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Passengers HANDLING  
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**Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**  
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## NDTV BATTLEGROUND

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#BattlegroundOnNDTV

## EC uploads more data on bonds till Nov 2023

Aditi Agrawal  
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**NEW DELHI:** The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Sunday uploaded all electoral bond-related documents that it received from political parties in 2019 and November 2023 in sealed covers, which it had subsequently submitted to the Supreme Court.

The documents contain details of the number and value of electoral bonds that parties redeemed between March 1, 2018 and November 20, 2023. On March 14, 2024, the poll body had uploaded data it received from the State Bank of India (SBI) for the bonds bought and redeemed between April 12, 2019 and February 15, 2024.

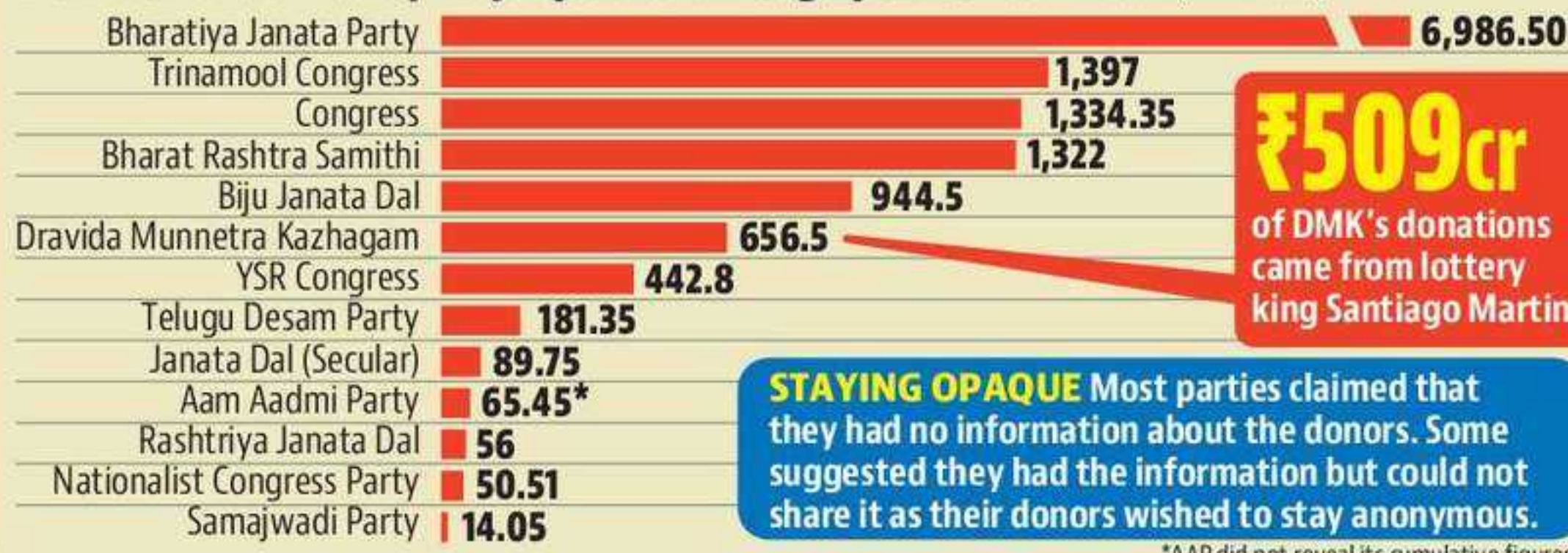
The documents unsealed and uploaded on Sunday showed that political parties knew the identities of the people and entities that donated funds to them, belying previous claims that the electoral bond

continued on →12

### What the latest disclosures reveal

The documents correspond to electoral bonds redeemed from March 2018-Nov 2023

Donations received by major parties through poll bonds Amount (in ₹ crore)



## BJP got lion's share before 2019 polls

Abhishek Jha and Aditi Agrawal  
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**NEW DELHI:** Electoral bonds worth ₹16,492 crore were redeemed in the thirty phases of their sale between March 1, 2018 and January 11, 2024 and the

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) redeemed 50% of them at ₹8,252 crore, according to data published by the Election Commission of India on March 14 and March 17.

The Congress accounted for 11.8% (₹1,952 crore) while the All India Trinamool Congress

(TMC) accounted for 10.4% (₹1,708 crore). The year the scheme was launched (FY18), only three parties got electoral bond donations: the BJP (95%), Congress (2.3%) and JD(S) (2.7%). The BJP thus received the biggest fillip ahead of the 2019 general elections. →P10



Arvind Kejriwal

## CM SUMMONED BY ED AGAIN IN EXCISE, DELHI JAL BOARD CASES

Neeraj Chauhan  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has issued summons to Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal in connection with its probe in two cases — the Delhi excise policy 2021-22, and alleged irregularities in the awarding of Delhi Jal Board (DJB) contracts — people aware of the matter said on Sunday.

The federal anti-money laundering agency has summoned Kejriwal to appear before it in connection with the DJB case on Monday, and in connection with the excise case on March 21.

The AAP reacted sharply to the development, terming the summons an attempt to stop Kejriwal from campaigning for the Lok Sabha elections. →P4

## PM seeks Andhra votes in joint push with Naidu

Srinivasa Rao Apparasu  
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**HYDERABAD:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday launched the National Democratic Alliance's (NDA) Lok Sabha campaign in Andhra Pradesh with a rally high in political rhetoric that he addressed along with TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu and JSP president Pawan Kalyan.



continued on →12

PM Narendra Modi with TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu. PTI

## INDIA bloc holds Mumbai rally on closing day of Rahul's yatra

Faisal Malik  
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**MUMBAI:** A day after the Election Commission of India announced the schedule for the Lok Sabha elections, INDIA bloc launched its joint campaign from Mumbai's iconic Shivaji Park. The opposition parties used the rally to display a show of strength on the day the Congress leader Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra culminated in Mumbai. →P11



Rahul Gandhi with INDIA bloc leaders in Mumbai on Sunday. PTI

## Delhi lose second WPL final in a row



Spinner Shreyanka Patil and her Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) teammates celebrate the wicket of Minnu Mani during the final match against Delhi Capitals (DC) on Sunday. RCB captured their first-ever Women's Premier League (WPL) title after defeating DC by eight wickets, handing the team its second loss in a final, at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi. Related story on page 17 ANI

## INDIA, MALDIVES REVIEW PROCESS FOR WITHDRAWAL OF MILITARY STAFF

Rezaul H Laskar  
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**NEW DELHI:** India and the Maldives on Sunday reviewed the process for replacing Indian military personnel who operate three aviation platforms in the Indian Ocean archipelago, with authorities in Male saying the second batch of personnel will be withdrawn by April 10.

The Indian side has begun replacing its military personnel with civilian technical staff following a demand by Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu for withdrawing all Indian military personnel from the country. Military personnel responsible for operating and maintaining one helicopter were withdrawn earlier this month. →P9

## INFLUENCERS WILL FACE ACTION IF FOUND ENDORSING ONLINE GAMBLING

Zia Haq  
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**NEW DELHI:** Social media influencers could face action for endorsing online gambling, the country's consumer protection watchdog has stated in an advisory, people familiar with the matter said. The Central Consumer Protection Authority has said that "increasing instances" of endorsements of betting and gambling, banned under Public Gambling Act of 1867, had come to its notice. →P10

## International students offering namaz beaten up at Guj varsity, MEA steps in

HT Correspondent  
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**AHMEDABAD:** A group of people stormed the Gujarat University hostel in Ahmedabad late on Saturday and attacked international students who were offering namaz inside the premises, injuring five people during the melee, prompting the state police to begin a high-level probe on Sunday and arrest two men, even as the ministry of external affairs said it had taken note of the incident.



A screenshot from a video purportedly of the attack.

Two students — one from Sri Lanka and another from Tajikistan — were hospitalised after the

attack, videos of which did the rounds on social media and drew widespread condemnation. Police said they had arrested two people, Hitesh Mewada and Bharat Patel, both residents of Ahmedabad, for their role in the attack, adding that they were on the hunt for more suspects.

Officers said the incident took place around 10.30pm on Saturday, when around 25 people broke into A Block of the hostel, which houses around 75 of Gujarat University's 300 international students. →P9

### { LONE-WOLF THIEF }

## Bunty Chor-like criminal steals engines in S Delhi



Shivam Kumar

Jignasa Sinha  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** Shivam Kumar managed to carry out more than 200 burglaries in Delhi over the last six months, giving investigators the slip at every step. But earlier this month, the 25-year-old's luck finally ran out, leading the Delhi Police to the lone-wolf and prompting comparisons with Bunty Chor, one of the city's most notorious burglars, who inspired the 2008 Hindi

film *Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!*. On March 2, Kumar was in the process of stealing the engine of a Toyota Innova parked near the Safdarjung bus terminal when he was spotted by its driver. Kumar panicked and fired at the driver Shiv Kumar Yadav and his friend Rakesh Singh when they tried to catch him, injuring Singh in the process, police said.

Singh collapsed when the bullet hit him and Kumar managed to escape with the engine.

But while Singh survived, police were now hot on Kumar's trail. DCP (southwest) Rohit Meena said a team was assigned to look for the suspect. Police had a hunch that he was a repeat offender because similar incidents of car engine theft had been reported in the area.

"We learned that he had come on a scooter and so we collected footage from CCTV cameras nearby. We then traced his movements backwards to

continued on →12

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{ MY INDIA } JAISHANKAR ON CAA

## 'Others fast-track citizenships as well'



Amid criticism of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) from the US and other parts of the globe, external affairs minister S Jaishankar has said that it is important to put the law in the context of the Partition and underlined that there are a "number of examples" of other countries fast-tracking citizenship. Speaking at the India Today Conclave on Saturday, Jaishankar said that he has a problem when people don't hold up a mirror to their own policies, as he cited Jackson-Vanik amendment, which was about Jews from Soviet Union, the Lautenberg Amendment, Specter Amendment and "fast-tracking of Hungarians after the Hungarian revolution, fast-tracking of Cubans in 1960s". "So, if you were to ask me, have other countries, other democracies, fast-tracked on the basis of ethnicity, faith, social attributes, I can give you any number of examples," the minister said.

→P9

{ MY DELHI } MCD TO MISS TARGETS

## MCD to miss deadline to clear 2 city landfills



The ongoing biomining project at two of Delhi's three landfills — Ghazipur and Bhalswa — are likely to miss the latest deadline of 2024 to clear the sites, Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) said on Sunday. Biominining is the process of separating various components of legacy waste by passing them through trommel machines. At present, MCD is in line to clear only the Okhla landfill in December this year — a deadline set in March 2023 — as no fresh waste is being dumped at the spot. In a report submitted to the Delhi Pollution Control Committee on February 17, the civic body admitted that the three landfill sites still have 172 million tonnes of legacy waste, due to which the deadline to clear the Ghazipur landfill has been pushed back from 2024 to 2026, while the Bhalswa landfill will be cleared by 2025.

→P7

{ MY INDIA } MAHADEV APP F.I.R.

