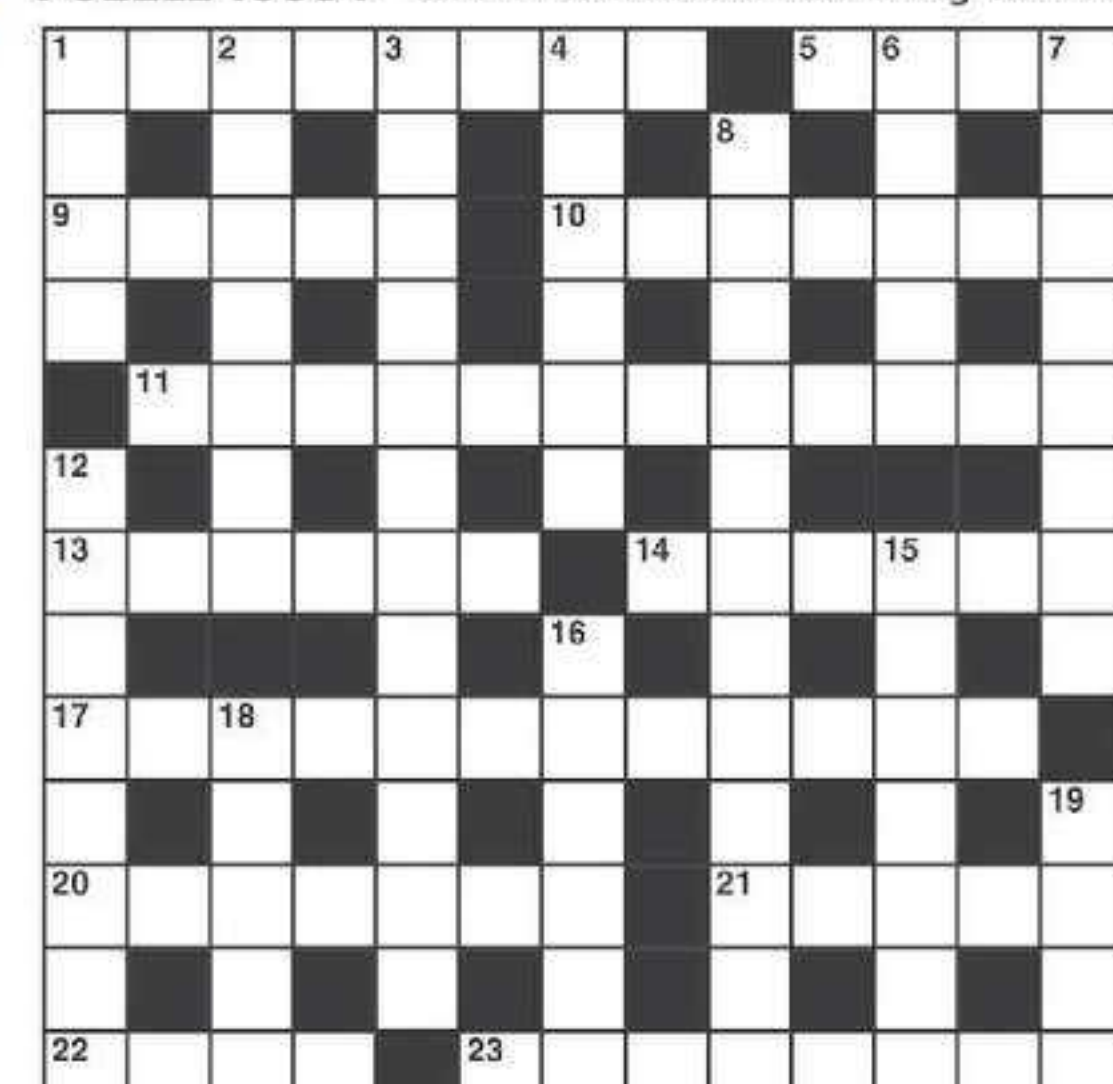
### DOWN

- One may find their pulse worth taking (4)
- No women around - it's heavenly! (3,4)
- Glossy coat shows Parisian chic (6,6)
- Go through again what the old car engine may need (6)
- Characteristic painting is lifted by it (5)
- Mother's violent death made a newspaper's name (8)
- Items bought to hold items bought (8,4)
- Milk producer cast out is glowering (8)
- No longer bound to deliver (3,4)
- Show resentment? Not a bit (6)
- Mischievous out of self-interest (5)
- The best part of a play (4)