## Case filed against me at the behest of BJP, says Baghel



Former Chhattisgarh CM and senior Congress leader Bhupesh Baghel on Sunday said the case filed against him in the Mahadev Online Book app scam was politically motivated and done at the behest of the BJP. HT reported on Sunday that the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the state police filed a case against Baghel under various sections pertaining to cheating, criminal conspiracy, breach of trust, and forgery under the Indian Penal Code (IPC), and Sections 7 and 11 of the Prevention of Corruption Act in connection with the alleged ₹6,000 crore scam. "The FIR against me was lodged on March 4 by EOW then why was it not published on the EOW website till now? My name was later added under pressure. This means the BJP fears losing Rajnandgaon and Chhattisgarh seats [in the Lok Sabha polls] because they know my candidature will have an impact across the state," Baghel, who is set to contest the Lok Sabha polls from Rajnandgaon, said.

→P10

{ BUSINESS } TUR, MASUR DAL

## Centre to buy 2 pulses directly from farmers



The Centre plans to procure 400,000 tonnes of tur dal and 200,000 tonnes of masur dal directly from farmers at the minimum assured procurement price (MAPP) or at the dynamic buffer procurement price (DBPP), whichever is higher, to boost stocks, a senior official said. The MAPP is the weighted average price of previous three trading days in a district, while the DBPP is the weighted average price of the day of procurement, three previous days and three subsequent trading days. This comes in the backdrop of falling government buffer stocks amid firm market prices caused by lower production of some pulses, including tur. "As part of the plan, these two pulses will be procured by the Nafed and NCCF directly from pre-registered farmers," said the official cited above.

→P16

{ MY INDIA } ANOTHER THREE YEARS

## RSS names Hosabale as general secy again



Dattatreya Hosabale was on Sunday re-elected as the sarkaryavah (general secretary) of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) until 2027. Hosabale has held this position since 2021, when he succeeded Suresh 'Bhaiyaji' Joshi. The decision was taken during the RSS's three-day Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha — the highest decision-making body of the Sangh Parivar — in Nagpur. "The RSS Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha (ABPS) re-elected (2024-2027) Shri Dattatreya Hosabale ji for the post of Sarkaryavah. He has been discharging the responsibility of Sarkaryavah since 2021," the RSS said in a post on X. In the Sangh, the general secretary is the deputy to the sarsanghchalak (RSS chief), who is currently Mohan Bhagwat, but is largely seen as a key decision-making figure. At a press conference, Hosabale said: "Sangh is getting into the hearts of the people and the impact of the Sangh is also increasing in society," he said.

→P10

# An expected win? Exit polls show victory for Putin

Agencies

letters@hindustantimes.com

**MOSCOW:** Vladimir Putin is poised for a record victory in Russia's presidential election that will allow the Kremlin to claim he has overwhelming public support to pursue his war in Ukraine and confrontation with the West.

The Russian leader won Russia's presidential election with 87.97% of the vote, according to the first official results showed on Sunday after polls closed.

Putin received 77% of the vote in 2018 and the Kremlin has been determined to deliver a similarly high result this year to demonstrate that Russians are united behind him over the war. Three other candidates in the tightly controlled election all represent parties loyal to the Kremlin.

Turnout passed 69% by Sunday afternoon in Moscow, which didn't include more than 4.3 million people who voted online, state television reported, citing Russia's Central Election Commission. That exceeded the 67.5% turnout recorded in 2018.

Three days of voting concluded late on Sunday in Russia's westernmost Kaliningrad region, with results of exit polls published shortly after.

**Signs of muted defiance**

Long lines formed at noon outside some polling stations, including in Moscow and St Petersburg, after allies of opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who died last month in an Arctic prison camp, called on people to protest Putin's election by turning up at that time.

Their presence represented a muted sign of defiance amid the harshest Kremlin crackdown on dissent in decades. The head of the Kremlin's human rights council, Valery Fadeyev, said police should investigate people who spoiled ballot papers because they were "controlled from abroad," the state-run Tass news service reported.

Already Russia's longest-serving leader since Soviet dictator Josef Stalin, 71-year-old Putin is set to extend his nearly quarter-century rule by another six years



Vladimir Putin

→RELATED PHOTOS ON P15

at a time his troops are on the offensive in Ukraine.

Russia is pressing its advantage in the third year of the invasion as Ukraine struggles to supply its forces with munitions amid delays in military aid from its US and European allies.

**War-time considerations**

Russia's wartime economy has largely weathered the shock of unprecedented international sanctions, thanks to a continuing flow of energy revenues and a massive injection of government spending to support the defence industry and shield domestic businesses.

Trade with China is booming as Russia reorients its economy away from markets in Europe. "In the last two years, the Putin regime has rebuilt every element of itself to adapt to a permanent state of war," said Andrei Kolesnikov, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Ukraine has waged an intensified campaign of drone attacks aimed at key Russian infrastructure including oil refineries ahead of the election. Authorities said the refinery in Slavyansk-on-Kuban in the southern Krasnodar region was hit overnight, causing a fire that was later extinguished, after several plants were targeted on Saturday.

The Russian leader dismissed prospects for a halt to the war in a televised interview on Wednesday, saying he's not interested in a "pause" that would allow Ukraine to rearm.

Russia wants written security guarantees to end the fighting and the "realities on the ground" should be the basis for any negotiations, he said.

Russia occupies about a fifth of Ukraine including Crimea, which it annexed in 2014. Putin in 2022 declared four regions of eastern and southern Ukraine to be "forever" part of Russia, even as his forces don't fully control them.

Russia organised voting in the presidential election in occupied areas of Ukraine. The foreign ministry in Kyiv said the votes were illegal and called on Ukrainians in the territories not to take part in the "pseudo-elections."

The government said more than 4.5 million people registered to vote via a system that's being used for the presidential ballot in 29 of Russia's regions for the first time. Critics say the system may make it harder to identify fraud in the results.

{ ICELAND VOLCANO } LAVA ADVANCES AFTER ERUPTION



**FOURTH TIME IN THREE MONTHS**

A volcano in Iceland erupted on Saturday evening for the fourth time in three months, sending orange jets of lava into the night sky. Iceland's Meteorological Office said the eruption opened a fissure in the Earth about 3 kilometers (almost 2 miles) long between Stóra-Skógfell and Hagafell mountains on the Reykjanes Peninsula. The volcano first erupted on December 18, last year, then on January 14 and February 8. Lava on Sunday continued to flow south towards the dykes built to protect the fishing village Grindavik, but the eruption's intensity had decreased, authorities said. Iceland is home to 33 active volcano systems, the highest number in Europe.

AFP/AP

# Access for EVs, relaxation of business mobility contentious issues in UK FTA

Rajeev Jayaswal

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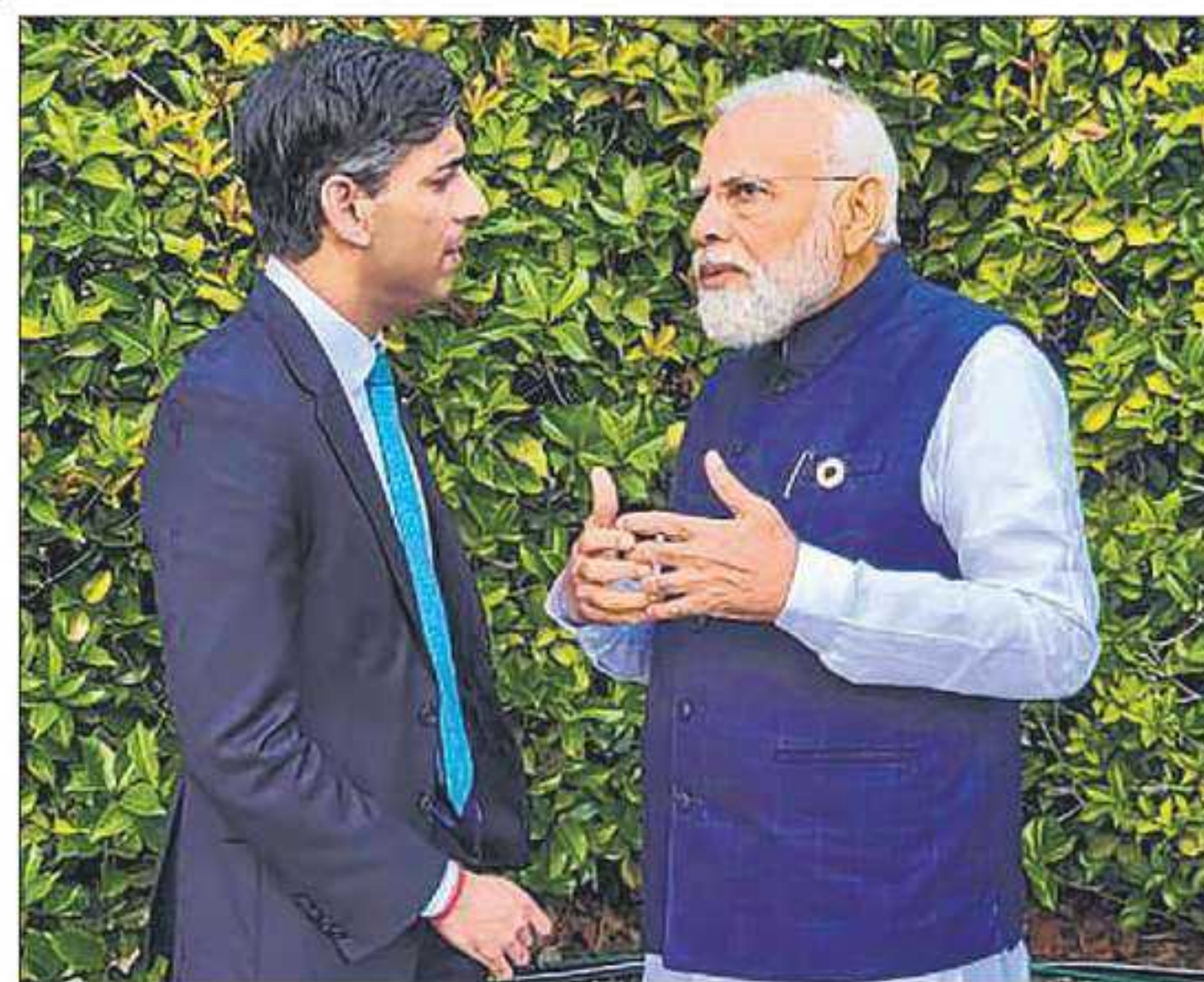
**NEW DELHI:** India is unlikely to allow unfettered access of electric vehicles (EVs) from the UK, one of the two key contentious issues resulting into a deadlock in the free trade negotiations even after 14 rounds of talks since January 2022, two people aware of the development said.

The other issue is related to India's demand for easy business visas, they said, requesting anonymity. The UK is averse to facilitate India's services trade by relaxing business mobility norms under the proposed pact, but it wants New Delhi to open up the vast Indian automobile market, particularly for EVs, they added.

"India has proposed some duty concessions in the automobile sector, provided London reciprocates on the Indian asks. But, it cannot open its EV market without giving due protection to domestic manufacturing as the sector is still at a nascent stage, and needs support," one of them said.

India may extend limited concessions on EVs in line with the new e-vehicle policy unveiled on Friday, provided British auto makers commit investments in India, the second person said.

On Friday, the government notified a policy to promote



Although recent talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his UK counterpart Rishi Sunak have brightened prospects of resolving differences, the deal will take more time.

P11

India as an EV manufacturing destination by slashing duty on limited number of imports of such cars to 15% (from up to 100%), provided foreign auto makers commit a minimum \$500 million (around Rs 4,150 crore) in three years and take up local value addition from 25% to 50% in five years.

India is the world's third largest automobile market worth \$151 billion (₹12.5 lakh crore) in 2023, according to official data. The sector is expected to cross \$300 billion (₹24.9 lakh crore) by 2030.