### YESTERDAY'S SOLUTIONS (16803)



## PUZZLE 16804 © Gemini Crosswords 2018 All rights reserved



### QUICK CLUES

- ACROSS**
- Staunchly loyal (4-4)
  - Stimulus (4)
  - Enthusiastic enjoyment (5)
  - Of little substance (7)
  - Refuse to listen (4,1,4,3)
  - To blush (6)
  - Glib (6)
  - Look forward with pleasure (4,4,4)
  - Go in emphatic disgust (7)
  - Bequeath (5)
  - Restrain (4)
  - Expert marksman (4,4)
- DOWN**
- Ancient Roman garment (4)
  - Fallacious (7)
  - National good mark (7,5)
  - Slovenly (6)
  - Uncommunicative (8)
  - Unique in kind (12)
  - Abundantly productive (8)
  - Call in question (7)
  - Erase (6)
  - Part of a church (5)
  - For fear that (4)

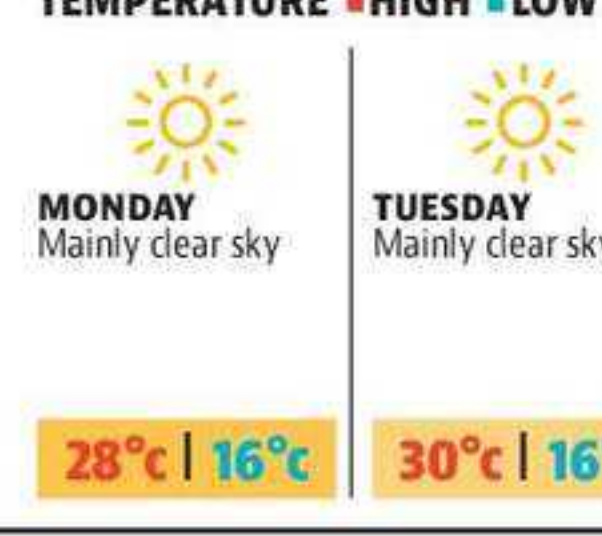
## { SUDOKU } DIFFICULTY LEVEL ★★★



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 }

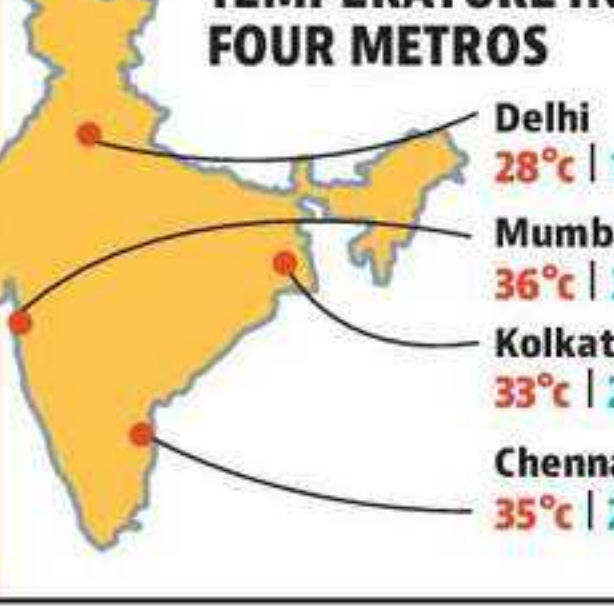
TEMPERATURE • HIGH • LOW



## ALMANAC

Today is 11th March 2024  
• 29 Shaban, 1445  
• 16 Phalguna, Shukla  
Paksha, 01  
• Samvat 2080  
Sunset: Monday at 06:27 p.m.  
Sunrise: Tuesday at 07:12 a.m.  
Moonset: Monday at 07:40 p.m.

## TEMPERATURE IN FOUR METROS





SPORT

# Dahiya, Bajrang cave in at Paris qualifiers trials

## What next for Bajrang Punia and Ravi Dahiya?



**Bajrang: Tokyo bronze medallist**

- Tokyo Olympics bronze medallist Bajrang looked a pale shadow of his past in the selection trials for Olympics qualifiers
- Sujet Kalkal won the final against Rohit and will be going for both Asian and World Olympics qualification tournaments
- As per the Olympics selection policy of the ad hoc panel, a quota winner will have to win trials at home
- Top four from Sonepat trials will compete to become challenger
- Bajrang finished in top-4 but did not turn up for the bronze medal bout and wanted to be excused on medical grounds. Remains to be seen whether it is accepted and he is given a top-4 finish



**Dahiya: Tokyo silver medallist**

- Coming back from a ACL surgery, Dahiya has played just one competition in six months
- Lost to Aman Sehrawat and Udit in Nordic round in high scoring bouts
- Aman won the final and will represent India in both Olympics qualifiers
- If Aman wins a quota place for India, Dahiya can challenge him at home to get the quota

**Avishek Roy**  
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**SONEPAT:** Indian wrestling's turbulence off the mat hit the competitive arena on Sunday as Tokyo Olympic medallists Ravi Dahiya (65kg) and Bajrang Punia (57kg) crashed out of the selection trials for the Paris Olympics qualifiers here. The two giants of Indian wrestling left the Sports Authority of India centre in a huff, unable to hide their disappointment and tears.

Bajrang and Dahiya will not make it to the squad for the Asian Olympic qualifiers and World Olympic qualifiers where wrestlers will contest for Olympic quota places. Their only opportunity will come if Sujet Kalkal, who won the 65kg trials, and Aman Sehrawat, who sealed his spot in 57kg, grab an Olympic quota and trials are then held at home to select the final team for Paris. This is as per the Olympics selection policy of the ad hoc committee, but there are ifs and buts considering the current mess in Indian wrestling.

On the mat, it was heart-break-

ing to watch Tokyo bronze medallist Bajrang's waning powers. He was nowhere close to the power-packed wrestling he is known for. He barely survived in his opening 65kg bout against Ravinder, winning 3-3 on criteria. In the semi-finals against Rohit though, Bajrang could not save off the upset, losing 9-1. Rohit led 2-1 in the first period and stepped up in the second with a fast attack, earning four points on the edge of the mat. He went up 8-1 and Bajrang could hardly make any attacking move to score.

Brute power, strength of his arms and belief to comeback from any situation — all those abilities that made him an Olympic medallist, multiple-time world championships medallist and a world No.1 — was not to be seen. Bajrang, gutted after the loss, went back to his corner and broke down. When the NADA team approached him for a urine sample, a dejected Bajrang did not oblige them. Soon, he left the stadium and did not report for the bronze medal match. An official said he sought exemption from the match on medical grounds.

In the last one year, Bajrang has

**WINNERS: OLYMPIC WEIGHT CATEGORIES**

**FREESTYLE:** Aman Sehrawat (57kg), Sujet Kalkal (65kg), Jaideep (74kg), Deepak Punia (86kg), Deepak (97kg), Sumeet (125kg)

**GRECO ROMAN:** Sumeet (60kg), Ashu (67kg), Vikash (77kg), Sunil Kumar (87kg), Nitesh (97kg), Naveen (130kg)

been the face of the protests by wrestlers against the previous Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh. Last year, Bajrang competed in the Hangzhou Asian Games but did not participate in any international tournament after that, focusing on preparing for these selection trials. He had been training in Russia for the last one month.

"I have competed against Bajrang before also and I thought he was not having the same power today. He was hardly able to give time to wrestling with the protests and so much going around him, it is natural that it will take a toll," Rohit who touched Bajrang's feet after beating him, said.

Rohit though could not make the most of his big win and lost to young Sujet Kalkal, the national

champion and U20 world medallist, in the final. Sujet made short work of Rohit, tying him in a fitley (leg lace) and rolling over for a 10-0 win.

The same fitley trick was employed by Aman Sehrawat in the 57kg final against Udit to win by superiority. Before that, Aman had to breach the defences of Ravi Dahiya, his training partner at Delhi's Chhatrasal Stadium, in what was the most entertaining bout of the day.

Aman, the 21-year-old Asian Championships gold medallist, has been making big moves in the weight category even as Ravi has grappled with form, fitness and injury. Ravi is coming off an ACL surgery, and though he looked good with his counter-attacking moves, lack of competition seemed to have led to a lack of

sharpness. Dahiya, in fact, lost two matches in a row in the Nordic style draw of seven wrestlers. After losing a fast-paced attacking bout against Aman (14-13), he surprisingly fell to Udit, the U20 Asian champion (10-8).