EVs are the future, the second person said. "It is unlikely that the FTA route would be provided to any country to completely bypass the policy obligations such as minimum investment requirement in setting up a manufacturing plant in India and local value addition," he added.

Although recent talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his UK counterpart Rishi Sunak have brightened prospects of resolving differences, it will take more time, the first person said. On March

12, Modi had a telephonic conversation with Sunak and "assessed positively the progress made towards early conclusion of a mutually beneficial Free Trade Agreement," a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office that day said.

While releasing trade data on Friday, commerce secretary Sunil Barthwal said India and the UK are "actively engaged" in the FTA negotiations. "Both sides are quite committed to the fact that there should be a commercially meaningful, fair, equitable, good deal between the two countries and sensitivities of both the countries should be respected, as well as strengths of both the countries should reflect in the trade deal," he said.

While an FTA with Oman is possible soon, a deal with the UK is expected only after the general elections, another government official said. India on Saturday announced dates for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls that will be concluded on June 1 and ballots counted on June 4. "A trade deal is unlikely before the new government is formed in June as mutually agreeable solutions on key matters are still elusive," he said.

"FTAs are meant to be mutually beneficial. India is willing to open its market for scotch and British automobiles while adequately protecting its industries.

But these concessions will not be possible without easier mobility of Indian businesses in the UK," the first person said. India sees potential for its services exports to Europe, which needs easier mobility of its professionals and businessmen, he added.

Indian industries were unwilling to offer tariff concessions on items like automobiles and liquor to British manufacturers without London allowing easier mobility for Indian professionals, HT reported on October 3, 2023. If business mobility, or easier temporary movement of Indian professionals to the UK for business purposes, is taken out of the FTA negotiations, there won't be any significant gain for India as most Indian goods (more than 60% of the total merchandise) already have duty-free access to the British market, and most of the other items attract a low tariff of 5%, it said.

The negotiating teams were not in a position to conclude an agreement even as the round 14 closed on Friday, PTI news agency reported from London, citing British officials. "We anticipate that while some talks might happen between rounds, the next round of negotiations will take place after the Indian elections," it quoted an official as saying.

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## SPACEX BUILDING SPY SATELLITE NETWORK FOR U.S. NSO: REPORT

Reuters

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**WASHINGTON:** SpaceX is building a network of hundreds of spy satellites under a classified contract with a US intelligence agency, five people familiar with the programme said, demonstrating deepening ties between billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk's space company and national security agencies.

The network is being built by SpaceX's Starshield business unit under a \$1.8 billion contract signed in 2021 with the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), an intelligence agency that manages spy satellites, they said.

The plans show the extent of SpaceX's involvement in US intelligence and military projects and illustrate a deeper Pentagon investment into vast, low-Earth orbiting satellite systems aimed at supporting ground forces.

If successful, the sources said the programme would significantly advance the ability of the US government and military to quickly spot potential targets almost anywhere on the globe.

The contract signals growing trust by the intelligence establishment of a company whose owner has clashed with the Biden administration and sparked controversy over the use of Starlink satellite connectivity in the Ukraine war, the sources said.

{ BEJAMIN NETANYAHU } ISRAELI PM

No amount of international pressure will stop us from realising all the goals of the war... To do this, we will also operate in Rafah.

Vowing to send ground forces into Gaza's southern city despite growing international concern over the fate of Palestinian civilians sheltering there

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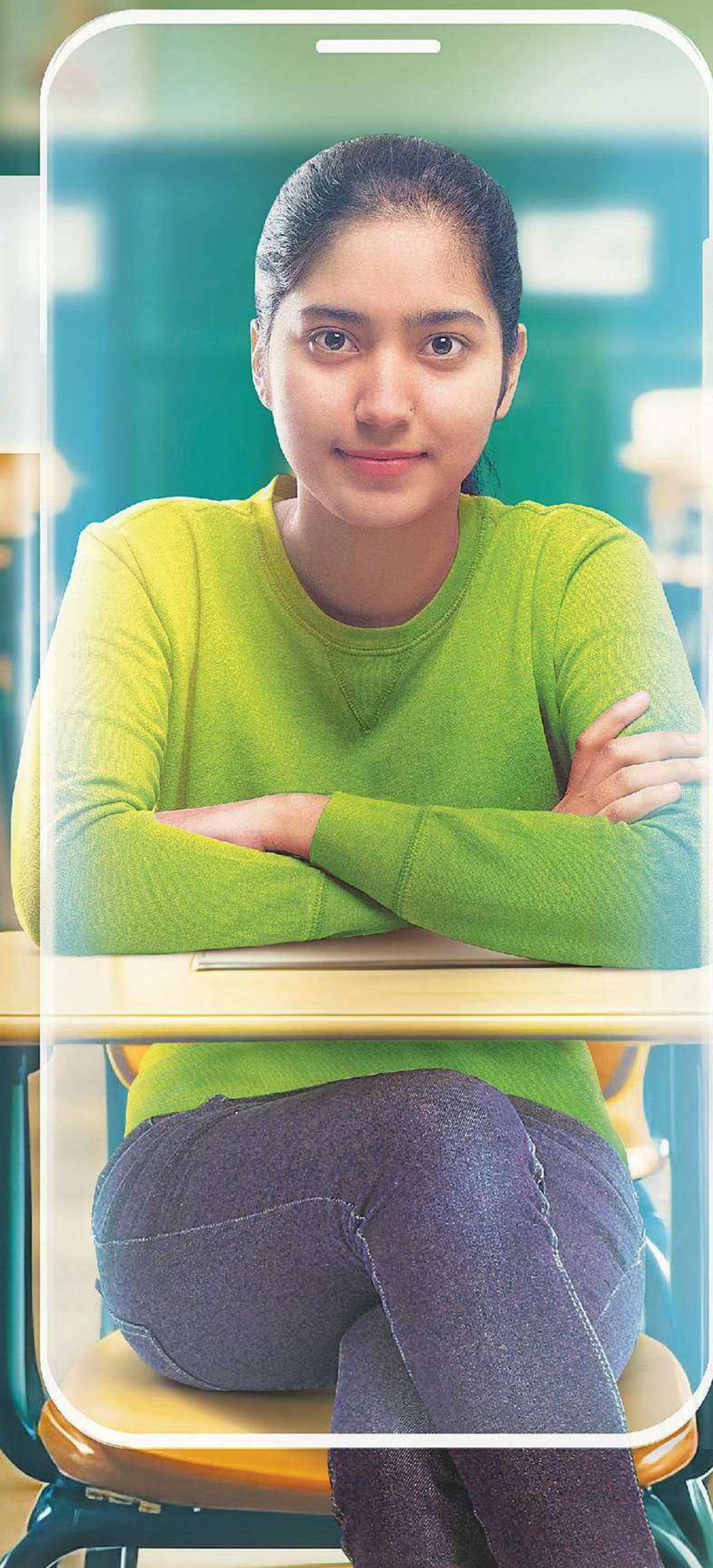
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# ED summons Kejriwal in 2 separate cases, AAP hits out

Neeraj Chauhan  
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**NEW DELHI:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has issued summons to Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal in connection with its probe in two separate cases — the Delhi excise policy 2021-22, and alleged irregularities in the awarding of Delhi Jal Board (DJB) contracts — people aware of the matter said on Sunday.

The federal anti-money laundering agency has summoned Kejriwal, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener, to appear before it in connection with the DJB case on Monday, and in connection with the excise case on March 21.



Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal at Rouse Avenue court on Saturday. The two summons to Kejriwal came a day after the court granted him bail in connection with two complaints filed by ED for not appearing before the federal agency in connection with the excise policy case.

The people cited above, however, said that the bail does not mean that the court has given Kejriwal immunity from appearing before ED.

"Hence, we have issued fresh or ninth summons to him asking him to join the probe on March 21," said an ED officer, on condition of anonymity.

The AAP hit out at the development, terming the two summons an attempt to stop Kejriwal from campaigning, and referring to the alleged irregularities in the DJB as a "back-up case". The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), meanwhile, accused the Delhi CM of repeatedly flouting the law.

**Another chapter in excise case**

The Delhi government's 2021-22 excise policy aimed to revitalise the city's flagging liquor business, but was scrapped after lieutenant governor VK Saxena recommended a Central Bureau of

Investigation probe into alleged irregularities in the regime. ED is carrying out a separate probe into the policy in connection with alleged money laundering.

Kejriwal has skipped eight summons issued by ED — on November 2, December 22, January 3, January 18, February 2, February 19, February 27, and on March 4 — calling them "illegal and politically motivated". He has also consistently objected to the summons, stating that it was not clear whether he was asked to appear before ED as a witness or suspect, as chief minister or as AAP chief.

However, the ED officer quoted above said Kejriwal's questioning is "important" to know more about the conspiracy in the excise policy, in which ₹100 crore was allegedly paid by a lobby of businessmen and politicians — referred to as the "South

Group" — to AAP leaders in lieu of liquor licences.

The federal agency on Friday arrested Bharat Rashtia Samithi (BRS) leader K Kavitha, and a court subsequently sent her to ED custody till March 23. A second ED official, also requesting anonymity, said that there is a possibility that if Kejriwal appears before agency on March 21, he may be confronted with Kavitha.

**Summons in a second case**

Separately, ED also issued summons to Kejriwal, asking him to appear before it on Monday in connection with alleged irregularities in the awarding of DJB contracts.

ED's probe under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) is based on a case filed by CBI in July 2022, related to alleged corruption in the water

utility. It has been alleged that former DJB chief engineer Jagdish Kumar Arora awarded a contract to M/s NKG Infrastructure Ltd for ₹38 crore, even though the company did not meet the technical eligibility criteria.

ED arrested Arora on January 31, and on February 6 conducted raids at 12 locations, including those connected to Kejriwal's personal secretary Bibhav Kumar and AAP parliamentary ND Gupta. ED alleged that bribes generated in the awarding of the contract were passed on as "election funds" to the AAP.

"Investigations and digital evidence show Arora passed on the bribe funds to various persons connected with managing the affairs of DJB including persons connected with AAP. Bribe amounts were also passed on as election funds..." the ED said in its statement on February 7.

ED said its probe has revealed the contract (to NKG) was awarded at highly inflated rates so that the bribes could be collected from the contractors from the inflated cost of the contract.

"As against the contract value of Rs 38 crore, only about Rs 17 crore was spent towards the contract and the remaining amounts were syphoned off in guise of various fake expenses. Such fake expenses were booked for bribes and election funds," it said.