Dahiya won his first bout 8-4 against Amit. The action-packed second bout against Aman, an Asian Games medallist, was a high-scoring thriller and Dahiya trailed 4-12 but forced his way back with some brilliant counters. However, it wasn't enough. Soon after, Dahiya was in a must-win situation against Udit, but again trailed 2-8 in the first period from which he could not cover.

"Ravi has not competed in a long time and that was showing in his wrestling. The good thing was that he was scoring points and both bouts went so close. He will be back to his best but for now we have to wait and watch," Chhatrasal coach Praveen Dahiya said.

The only Olympic quota India have won so far is through Antim Panghal. With the two stalwarts losing their way, India's Olympic preparations appear to be on a shaky ground.

# Amid Bazball noise, India took the aggressive route to victory

India fielded five specialist bowlers in their push to take 20 wickets every Test. Bowling out England in all 10 innings in the 4-1 win underlines their attacking intent

**Vivek Krishnan**  
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**DHARAMSALA:** Very early in this five-Test series that concluded on Saturday, it was apparent that India had an inexperienced batting line-up and an experienced bowling attack. England, on the other hand, had experienced batters — three with 100-plus Tests now — while their bowling unit comprised three rookie spinners.

In Dharamsala, for example, England's top seven had a collective experience of 474 Tests compared to India's 172. India's spinners had 184 Tests under their belt as against England's Tom Hartley and Shoaib Bashir with eight Tests between them.

Test cricket is a game of experience, therefore, the duels between England's batters and India's bowlers were going to be decisive to the outcome of this series. And India's bowlers won these battles almost every time, illustrated by their success in taking 20 wickets in all five Tests for a 4-1 series win.

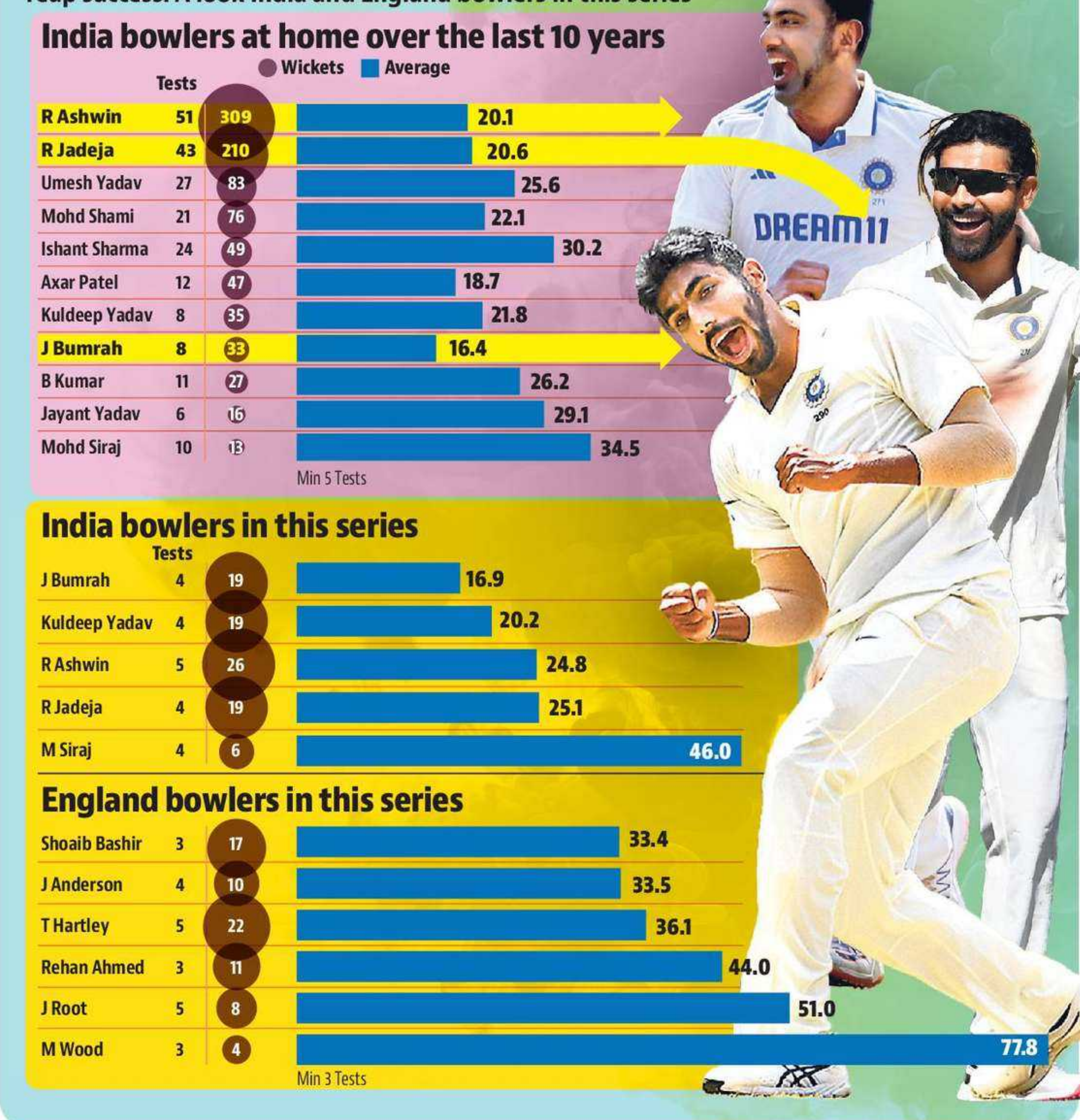
It was only in the second innings of the first Test in Hyderabad that England got on top of India's bowlers, led by an unexpected knock of 196 from Ollie Pope who returned only 119 runs in his other nine innings. Of further relevance is that England managed totals exceeding 350 in only two of 10 innings. India, despite fielding a few debutants, racked up 350-plus scores in five of nine innings.

These matches were played on perfectly good Indian pitches that gave the away team nothing to complain about, and yet the lack of skill and application of their batters was exposed repeatedly by a world-class five-member Indian attack. This is the essence of why India's winning streak in home series now stands at 17.

In this series in particular, India could have easily chosen to lengthen their batting by playing another specialist batter to make

## Stacked with true firepower

20 wickets win Tests and India pick 5 bowlers almost always to reap success. A look India and England bowlers in this series



up for the inexperience, but they played five bowlers in each Test. It helps that Ravindra Jadeja, who is six shy of 300 Test wickets, is also a capable No.6 batter with four centuries (no coincidence perhaps that India's winning streak at home began shortly after

his debut). But cast your mind back to the second Test in Vizag when the all-rounder was injured. Having faced criticism for losing the first Test in Hyderabad where they failed to chase 231, India had the option of strengthening their top seven with a proper batter in

Jadeja's place at No.6 and relying on just four bowlers. Instead, they decided to bat Axar Patel at No.6 — a risk with debutant Rajat Patidar at No.5 and KS Bharat at No.7 — and bring in left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav to retain a five-man bowling unit. That Kuldeep has

captivated us all with 19 wickets in four Tests shows they have been vindicated.

At the end of the series, India coach Rahul Dravid could afford to chuckle while recalling that move in Vizag. "When I saw Axar walk in at No.6, I remember look-

ing at Vikram (Rathour) (batting coach) and thinking, 'jeez, VVS (Laxman) used to walk out at that position'.

With due respect to Axar (laughs), he is a lovely player. It was the braver option and I am glad we went with that. We knew we needed 20 wickets and trust our batters to do the job. That paid off," Dravid said in the post-match press conference on Saturday.

The reference to Laxman batting at No.6 during Dravid's time is reflective of an era when India almost always played six specialist batters followed by the wicket-keeper and four bowlers. That isn't the case anymore.

Over the past decade, India have more often than not tilted towards five bowlers. Yes, Jadeja and R Ashwin's status as great spinners as well as handy batters provides that balance at home. But even in Tests outside Asia, India have been willing to sacrifice an extra batter and

focus on the best possible way of taking 20 wickets.

Remember, when India did remarkably well on the previous tour of England for a 2-2 draw, they always had four specialist pacers to go to with Jadeja as the spin-bowling all-rounder at No.7. Jadeja and Shardul Thakur's batting ability may give them the edge over some other bowlers — Ashwin missed all those Tests as a result — but it's commendable nonetheless that the captain always had five bowling options.

Whether it was the combination of Virat Kohli and Ravi Shastri as captain and coach or Rohit Sharma and Dravid now, the thought process hasn't changed. "We have always wanted to ensure we have the best resources to be able to take 20 wickets. That's the bottom line of what me and Rohit have always spoken about. That's what wins you Tests... being able to take 20 wickets as quickly as possible. That's something we have been clear about," Dravid said on Saturday.