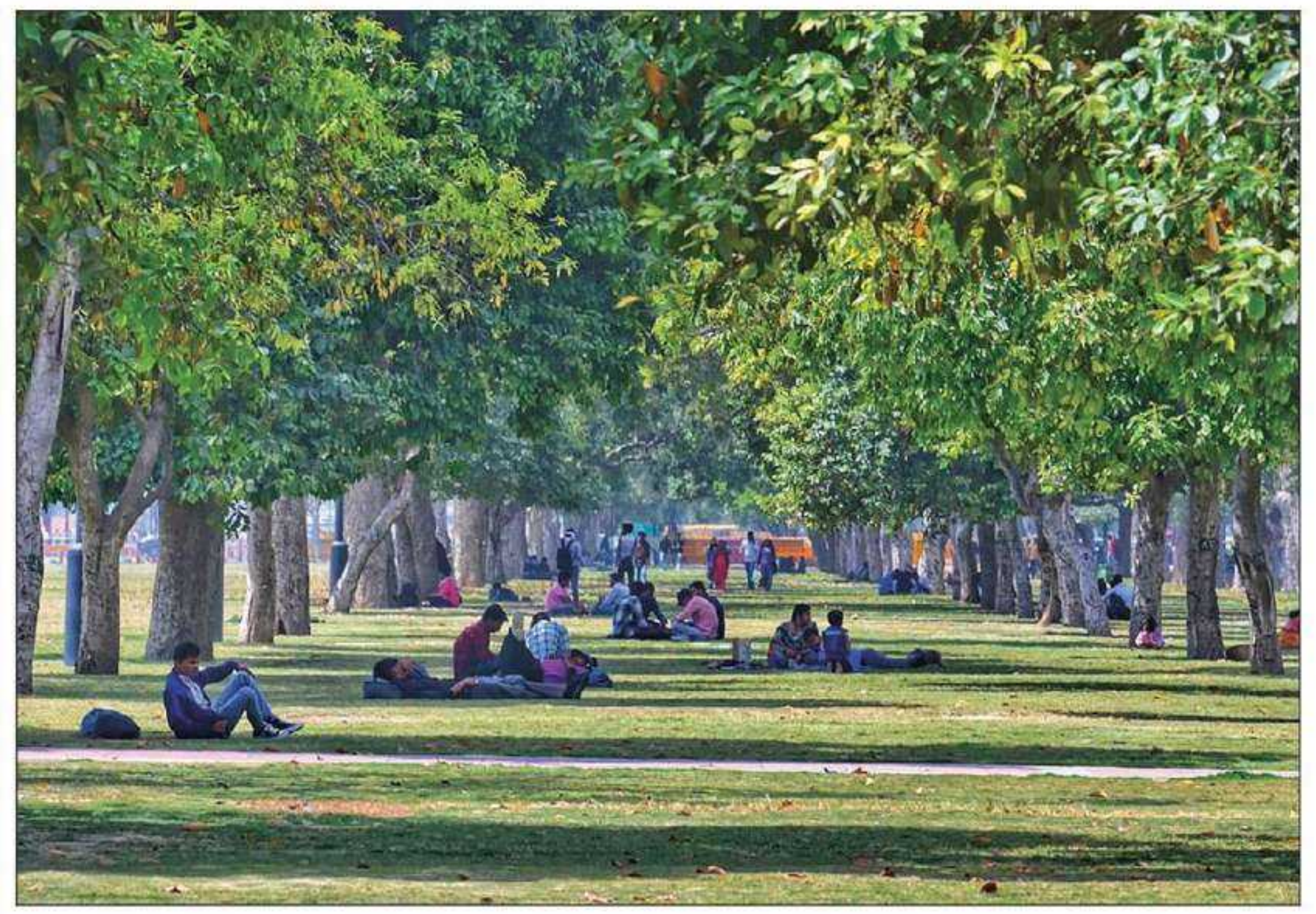
**AAP says Kejriwal targeted, BJP hits back**

Hours after ED issued the two separate summons, the AAP alleged that the BJP-led Centre was attempting to prevent Kejriwal campaigning for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

"Nobody knows what the DJB case is... Maybe they doubt whether they will be able to arrest Kejriwal in the excise case, so this has been opened as a backup case. A third case may be opened if they can't arrest him in this case as well," Delhi minister Atishi said at a press conference.

Separately, AAP legislator Dilip Pandey said the party's legal team is examining the two summons, and an appropriate response will be issued. "The latest notice shows the desperation of BJP and the Centre ahead of the Lok Sabha polls," he said.

Hitting back, BJP accused Kejriwal of repeatedly flouting the law. "Kejriwal's bail on Saturday has nothing to do with the excise policy case. After disrespecting the summons which Kejriwal previously claimed were illegal, he has now taken bail, confirming the validity of the summons. The conduct and language of AAP leaders resemble that of thugs, which is a testament to their character," Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said, adding that the summons in the DJB case is "another proof of looting".



The maximum temperature was recorded at 30.8°C on Sunday.

VIPIN KUMAR/HT PHOTO

# Uptick in max temp in coming days: IMD

HT Correspondent  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** The temperature may rise by 2-3 degrees Celsius (°C) at most places across the Capital over the next five days as summer has begun making inroads across north India, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has said.

According to IMD, Delhi's maximum temperature could spike to 33°C by Friday. The minimum temperature was recorded at 11.9°C on Sunday, which was five degrees below normal for this time of the year. It was 10.1°C on Saturday and 13.9°C on Friday.

Both maximum and minimum temperatures had dipped marginally in the last 48 hours, owing to the strong surface winds sweeping the region. IMD said despite clear skies in Delhi, there was a dip in temperature after fresh snowfall in the upper parts of the Himalayas on March 15. The snowfall impacted the plains too with northwesterly winds blowing towards Delhi-NCR. IMD has forecast the mini-

mum to rise again in the next few days, touching 13°C by Monday, 14°C by Thursday and 15°C by Friday.

"The slight dip in temperature over the last two days was down to strong surface winds of 30-35 km/hour. With fresh snowfall recorded during the last western disturbance on March 14 and 15, we saw cool northwesterly winds again bringing a slight cooling effect to the plains. This temporary impact is reducing and we expect clear skies to continue for the next seven days and plains to heat up again," said an IMD official.

Delhi's maximum temperature was recorded at 30.8°C on Sunday, a degree below normal. The maximum was 30.3°C on Saturday and 28.4°C on Friday. With clear skies persisting, the maximum is forecast to touch 32°C by Tuesday and could touch 33°C by Friday, IMD said.

The highest maximum recorded so far this March has been 31.4°C, which was recorded on both March 11 and March 13. In March last year, the highest

maximum recorded was 34.3°C on March 16. In 2022, it went up to 39.6°C on March 31 and in 2021, touched 40.1°C on March 30. In 2020, the highest maximum in March was 33.3°C (March 26) and it was 39.2°C in 2019 (March 31).

The Met department said that day temperatures will likely increase by 2-4 degrees over northwest India as well, including Haryana and Punjab in the next 4-5 days. Maximum or day temperatures are below normal by 2-3 degrees over many parts of the country except some areas of J&K, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, and Punjab, among other areas, where these are near normal. But, now there will be a gradual shift towards hot weather, IMD has said.

"No major weather activity is expected over northwest India now. This will lead to both rise in day and night time temperatures. Max will reach around 33°C over say Delhi next week and rise further thereafter," said Mahesh Palawat, vice president, climate and met at Skymet Weather.

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Online bids are invited for Miscellaneous Development including Restoration and Enabling Civil Works from Sahibabad to Duhai Depot Station including Duhai Depot of Delhi-Meerut RRTS Corridor.

For detailed information and subsequent addendum/corrigendum (if any), please visit NCRTC website [www.ncrtc.in](http://www.ncrtc.in) or CPP Portal [www.etenders.gov.in/eprocure/app](http://www.etenders.gov.in/eprocure/app) from 18.03.2024 to 22.04.2024 (1500 hrs). Sd/- GGM/Procurement

**WESTERN RAILWAY - RAJKOT DIVISION**  
VARIOUS ENGINEERING WORKS  
Date: 12-03-2024

Sr. No.	e-Tender No.	Name of work	Approximate NIT Cost
01	DRM-RJT-23-E-111	Rajkot Division: Providing Lift and its allied work at Platform No.4/5 at Rajkot Station.	₹ 39,80,506.28
02	DRM-RJT-23-E-112	Annual repair and maintenance of bridges under jurisdiction of Assistant Divisional Engineer (East) Jamnagar's jurisdiction for a period of one year. Date & Time of Opening of Tender: 02-04-2024 15:00 Hrs.	₹ 1,45,40,569.00
03	DRM-RJT-23-E-113	Welding of 60/52 Kg (R260/90UTS) rails on various locations under Divisional Engineer (East) Rajkot's jurisdiction. Date & Time of Opening of Tender: 02-04-2024 15:00 Hrs.	₹ 36,90,612.96
04	DRM-RJT-23-E-114	Rajkot Division - Balance work of Daladi - Rajkot Section in connection with Surendranagar - Rajkot doubling work. Date & Time of Opening of Tender: 02-04-2024 15:00 Hrs.	₹ 14,22,76,367.27

Address of the Office & Website particulars: Divisional Railway Manager (Engineering), Western Railway, Kothi Compound, Rajkot, Gujarat-360001. Website: [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

**NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY**  
Tender Notice No. 16420232024 Date: 15.03.2024  
E-Tendering Tender Notice

Divisional Railway Manager (Engineering)/North Central Railway, Prayagraj, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites online open tenders (E-Tender) as detailed below:

SN	E-Tender Notice No.	Approx Cost (In Rs.)	Earnest Money (In Rs.)
1	16420232024-436	5,39,32,943.72	4,19,700.00
<b>Name of work:</b> Combined Tender of (A) Heavy repairs to boundary wall in Ghanshyam Nagar colony & track side DSA colony, Prayagraj. (B) Heavy repair to boundary wall from Rajroopur road to circulating area of SFG and around CSP colony, Subedarganj. (C) Heavy repairs to boundary wall from 9th Avenue Road to CPRO building on north Side of Platform No. 6 circulating area and improvement of store building in jurisdiction of SSE/W/Hospital.			
2	16420232024-437	4,98,45,547.82	3,99,200.00
<b>Name of work:</b> Heavy repairs to Road, Pathway and side Drain in jurisdiction of DEN/E/PRYJ			
3	16420232024-438	5,30,77,566.66	4,15,400.00
<b>Name of work:</b> Combined tender- (A) Heavy repairs to surface of HWH end FOB, Passenger enclosures & circulating area at Naiini station. (B) Heavy repairs to drain from ROB No.35B to bridge No.28 near Kela siding at Naiini station.			
4	16420232024-439	2,05,96,225.81	2,53,000.00
<b>Name of work:</b> Provision of Substation building adjacent to PF-2 near goods shed at NYN and 33 KV substation open access building for improvement in divyangjan facilities.			
5	16420232024-440	2,33,43,447.89	2,66,700.00
<b>Name of work:</b> Naiini Prayagraj Construction of RCC boundary wall to protect encroachment/trespassing at vulnerable location in section of ADEN/HQ-IPRYJ.			
6	16420232024-441	1,69,77,967.95	2,34,900.00
<b>Name of work:</b> Naiini Development of concourse, waiting hall, circulating area, parking, horticulture etc. for passengers & divyangjan.			
7	16420232024-442	1,47,79,057.74	2,23,900.00
<b>Name of work:</b> Outside patch plastering, putty & painting of crew running room building in Malpoddam colony & all RCC overhead tanks in jurisdiction of DEN/E/PRYJ.			
8	16420232024-443	2,11,31,580.25	2,55,700.00
<b>Name of work:</b> Prayagraj Replacement of old corroded/damaged water supply pipeline in colonies under ADEN/HQ-IPRYJ.			