For all the talk about England's attacking methods and their "noble endeavour" to keep Test cricket alive — they stubbornly stuck to just four bowlers all series — it's perhaps India then that is taking the truly aggressive route by always hunting for wickets and wins.



Mumbai's Shardul Thakur in action on Sunday. PRAKASH PARSEKAR

## Shardul rallies Mumbai after Vidarbha strikes

**Rasesh Mandani**  
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**MUMBAI:** Vidarbha were in Mumbai's den but the visiting bowlers roared on Day 1 of the Ranji Trophy final at the Wankhede Stadium before Shardul Thakur's spunky 75 brought the 41-time champions back into the game. Three strikes late in the day reduced Vidarbha to 31/3 to balance the day's proceedings after Mumbai, asked to bat first, were bundled out for 224.

Mumbai though would intrude upon the 35 minutes of batting madness before lunch when they slipped from 81/0 to 99/4.

In between his occasional play and miss, Prithvi Shaw would stroke plenty of punishing drives as Vidarbha's fast bowlers sprayed the ball on a pitch which had enough life. The window of opportunity arrived when Bhupen Lalwani chased one outside off-stump on 37 off pacer Yash Thakur. Vidarbha skipper Akshay Wadkar took a one-handed catch diving to the right and the tide turned. Misjudging the length of Harsh Dubey's classical left-arm spinner's delivery led to Shaw's undoing. Shaw (46-63b) swept only to see his stumps disturbed. Teenager Musheer Khan (6) then closed his bat face too early against Dubey to be trapped in front. But his best wicket was yet to come.

In walked Shreyas Iyer, with a point to prove. Vidarbha were quick to welcome him with the short ball. After facing 15 searching deliveries, Iyer (7), discarded from the Test team and BCCI's central contract, poked at Umesh Yadav's rising delivery to be caught at first slip.

If that wasn't bad enough, Har-dik Tamore and out-of-form skipper Ajinkya Rahane were dismissed early in the second session at the score of 111 as Vidarbha left Mumbai staring down the barrel.

**Thakur's counter**  
That's when Shardul Thakur took over, like he did with a century in the semi-final against Tamil Nadu. For all the 'Lord' meme he attracts, the India all-rounder stands out with his ability to stand up when the chips are down. Thakur's first shot of intent was stepping out against Dubey to send the ball to widow long-off boundary. It drew the biggest cheer from the Vijay Merchant pavilion — the packed stand in the stadium celebrating its golden jubilee.

Thakur continued his clean striking, stepping out against spinners and punching and pulling hard off the back foot against pace. He had some close shaves, survived some difficult dropped catches, but did not temper his approach much. Thakur brought up his 50 in 37 balls, and by the time he was the last man dismissed (75-69b, 8x4, 3x6), he had saved Mumbai the blushes.

Dubey (20-3-62-3) and Yash Thakur (11-2-54-3) topped the bowling charts for Vidarbha with the seasoned Umesh Yadav picking two wickets.

In response, Mumbai pace bowlers found ways to eke out three quick wickets. **Brief scores:** Mumbai 224 in 64.3 overs (Prithvi Shaw 46, Bhupen Lalwani 37, Shardul Thakur 75; Umesh Yadav 2/43, Harsh Dubey 3/62, Yash Thakur 3/54). Vidarbha 31/3 in 13 overs (Dhawal Kulkarni 2/9).

# Capitals steal last-ball win over Bangalore, seal playoffs spot



Delhi Capitals players console RCB's Richa Ghosh. PTI

**Shalini Gupta**  
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**CHANDIGARH:** A day after Harmanpreet Kaur's fiery match-winning 48-ball 95 for Mumbai Indians against Gujarat Giants at Delhi's Ferozeshah Kotla ground raised the pitch in the Women's Premier League (WPL), Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) came close to replicating the effect against hosts and last year's runners-up Delhi Capitals (DC).

However, they fell one-run short despite Richa Ghosh's stunning 29-ball 51 as the hosts snatched victory to sail through

to the playoffs in style. Chasing DC's 181/5, RCB stumbled in the last over as they were restricted to 180/7 in 20 overs with Ghosh run out on the last ball.

With 17 runs needed off the last six balls, Ghosh charged ahead hitting two sixes off Jess Jonassen's bowling, but faltered in the end as DC earned the win.

Capitals' challenging total was set up by Jemimah Rodrigues, who top-scored with a 36-ball 58 (8x4, 1x6) to propel the team. Jemimah has taken to franchise T20 cricket like fish to water and her form has peaked at the right time this season. Alice Capsey

**STANDINGS**

Team	M	W	L	Pts	NRR
DC	7	5	2	10	0.918
MI	7	5	2	10	0.343
RCB	7	3	4	6	0.027
UPW	7	3	4	6	-0.365
GG	6	1	5	2	-1.111

too played her part, scoring 48 off 32 balls, after captain Meg Lanning (29) and opener Shafali Verma (23) had added 54 runs for the opening wicket.

RCB's chase was set up by Elysse Perry (49 off 32b), Sophie Devine (26 off 16b), Sophie Molineux (33 off 30b) and Ghosh after captain Smriti Mandhana was dismissed for five runs.

Needing 40 runs off the last 18 balls, with Ghosh and in-form Devine in the middle, RCB were pushed on the back foot with Marizanne Kapp removing Kiwi cricketer Devine.

It was Ghosh who then brought RCB to the brink of victory. She swatted three sixes and four boundaries but with RCB needing two runs off the last ball, Ghosh hit straight to backward point and was caught short at the non-striker's end. RCB will have to win their next two games to make it to the playoffs.

**Brief scores:** DC 181/5 (Jemimah Rodrigues 58, Alice Capsey 48; Shreyanka Patil 4/26), RCB 180/7 (Elysse Perry 49, Richa Ghosh 51). **DC won by 1 run.**

**Verstappen wins for a Red Bull one-two**  
**JEDDAH:** Defending three-time world champion Max Verstappen consolidated his lead with victory on Saturday when he led Red Bull team-mate Sergio Perez home at the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix. The 26-year-old dominated from pole to chequered flag to finish 13.643 seconds ahead of Perez. Charles Leclerc of Ferrari was third.

**Sreeja loses to No. 3 Chinese Manyu**  
**MUMBAI:** Sreeja Akula went down fighting to world No. 3 Chinese Wang Manyu 2-3 (6-11, 11-9, 5-11, 11-8, 8-11) in the Rd of 64 of the Singapore Smash.

**Roy pulls out of IPL, KKR sign Phil Salt**  
**NEW DELHI:** KKR have brought in Englishman Phil Salt as a replacement for Jason Roy who pulled out of the IPL due to personal reasons. This will be Salt's second season in the IPL, having played for Capitals last season. The 27-year-old Salt has been bought at his reserve price of ₹1.5 crore.



# Satwik and Chirag clinch French Open title without losing a game

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**MUMBAI:** If you're the kind that believes a trailer tells you a lot about a movie, the Sat-Chi show in Paris would fill you with hope on what's to come in about five months' time. For, in the same city and venue that will play host to the badminton events of the 2024 Paris Olympics in July-August, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty stood atop the podium, arms aloft and smiles abound, after capturing the French Open crown on Sunday.

They did so putting the lights out on the dazzling run of Chinese Taipei's Lee Jhe-Huei and Yang Po-Hsuan, the German Open winners of last weekend, in a 21-11, 21-17 annihilation across a 37-minute final. It was the shortest contest on the last day of the Super 750 tournament, which the Indians have now won twice (first in 2021) while also finishing runners-up in 2019.

Paris seems to be Satwik and Chirag's happy place. No wonder it's where they wiped the wound of losing three straight finals after having fallen one step short at the China Masters (November 2023),



Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty after winning the French Open. BADMINTON PHOTO/BAI

Malaysia Open and India Open (both Jan 2024). The world No. 1 pair's first title on the BWF Tour since the Korea Open in July last year had their signature stamp of class, consistency and command.

So dominant were Satwik and Chirag through the week that they did not drop a single game. Not even while maneuvering through

a tricky opener against the 2021 World Championships bronze medalists. Not even while being up against reigning world champions Kang Min Hyuk and Seo Seung Jae in the semi-finals, swatting the Koreans aside and avenging their India Open final defeat that would've stung.

Did the unseeded Lee and Yang,

no matter their rich current form, really stand a chance then? Not against the collective quality of Sat-Chi. Not in Paris, anyway.