Date & Time of closing of Tender: 10.04.2024 at 15:00 PM for each Tender. Completion Period: 06 Months for each tender. Nature of work: Any civil Engineering work for SN-1 to 3 and 5 to 8 & Building work for SN-4. NOTE: (1) For full details and submission of tenders, please see the Indian Railway website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in). 527/24(K)

**adani Electricity**  
Registered Office: Adani Corporate House, Shantigram, Near Vaishno Devi Circle, S G Highway, Khandyur, Ahmedabad 382421-Gujarat, India  
Website: [www.adanielectricity.com](http://www.adanielectricity.com)  
CIN: U40108GJ2020PLC18718

**E-BIDDING TENDER NOTICE**

AEML SEEPZ Limited (ASL) is inviting Long Term Bids for Procurement of 50 MW grid connected Solar Power Projects under Global Competitive Bidding process on ISN-ETS Portal (website <https://www.bharat-electrictender.com>). For more details of Notice for Invitation of Tender (NIT), please visit ISN-ETS Portal <https://www.bharat-electrictender.com> and/or AEML website [www.adanielectricity.com](http://www.adanielectricity.com).

**पावर ट्रांसमिशन कारपोरेशन ऑफ उत्तराखण्ड लि 0**  
(उत्तराखण्ड सरकार का उपक्रम)

**ई-निविदा संशोधन सूचना-तृतीय**

मुख्य अभियन्ता परी 0 एवं परी 0 पिटकुल, हल्द्वानी द्वारा आमंत्रित ई-निविदा संख्या 02/2023-24/मु0अमि0 (परी 0 एवं परी 0)/पिटकुल/हल्द्वानी में निम्नवत् संशोधन किया जाता है :

ई-निविदा संख्या - 02/2023-24/मु0अमि0 (परी 0 एवं परी 0)/पिटकुल/हल्द्वानी का ई-निविदा वेबसाइट [www.uktenders.gov.in](http://www.uktenders.gov.in) से प्राप्त/जमा करने की अवधि दिनांक 06.04.2024 समय 17:00 बजे तक एवं खुलने की तिथि को 12.04.2024 समय 15:00 बजे तक विस्तारित किया जाता है।

ई-निविदाओं परीकृत डाक के माध्यम से जमा करने की अंतिम तिथि 11.04.2024 समय 17:00 बजे तक है। निविदा प्राप्त/खुलने की तिथि को अवकाश होने की दशा में निविदा अगले कार्य दिवस में प्रातः/छोटी जायेगी। ई-निविदाओं से सम्बंधित विस्तृत विवरण [www.uktenders.gov.in](http://www.uktenders.gov.in) एवं [www.ptcul.org](http://www.ptcul.org) से प्राप्त किया जा सकता है। ई-निविदाओं से सम्बंधित अन्य सभी नियम एवं शर्तें यथावत् रहेंगी।

मुख्य अभियन्ता  
Date: 16.03.2024 "राष्ट्र हित में बिजली बचाव" परी 0 एवं परी 0, पिटकुल, हल्द्वानी

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**NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY**  
Tender Notice No. 44-ElectG/PRYJ/23-24 Dt. 13.03.2024  
E-Tender Notice

Senior Divl. Electrical Engineer/Gen/N. C. Rly/Prayagraj, for and on behalf of the President of India, invite the following E-Tenders on prescribed form for the following works up to 15:00 hrs. on 11.04.2024 The details of the tenders are as under:-

S.N.:	Tender No.:	ELG-216-2324	Cost of work (in ₹):
01	01	ELG-216-2324	₹ 4271994.07
<b>Name of work:</b> Electrical work in connection with "Provision of modular sitting arrangement along with centralized air condition in various offices of DRM office, Prayagraj".			
02	02	ELG-217-2324	₹ 10991489.35
<b>Name of work:</b> Electrical work in connection with "Upgradation of Goods Shed at Nibkarori station over Prayagraj division." Electrical work in connection with "PNKD-Proposals for Existing Goods Sheds for improvement/upgradation work". Electrical work in connection with "Rura: Augmentation of RPF posts at Rura Station. "Electrical work in connection with "Fatehpur-Installation, commissioning & testing of Effluent treatment plant 50 KLD & associated work along with sewer line for proper disposal of sewage to maintain hygiene at Fatehpur" Electrical work in connection with Tundla-Improvement NCR college by replacement of roof & other work at Tundla." Electrical work in connection with "Govindpur- Setting up of quick watering arrangement systems at GOY station."			
03	03	ELG-218-2324	₹ 29644605.10
<b>Name of work:</b> Electrical work in connection with "ETAH - Proposals for Existing Goods Sheds for improvement/upgradation work". Electrical work in connection with "Prayagraj Chheko Improvement / upgradation work in existing goods shed". Electrical work in connection with "CPC- Proposals for Existing Goods Sheds for improvement/upgradation work".			
04	04	ELG-219-2324	₹ 17843820.50
<b>Name of work:</b> Provision of cables in place of Over head lines at station Platforms over the PRYJ division.			
05	05	ELG-220-2324	₹ 13929089.65
<b>Name of work:</b> Electrical work in connection with "Kanpur Central: Construction of 100 bedded New Guard Running Room at CNB station." Electrical work in connection with "Kanpur Central Construction of 3 Nos. TYPE-V New quarters for officers in Kanpur.			
06	06	ELG-221-2324	₹ 17612894.54
<b>Name of work:</b> Electrical work in connection with "Manning of LC gates between DER station and NTPC/DER". Electrical work in connection with "Tundla- Ghaziabad: Replacement of 12 nos Type-II old dilapidated qtrs by new quarters in Tundla- Ghaziabad section". Electrical works in connection with "Prayagraj Division -Construction of new Crew Running Room at Prayagraj". Electrical work in connection with "Renovation of swimming pool, outside area and dismantling of school in coral club at Prayagraj". Electrical work in connection with Provision of new toilet block with other wellness facilities at DSA ground Prayagraj". Electrical work in connection with construction of new station building at Rooms Station PRYJ-CNB section. Electrical work in connection with construction of office and store for SSE of S&T department at Aligarh station of Prayagraj Division. Electrical work in connection with "Provision of BLC monitoring centre at ETW station".			

Bid Security (in ₹) : S.N.:1- ₹ 85400.00, S.N.:2- ₹ 205000.00, S.N.:3- ₹ 298200.00, S.N.:4- ₹ 239200.00, S.N.:5- ₹ 219700.00, S.N.:6- ₹ 238100.00, Duration of Completion of all tender : 06 Months, Tender Opening Date: 11.04.2024, 15:00 Hrs. Note: 1. The complete information along with tender document of above e-Tender is available on Website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) up to 15:00 hrs. on the due date of tender opening. 484/24(DG)

North central railways @CPRONCR @northcentralrailway www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in

**NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY**  
Tender Notice No. 16020232024 Date: 14.03.2024  
E-Tender Notice

Divisional Railway Manager (Engineering)/ North Central Railway/Prayagraj, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites the following E-Tenders on prescribed form for the following works up to 13:30 hrs. on 08.05.2024. The details of the Tenders are as under:-

S. N.:	Tender No.:	Approx Cost of work (₹)
01	419	₹ 14495675.91
<b>Name of work:</b> Annual Civil Maintenance work from ALJN To Khurja (excl) and up to Harduaganj Branch Line for period ending 30.06.2025 under ADEN/ALJN.		
02	420	₹ 14691051.68
<b>Name of work:</b> Annual Civil Maintenance work from Khurja Jn. To Chhipiyana Buzurg for period ending 30.06.2025 under ADEN/ALJN.		
03	421	₹ 11098999.02
<b>Name of work:</b> Annual Civil Maintenance work from PORA to ALJN (excl.) and including HRS-HRF Branch Line for period ending 30.06.2025 under ADEN/ALJN.		
04	422	₹ 11813999.96
<b>Name of work:</b> Annual Civil Maintenance work from TDL(excl.) to Pora (excl.) including ETH-BRN Branch Line for period ending 30.06.2025 under ADEN/ALJN.		
05	423	₹ 14189989.71
<b>Name of work:</b> Annual Civil Maintenance zone work for North East Zone in the section of SSE/W/TDL for the P.E. 30.06.2025 under ADEN/ALJN.		
06	424	₹ 14999900.34
<b>Name of work:</b> Annual Civil Maintenance zone work for North West Zone in the section of SSE/W/TDL for the P.E. 30.06.2025 under ADEN/ALJN.		
07	425	₹ 14001871.30
<b>Name of work:</b> Annual Civil Maintenance zone work for Service Building including Station Building, Running Room, ORH and other Service Building (Excl.) Branch Line in the section of SSE/W-TDL for the P.E. 30.06.2025 under ADEN/ALJN.		
08	426	₹ 12501875.30
<b>Name of work:</b> Annual Civil Maintenance zone work for South Colony in the section of SSE/W-TDL for the P.E. 30.06.2025 under ADEN/ALJN.		
09	427	₹ 5200000.00
<b>Name of work:</b> Horticulture work at Tundla & TDL to DAQ for the P.E. 30.06.2025 under ADEN/ALJN.		
10	428	₹ 5500000.00
<b>Name of work:</b> Horticulture work from ALJN to CPYZ for the P.E. 30.06.2025 under ADEN/ALJN.		
11	429	₹ 7534150.00
<b>Name of work:</b> Annual P/Way Zone for period ending 30.06.2025 under ADEN/ALJN.		
12	430	₹ 9050000.00
<b>Name of work:</b> Annual P/Way Zone for period ending 30.06.2025 under ADEN/ALJN.		

**Earnest Money (₹) :** S.N.: 1- ₹ 222500.00, S.N.: 2- ₹ 223500.00, S.N.: 3- ₹ 205500.00, S.N.: 4- ₹ 209100.00, S.N.: 5- ₹ 221000.00, S.N.: 6- ₹ 225000.00, S.N.: 7- ₹ 220000.00, S.N.: 8- ₹ 212500.00, S.N.: 9- ₹ 104000.00, S.N.: 10- ₹ 110000.00, S.N.: 11- ₹ 150700.00, S.N.: 12- ₹ 181000.00, All Completion Period : 30.06.2025, Date of Opening of All Tender : 08.05.2024, Eligibility Criteria for Similar work : S.N.: 01 to 08- Any Civil Engineering work, S.N.: 09 to 10- Any Horticulture work, S.N.: 11 & 12- P/Way work, (1) E-Tender Forms shall be issued free of cost to all tenderers. (2) The complete information along with tender document of above E-TENDER is available on Website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) upto 13:30 hrs. on the due date of tender opening i.e. 08-05-2024. (3) Bids other than in the form of E-Bids shall not be accepted against above tenders. For this purpose, vendors are required to get themselves registered with IREPS website along with Digital Signature Certificate issued by CCA under IT Act-2000. (4) The tenderers shall submit a copy of certificate as given in tender document in standard format, without which their tender may not be considered and shall be summarily rejected. (5) In case of any difficulty helpdesk available on the website of IREPS may be approached. (6) The tenderer has to submit necessary documents in compliance of clause 10 to 18 (Part-I) of GCC July 2022 mandatorily, otherwise offer will be considered as incomplete offer and accordingly shall not be considered. 500/24(DG)

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Chairman, HDFC Bank Ltd.



**Guest of Honour**  
His Excellency  
**Mr. Clemente Pedro Francisco**  
Ambassador of Angola to India

**Date:**

Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2024

**Time:**

11:00 AM

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# Outer Ring Road stretch set to be repaired in April

Paras Singh

letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** The state Public Works Department (PWD) will repair and recarpet the south Delhi stretch of Outer Ring Road between Modi and Chirag Delhi in a ₹15 crore project that's likely to get off the ground in April, said senior officials aware of the matter.

PWD opened up the bidding process for the project's tenders on Friday. A senior PWD official said the tendering process will be completed by April 1 and the project will likely take four months to complete.

"Since this is a major arterial road for the city, we will carry out the recarpeting work in phases during off-peak hours and at night so that traffic disruptions are minimal," said the official cited above.

"The existing bituminous layer will be scraped off and the surface entire stretch, including the service lanes on either side, will be revamped. We will add new layers of glowing studs and horticultural work," added the official.

The six-lane Outer Ring Road encircles the city, spanning 47km, with three lanes in each direction. Several stretches of Outer Ring Road have been notified as National Highways. The corridor between Modi Mill and Chirag Delhi is around 4km long. Once complete, officials will get down to recarpeting the Chirag Delhi to Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi section of Outer Ring Road — a roughly 5km-long stretch, added the official.

The project to revamp these roads was cleared by PWD minister Atishi last month. At the time, she had said these roads were originally constructed and upgraded "a while ago, leading to their gradual deterioration."

"PWD has conducted a thorough assessment of the roads



Commuters at a traffic snarl near the Kalkaji flyover in south Delhi.

HT ARCHIVE

with the assistance of experts and the department has been instructed to initiate the upgrading process. We will ensure minimal disruption to commuters during the construction phase," she had said.

On February 20, HT reported that the Public Works Department (PWD) has sent a proposal for administrative approval to build an elevated road parallel to the Kalkaji flyover in south Delhi as part of a plan to build a signal-free corridor from Modi Mill to IIT-Delhi.

Presently, a one-way flyover comprising three lanes facilitates vehicular traffic from Modi Mill towards Nehru Place while

vehicles travelling in the opposite carriageway move at the surface level. PWD will convert this into a six-lane flyover with three lanes on either side.

"The project will be to build a six-lane flyover along with its extension to meet the ramp of the six-lane Modi Mill flyover leading to an elevated corridor on the stretch," a PWD official had said.

Traffic merges from four sides on the section of Outer Ring Road near Okhla NSIC Metro station — connecting Okhla Mandi near Captain Gaur Marg with Okhla Estate, Sarita Vihar and Faridabad to the south; Ashram and New Friends Colony to

the north and Sukhdev Vihar and Jamia Millia Islamia on the eastern side of the corridor — often leading to snarls. The project will also involve widening and redesigning the surface-level road on either side of the flyover.

In subsequent phases, the agency also plans to decongest the 8km corridor by doubling the single-carriageway flyover at Savitri Cinema. Outer Ring Road is also one of the most crucial routes to the Delhi airport.

The Delhi government had said the project was a step towards improving connectivity and easing traffic congestion in south Delhi.

## DELHI POLL BODY SETS UP TEAMS TO ENFORCE MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT

Press Trust of India

letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** The office of the chief electoral officer of Delhi has set up flying squads and control rooms across the city's seven Lok Sabha constituencies to check incidents of voter intimidation. In a public notice issued on Sunday, the poll office said district election functionaries or returning officers will enforce the model code of conduct in letter and spirit.

Polling for Delhi's seven Lok Sabha seats will be held on May 25 in the sixth phase of the general elections, with 14.7 million people eligible to exercise their franchise, according to the schedule announced by the Election Commission of India on Saturday. According to the notice, flying squads have been formed to register cases against "givers and takers of bribes" and to take action against those engaged in intimidation of electors.

"All the citizens are hereby requested to refrain from any illegal activities," it said. The poll body has also urged people to inform of incidents related to violations, including defacement of any public property, distribution of cash, liquor, gifts and bribing of returning officers by candidates or political parties.

## 4 held for supplying pre-activated SIM cards to Vietnam

Karn Pratap Singh

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**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi Police's IGI airport unit on Sunday said it busted an organised inter-state racket involved in procuring SIM cards and supplying them to their links in Vietnam, adding that four people were arrested.

Police identified the arrested suspects as Anil Kumar, 20, the mastermind of the racket, Mukul Kumar, 22, Hemant Kumar, 26, and Kanhaiya Gupta, 29. While Anil was arrested from Model Town, the other three were nabbed from Agra. The arrests were made between March 14 and 15, officers said.

According to police, the SIM cards were sold for higher rates to people in Vietnam to be used for gaming apps and social media profiteering. Nearly 700 SIM cards of three private service providers were issued on the IDs of poor people in Agra and nearby areas, they added.

Deputy commissioner of police (IGI airport) Usha Rangani said that the scam was unearthed following an investigation into a cheating case filed at the IGI airport police station under Section 420 of the Indian

Penal Code on February 22 on the complaint of a courier company at IGI cargo terminal.

"A total of 500 SIM cards were recovered from three separate packets to be parcelled to Vietnam... The original owners of the SIMs revealed that they were fooled by Mukul, who gave them ₹200 to get the SIM issued in their name. They were mostly labourers," said Rangani. The manager of the company, in his complaint, said they discovered a shipment with SIM cards in bulk during a random physical check. "They were concealed in carbon papers, hidden in a cavity in a diary," said Rangani.

The suspects, police said, are part of a syndicate through which they used to procure SIM cards issued in the names of gullible people after luring them for a very small amount of money. The SIMs were then sold to people in Vietnam. Investigators also identified multiple bank accounts in which Anil received the money he earned illegally. The accounts were reported in 19 cyber complaints filed from various parts of India. He was using a Chinese crypto-currency app named Binance, recently banned in India, police said.

## NOIDA TO MOVE HC OVER ORDER FOR REGISTRY OF HOUSING PROJECT

Vinod Rajput

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**NOIDA:** Two weeks after the Allahabad high court ordering to execute registry in the name of the homebuyers in Cloud Nine's Lotus Espacia housing project in Sector 100, the Noida authority has decided to challenge the court order, thereby causing more delay in the process.

In response to the writ of the homebuyers, the Allahabad high court in February directed the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to investigate the realty firms, Lotus 300 housing project in Sector 107 and Cloud 9 Projects Private Limited, accused of diverting homebuyers' money to the Lotus Espacia housing project in Noida's Sector 100 and delaying the project. Nearly 160 buyers are yet to execute registry of their flats.

The Noida authority to execute the registry in the name of homebuyers without seeking a no-dues certificate from realty firms in these two projects.

However, the Noida authority chief executive officer Lokesh M and chief legal advisor Ravinder Prasad Gupta said that the authority will not be able to issue permission for the registry without the promoters paying up the financial dues.

Lotus 300 project has a dues of around ₹166 crore and the Lotus Espacia has a dues of around ₹80 crore.

"We have decided to challenge the Allahabad high court orders on the ground that the authority can not allow registration without the realtor clearing the financial dues. We are exploring the legal options available for us. Either we will file a special leave petition in the larger bench in Allahabad high court or go to the Supreme Court protecting our financial interests. We have a duty to recover the financial dues as per the law," said Ravinder Prasad Gupta, the chief legal advisor of the Noida authority.

## Constable rams car into multiple vehicles in central Delhi: Police

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** A Delhi Police head constable, who was allegedly driving in an inebriated condition, rammed his Maruti Baleno car into multiple vehicles near Daryaganj in central Delhi in the early hours of Sunday, officers aware of the case said.

The policeman has been identified only by his first name Mohit. "He is posted with the special cell.

We have taken action under section 185 of Motor Vehicles Act," deputy commissioner of police (central) Harsha Vardhan said.

Giving details, police said the incident came to light at around 2am, when the PCR received a call about an accident near Delhi Gate. A team reached the spot and found a cab driver named Ramesh Tiwari at the spot who told investigators that he was driving a passenger from Daryaganj towards ITO when the driver of a Baleno

grazed his vehicle at a high speed, and fled towards ITO.

The car was already being chased. I also started following the car. The driver was speeding... his vehicle was intercepted near Delhi Gate. The car had a police uniform... and an empty bottle of alcohol inside the car. Some policemen came and took him away," officers said, quoting Tiwari. Police added that nobody has filed a complaint against Mohit so far.

# Transforming railway stations into new city centres

Manoj Sharma

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**NEW DELHI:** Railway stations are integral to a city's history and identity, serving as gateways through which visitors get their first impressions of a city. India boasts some of the grandest stations in the world, but many stations constructed during the British Raj have, over time, deteriorated into dirty, dilapidated, and chaotic places.

While several airports across the country have been modernised, railway stations remain caught in a time warp, lacking amenities that meet the requirements of contemporary travellers. Now, several colonial-era railway stations across the country are undergoing a major transformation into city centres under the Union government's Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, reshaping the city-station relationship.

Under this scheme, 1,318 railway stations are earmarked for development or redevelopment. These include stations in Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR) such as New Delhi, Delhi Cantonment, Anand Vihar, Gurugram, Ghaziabad, and Faridabad.

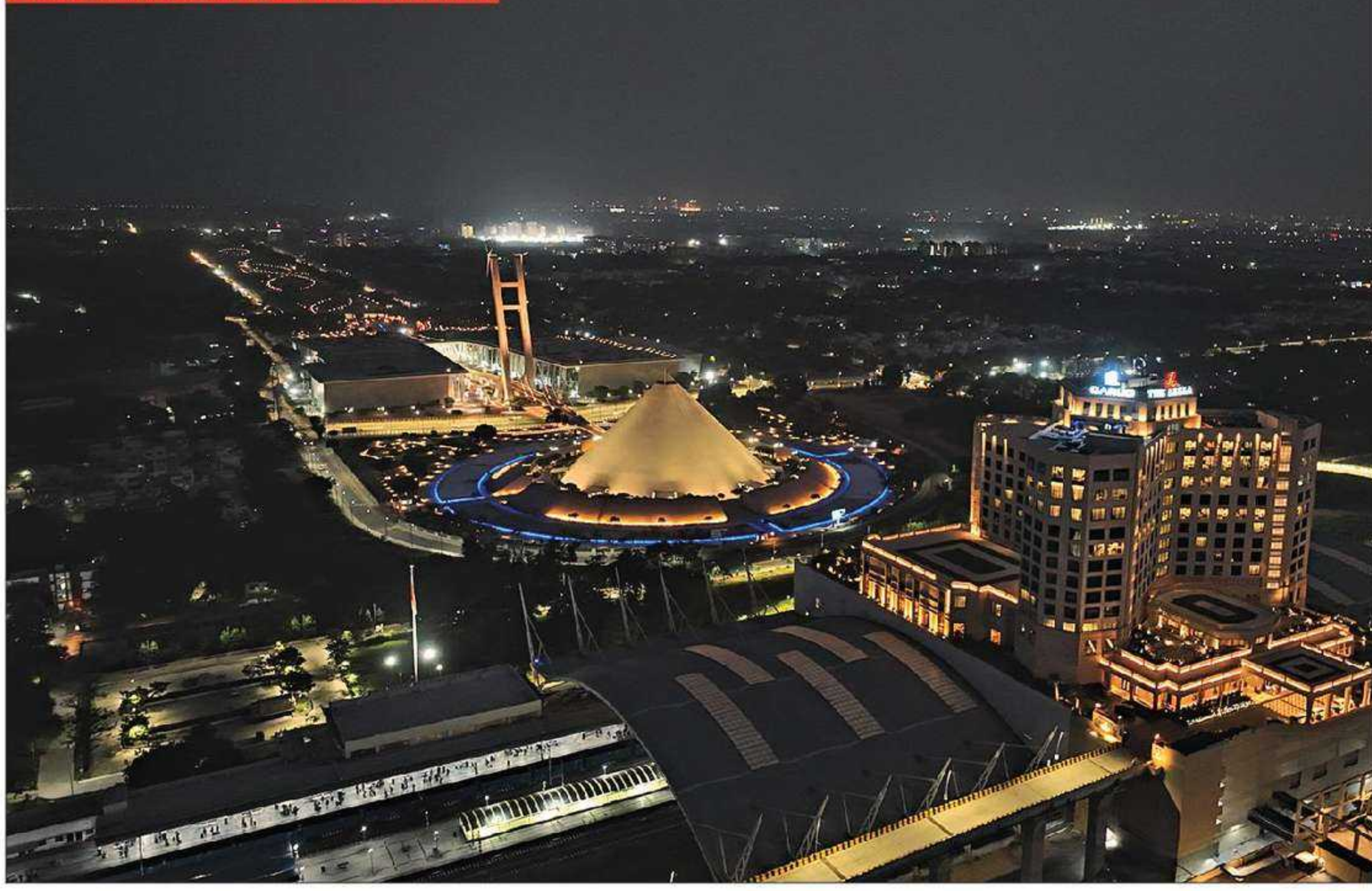
Last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation for 554 stations and virtually inaugurated the first phase of the redeveloped Gombi Nagar station in Lucknow.