The two pairs split the first six points but once Satwik pounced towards the net for a backhand kill, the Indians came alive. And, helped by a few defensive errors gone wide from the Taipei pair, off

they went for a 9-4 lead.

"Stay where we are", came the instructions from coach Mathias Boe at the mid-game interval at 11-5. His wards duly did, continuing to target Lee's misfiring defence that leaked errors. Lee and Yang won a 27-shot rally at 16-10, but Satwik and Chirag's quick hands and reflexes on the front court placed them ahead just 15 minutes into the final.

The 16th-ranked pair came out attacking the first point of the second game, and opened up a 4-1 lead. The world No. 1s were quick to sneak ahead 6-5, aided by service errors and indecision on the back court by the men across. Lee and Yang's more attacking intent still took them into the break with a two-point lead, which was again swiftly erased. That's when the Indians picked up their intensity in the front court, winning 8 out of the 10 points in a clutch phase that took them 19-15 ahead.

One championship point gone, a Chirag smash ensured the second did not. Soon the trademark celebrations began—Chirag leaping on Satwik; Satwik shaking a leg. The movie, gearing up for another Paris show come July, is looking good.

# Oz have backs to the wall versus NZ

**Agencies**  
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**CHRISTCHURCH:** New Zealand cleaned out the top four Australian batsmen to leave the tourists on 77/4 and facing an uphill task in their chase of 279 to win the second Test in Christchurch. The hosts set a demanding

target for an Australian side struggling for runs on a ground where the highest successful fourth innings is 285/8, set by NZ against Sri Lanka last year.

Steve Smith, Marnus Labuschagne, Usman Khawaja and Cameron Green were all swiftly sent back to the pavilion. Matt Henry, rated by Lyon as the

bowler of the series, had figures of 2/37 with debutant Ben Sears on 2-22. Australia still need 202 runs. At the close of play on day three, Mitchell Marsh was not out 27 with Travis Head unbeaten on 17.

With two days remaining and no rain forecast, a draw is out of the equation.

# BAGAN CRUSH EB 3-1 TO SEAL ISL PLAYOFF BERTH

**Agencies**  
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**KOLKATA:** Mohun Bagan produced one of their finest displays of the season to crush East Bengal 3-1 in their ISL return leg at the Salt Lake Stadium.

Cleiton Silva missed from the spot in the 14th minute but since then it was a one-way traffic for Mohun Bagan who scored through Jason Cummings (27th), Liston Colaco (36th) and Dimitri Petratos (45+3', pen). Saul Crespo (53rd) pulled one back.

The win took Mohun Bagan past Mumbai City to the top spot of the standings on goal difference and to the playoff spot. Both sides now have 36 points but Mohun Bagan have one match in hand and remain firm favourites for the Shield. With the loss, East Bengal are out of playoff race.

# Liverpool and Man City draw at Anfield to leave Arsenal top of Premier League

**Agencies**  
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**LIVERPOOL:** Arsenal remain top of the Premier League after a titanic tussle between Liverpool and Manchester City ended 1-1 at Anfield on Sunday. Alexis Mac Allister's penalty cancelled out John Stones' opener to leave Liverpool behind the Gunners on goal difference and City one point back in third with 10 games to go.

The result was exactly what Arsenal wanted as the Gunners retained first place, a position they earned when Kai Havertz's late header clinched a dramatic 2-1 win against Brentford on Saturday. Arsenal are above second-placed Liverpool on goal difference, with a +7 advantage, while champions City are one



Liverpool's Alexis Mac Allister celebrates after equalising. AFP

point adrift of the top two, with all three teams having 10 games left. The final Premier League clash between Jurgen Klopp and Pep Guardiola did not disap-

point as Liverpool roared back in a breathless second half despite being depleted by injury.

Klopp's men could have regrets if they do not go on to

**STANDINGS**

TEAM	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
Arsenal	28	20	4	4	46	64
Liverpool	28	19	7	2	39	64
Man City	28	19	6	3	35	63
Aston Villa	28	17	4	7	18	55
Tottenham	27	16	5	6	20	53

break City's run of three consecutive titles as they missed chances to secure a win. But City could also have snatched victory late on when Jeremy Doku hit the post.

Tottenham routed Aston Villa 4-0 to reignite their bid for a top four finish. James Maddison put Spurs ahead and Brennan Johnson doubled their lead before John McGinn was sent off. Son Heung-min and Timo Werner struck in stoppage time.

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