Apart from Gombi Nagar, the stations that have already been redeveloped include Gandhinagar Capital, which boasts a luxurious five-star hotel atop it, and Rani Kamalapati railway station in Bhopal.

"The redevelopment work is currently underway at 65 major stations across the country and is at different stages of progress. Many of these stations, such as Chandigarh, are already over 50% complete. Most of these stations are being redeveloped under an engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) model," said a senior railways official associated with the station redevelopment project.

"Over the years, we have been upgrading stations under various schemes, but now we are fully redeveloping them. The aim is to provide a world-class experience to travellers and create new city centres at railway stations, integrated with the surrounding urban environments through place-making," he added.

### GANDHINAGAR CAPITAL, GUJARAT



The Gandhinagar Capital railway station has a hotel atop.

HT PHOTO

ern facilities and designs, including separate arrival and departure areas at different levels. Redeveloped stations will boast amenities such as airport-like concourses, digital information systems, executive lounges, shopping areas, cafeterias, and spaces for business meetings, among others. Many, like the New Delhi railway station, will also serve as a massive multimodal transit hub, with several luxury facilities.

"The concept of redeveloping railway stations as city centres stems from the idea of maximising their potential as dynamic urban hubs. This approach seeks to integrate transportation infrastructure with commercial, recreational, and residential amenities, creating a vibrant urban environment," said Dikshu Kukreja, whose firm CP Kukreja Architects developed the master plans for the Gandhinagar Capital and Gombi Nagar stations.

The Gandhinagar Capital station, inaugurated in 2021, is India's first redeveloped station. It features a modern facade, an interfaith prayer hall, a baby feeding room, a post waiting lounge, a business centre, and an airport-like concourse. The concourse serves as the main congregation space, connecting all entry gates to platforms, lounges, toilets, cloakrooms, food courts, retail shops, and

ticket vending machines.

Similarly, Gombi Nagar railway station in Lucknow, whose completed first phase covers around 1 million square feet, features two separate terminals, a concourse connecting them, elevated departure, ground floor arrival and various amenities, including hospitality and retail blocks.

"In India, railway stations over the years became the centres of chaos in a city. But mega stations in the world like the Grand Central in New York or the King's Cross Station in London do not choke the traffic movement, and so inspired by them we introduced separate departure and arrival points at Gombi Nagar station, a first in India. The redevelopment of Gandhinagar Capital and Gombi Nagar railway stations aim to transform them into bustling urban districts that cater to

**THE REDEVELOPED STATIONS WILL BOAST AMENITIES SUCH AS DIGITAL INFO SYSTEMS, SHOPPING AREAS, LOUNGES, CAFES, AND SPACES FOR MEETINGS, AMONG OTHER THINGS**

diverse needs and activities," says Kukreja.

The proposed redevelopment plans for stations in Delhi-NCR, also aim for grandeur and modernization. The nondescript Gurgaon station, constructed in 1950 is set for a nine-storey makeover. With three floors dedicated to railway operations, one for passenger amenities, and four for commercial ventures, including cafes, it promises a whole new look.

The proposed blueprint for Andheri station in Mumbai includes east and west side station buildings, with an expansive concourse linking both. It will have five commercial towers on the east side. "While nighttime traffic at the station is low, it presents an opportunity for transformation into a bustling city centre for dining and shopping. The redevelopment plan is rooted in the idea that stations should be responsive to the city's needs and contribute positively to its community," said Harsh Varshneya, principal architect at Sthapati Associates, a firm that has developed master plans for stations such as Bangalore Cantonment and Andheri station in Mumbai.

**Evolving role of the railway station**  
Railway stations have evolved since their inception in the mid-18th century. During the British

Raj, the primary purpose of the first railway stations was to facilitate the transportation of goods — particularly raw materials such as cotton, jute, and coal, from the hinterlands to the ports for export to Britain. Initially, passenger travel played a secondary role, but it gradually gained importance as the railway network expanded and connected more regions across the country. The stations were designed to facilitate the movement of trains, passengers, and goods.

"Now, the main focus of design is on passengers, as goods movement is shifting to new freight corridors and stations," said Goomtest Singh Chauhan, co-founder, Design Forum International (DFI), which developed the master plan for the redevelopment of stations such as Amritsar, Delhi Cantonment and Thiruvananthapuram.

Railway stations in India were often built on the outskirts of cities, as transportation hubs to minimise disruptions caused by train traffic and to meet the extensive land requirements of railway infrastructure. But over the decades, cities grew around them, and today, many railway stations in India find themselves surrounded by densely populated urban areas.

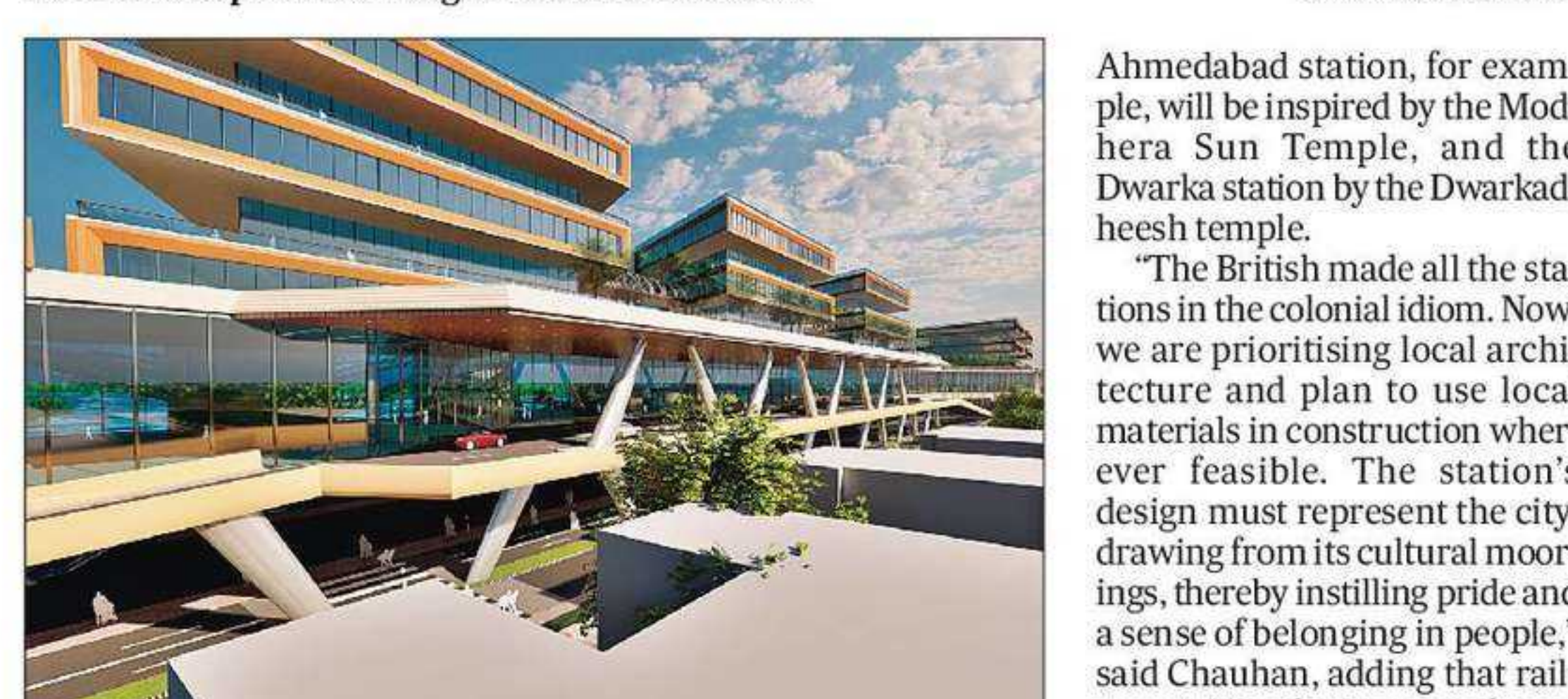
"Historically, cities grew as administrative or commercial

### GOMTI NAGAR, LUCKNOW, UP



The redeveloped Gombi Nagar station in Lucknow.

DEEPAK GUPTA/HT PHOTO



An artist's impression for Andheri station includes east and west side buildings, with an expansive concourse linking both.

HT PHOTO

centres and railway stations typically saw wholesale trade centres grow around them, and therefore bound the neighbouring smaller towns in the region as one economic whole," Chauhan said.

"In India, stations typically have the main buildings on one side, leading to an uneven development of the city with one side often neglected. The lack of proper foot-over-bridges at the stations limited the cross-city movement. New stations we have been designed address this with wide foot over-bridges, facilitating movement between the two sides of the city without entering the stations," he said.

**The challenges of redevelopment**

Architects say redeveloping stations without affecting railway operations is a herculean task involving maintaining platforms, ticketing systems, and other critical infrastructure. "We must carefully phase our approach, constructing new facilities before demolishing the old ones, all while contending with the existing spatial constraints. For example, a new booking office is constructed

before demolishing the old one," said Varshneya.

While prefabricated or modular construction techniques help as they allow faster assembly on-site and reduce the overall construction timeline, there are many other complexities to be taken care of. "We engage with multiple stakeholders — municipal authorities, traffic police, and other entities to align our station master plan with the broader city master plan," said Varshneya.

However, the biggest architectural challenge lies in the redevelopment of heritage stations like Bangalore Cantonment. "It involves preserving historical features while introducing modern amenities and functionality, ensuring that every new addition harmonises with the existing architecture and environment," said Varshneya.

**Symbiosis heritage**

While laying the foundation stone for the development, the Prime Minister said that these stations will symbolise both Vikas (progress) and Virasat (heritage) showcasing local culture and architectural heritage.

Ahmedabad station, for example, will be inspired by the Modhera Sun Temple, and the Dwarka station by the Dwarkadheesh temple.

"The British made all the stations in the colonial idiom. Now, we are prioritising local architecture and plan to use local materials in construction wherever feasible. The station's design must represent the city, drawing from its cultural moorings, thereby instilling pride and a sense of belonging in people," said Chauhan, adding that railway station designs are also an exercise in placemaking.

"A railway station, as a public space, should prioritise safety, inclusivity, and convenience while capturing the essence of the city — its cuisine, culture, and architectural heritage."

**Instant hit on Instagram**  
Some of the new station buildings have become architectural novelties. Stepping out of Gandhinagar Railway Station, visitors are surprised at the sight of a five-star hotel — The Leela — atop live-running train tracks. The hotel's lobby sits approximately 77 feet above the ground level, while rooms start at about 150 feet.

"Staying in a hotel above the railway tracks is a one-of-a-kind, Instagram-worthy experience for guests. Many choose to plan their special occasions at the hotel for the sake of creating lasting memories. While people get great views of Gandhinagar's lush green cityscape without any train noise in the rooms," said Vikas Sood, general manager, The Leela, Gandhinagar station.

Kukreja said the redeveloped stations will help reshape the urban landscape. "They will help catalyse economic growth, revitalise neglected neighbourhoods, and boost overall livability," he said.



# MCD invites bids for biomining at silt dumping site in Singhola

**Paras Singh**  
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**NEW DELHI:** The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) will initiate biomining and remediation work at the silt dumping site at Singhola village in outer Delhi, similar to biomining work currently in progress at the Capital's three landfills at Okhla, Bhalswa and Ghazipur, officials aware of the matter have said.

The civic body has invited bids for the project to clear 900,000 tonnes of accumulated silt and waste, they added.

The silt dumping site in Singhola, located near Khanpur village on Grand Trunk Road, is spread over an area of 7.2 acre. Officials said the site is used to dump silt collected during the annual pre-monsoon exercise of desilting the Capital's drainage system, but has also accumulated plastics, construction and demolition waste, and other waste.

Biomining separates various components of legacy waste

## Fourth biomining project in city

**WHAT IS BIOMINING?** Biomining separates various components of legacy waste such as plastic, paper, cloth, sand, and bricks by passing them through trommel machines, which act as cylindrical rotating sieves

**900,000** tonnes of silt and waste to be deared from 7.2 acre site

**₹70.4 crore** amount sanction to flatten the silt dump

- MCD to start biomining at fourth site; slow progress and deadlines postponed for existing landfills
- MCD to undertake biomining at Singhola silt dumping site near GT road
- Over the last one year, MCD has been in touch with the National Highways Authority of India for the utilisation of accumulated silt for the formation of the base in construction of roads

such as plastic, paper, cloth, sand, and bricks by passing them through trommel machines, which act as cylindrical rotating sieves.

A senior MCD official said that the corporation invited bids to clear the site on March 14.

"The open dumping of at Singhola is causing serious concern for the ecosystem through air, water and land

pollution. There are directions from the National Green Tribunal to clear out such areas as soon as possible," the official said, on condition of anonymity.

The official said that MCD has an expenditure sanction of ₹70.4 crore to flatten the silt dump, and material derived after the biomining exercise is expected to be used for the construction of roads.

The capacity saturation at the Singhola site has led to silt being diverted to the Bhalswa landfill — dumping more silt and fresh waste at the garbage mountain has reversed the biomining process at the site and has slowed down net gains, but there are no alternatives available with the civic body, the official said.

According to officials, there are about 2,846 constructed drains in Delhi, with a total length of 3,692 kilometres. HT on November 3 had reported that according to an engineering department note released in October, the Singhola site faces space constraint as no area is left for further disposal of silt.

"The vertical level at the site cannot be raised further... Further dumping may cause the risk of sliding/slipping of silt towards adjoining areas. Hence there was an urgent need to reduce the load of silt and create space for dumping of silt and create more space for dumping further at this site,"

the note stated.

A second MCD official said that the Singhola site was transferred from the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) in April 2018 to the municipality in order to dispose of silt from east and north Delhi areas. The silt dumping site is used for dumping the silt material collected during the pre-monsoon annual desilting exercise of Capital's drainage system.

MCD, over the last one year, has been in touch with National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) for the utilisation of accumulated silt for the formation of the base in construction of roads. Accordingly, MCD officials said, the Singhola site was inspected by NHAI in December 2022.

"NHAI conveyed to us that the available material has a lot of plastic and garbage, and for making it suitable for use in highway construction, the silt will need to be segregated from other fractions," the MCD official quoted above said.

## MAN MURDERS PARTNER FOR NOT COOKING EGG CURRY, ARRESTED

**GURUGRAM:** A 35-year-old man was arrested from Delhi's Sarai Kale Khan on Saturday for allegedly bludgeoning his live-in partner to death with a hammer and brick inside an under-construction house at Sector-1 in Palam Vihar after she refused to cook egg curry for him, officials aware of the matter said on Sunday.

Naveen Sharma, assistant commissioner of police, Palam Vihar, said the suspect was identified as Lallan Yadav, a native of Bihar's Madhubani, and the victim as Anjali, 32.

Police said that the murder took place on the second floor of the building on Tuesday night. A worker and his wife spotted the body the next morning.

"Yadav's wife died of snake-bite six months ago, after which he had a fight with his family members and shifted to Delhi where he met Anjali. Both of them started living together and came to Gurugram on March 10 and began working at the building site," he said.

Sharma said that in an inebriated condition on Tuesday night, "When Anjali refused to cook egg curry, a quarrel ensued during which Yadav assaulted her, leading to her death," he said. HT

# Snake venom case: YouTuber held, sent to judicial custody

**Arun Singh**  
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**NOIDA:** Noida Police arrested YouTuber Elvish Yadav on Sunday in connection with a probe into the suspected use of snake venom as a recreational drug at a party, officials aware of the matter said. Yadav has been sent to 14-day judicial custody, they added.

"We have found substantial evidence against Yadav and his involvement in supplying snake venom. After appearing before the court on Sunday, Yadav was sent to 14-day judicial custody," said Noida additional deputy commissioner of police Manish Kumar Mishra.

"Yadav was called in for questioning at Sector 20 police station on Sunday," he added.

Police also added sections 284 (negligent conduct with respect to poisonous substances) and 289 (negligent conduct with respect to animals) of the Indian Penal Code and the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act in the first information report (FIR).

On November 3 last year, Yadav and five others were booked under the Wildlife (Protection) Act and section 120 B (criminal conspiracy) of the



Elvish Yadav being produced before a court in Greater Noida on Sunday. PTI

Indian Penal Code for allegedly providing snake venom at a party in Noida's Sector 51. The arrests took place after an animal welfare activist, Gaurav Gupta, associated with the NGO People For Animals, approached the Sector 49 police station.

Noida assistant commissioner of police Praveen Kumar Singh said, "Yadav's involvement in the party at Sector 51 was established during the investigation."

The five others, who were arrested, are now out on bail.

"Nine snakes — five cobras, one python, two sand snakes and one rat snake — protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, and a 20ml tube of suspected snake venom were recovered from the possession of the five suspects," said police.

# Biomining at landfills in Ghazipur, Bhalswa set to miss latest deadline

**Paras Singh**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** The ongoing biomining project at two of the Capital's three landfill sites — Ghazipur and Bhalswa — are likely to miss the latest deadline of 2024 to clear the sites, Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) officials aware of the matter said on Sunday.

Biomining is a process of separating various components of legacy waste such as plastic, paper, cloth, sand, and bricks by passing them through trommel machines, which act as cylindrical rotating sieves. MCD launched the biomining project to clear its three oversaturated landfill sites in July 2019 on

## MCD LAUNCHED THE BIOMINING PROJECT TO CLEAR ITS THREE OVERSATURATED LANDFILL SITES IN 2019 ON NGT'S DIRECTIONS

directions of the National Green Tribunal, that directed that legacy waste dumps are to be "cleared within one year but substantial progress must be made and demonstrated within six months".

Senior officials at the civic body, however, noted that there have been multiple revisions and

extensions of these deadlines due to several reasons, including the slowdown in biomining due to the continued dumping of fresh waste, as well as the halting of work due to rainy weather during the monsoons. The civic body also faced problems with the disposal of inert material and plastic derived after the biomining process, but this issue was later resolved.

At present, the officials said, MCD is in line to clear only the Okhla landfill in December this year — a deadline set in March 2023 — as no fresh waste is being dumped on this location. In a progress report submitted to the Delhi Pollution Control Committee on February 17, the civic body admitted that the

three landfill sites still have 17.2 million tonnes of legacy waste, due to which the deadline to clear the Ghazipur landfill has been pushed back from 2024 to 2026, while the Bhalswa landfill will be cleared by 2025.

The report, a copy of which HT has seen, also noted that the addition of fresh waste at the Ghazipur and Bhalswa sites is slowing down the biomining process.

"The performance of the contractor at the Ghazipur landfill site has been slow, and we have issued several warnings. The company is facing internal challenges. Meanwhile, we are unable to hire new companies as the MCD standing committee is not in place," the official said.

# Cab on wrong side of road hits bike, 1 dead

**Debanshish Karmakar**  
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**GURUGRAM:** A senior legal executive of a private firm in Gurugram has died after a cab speeding travelling in the wrong direction hit his motorcycle on the service lane of the Delhi-Jaipur carriageway near Shankar Chowk, officials aware of the matter said on Sunday.

The victim was identified as Dharmendra Kumar Ahirwar, 38, a native of Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh and lived at Dwarka in Delhi. The accident took place when he was returning home from his office in DLF Phase-III, they added.

Inspector Balraj Singh, station house officer of DLF Phase-III police station, said that the cab

driver, who was identified as Mohammad Saddam, 27, was arrested on Saturday. "He hails from Nuh and entered the wrong lane to take a shortcut," he said.

Investigators said the cab suddenly came from the wrong side to head towards Udyog Vihar and hit Ahirwar's motorcycle. He was flung several feet away due to the impact and his helmet also came off. The cab driver lost control and rammed the divider.

Commuters immediately rushed Ahirwar to a private hospital in DLF Phase-III where he soon died while undergoing treatment, investigators added.

Inspector Singh said the Swift Dzire and the motorcycle were seized from the spot. "The body was handed over to the family after the autopsy," he said.

# Law an eternal process of learning: SC judge

**HT Correspondent**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** The KK Luthra Memorial Moot Court competition concluded on Sunday, with Supreme Court judge, justice Vikram Nath presenting the award to the Campus Law Centre, Delhi University for the best team among 72 universities in India and abroad that participated. The moot court invited teams to explore the interplay of laws relating to international diplomatic relations and criminal investigation and procedure.

over the closing ceremony of the three-day event, said, "Law is an eternal process of learning. One must continue to learn until the end of one's career."

This year was the 20th edition of the moot court event organised in memory of eminent lawyer KK Luthra, whose son, senior advocate Siddharth Luthra is a leading criminal lawyer.

The final round was judged by a panel of three judges of the Delhi high court — justices Rekha Palli, Neena Bansal Krishna, Sudhir Kumar Jain — who were guests of honour at the prize distribution event.

**PACE NEWS | Hindustan Times MEDIA MARKETING INITIATIVE**

### Empowering Students is Empowering Future: A Call to Excel the CBSE Exams

I extend my heartfelt wishes and words of encouragement to each one of you. These exams mark a significant milestone in your lives, witness to your hard work, dedication, and perseverance over the years.

- **Believe in Yourself:** Remember, dear students, that you possess immense potential within you. Believe in your abilities and trust in your preparations.
- **Be Positive:** In the face of adversity, maintain a positive outlook. Optimism fuels resilience and fosters a mindset conducive to growth.
- **Be Regular in Your Work:** Consistency is the key to success. Attend your classes regularly, be it in your studies or any other activity or sport you are enrolled in, engage wholeheartedly and make the most of every learning opportunity.
- **Be Focused:** Set clear objectives, prioritize your tasks, and channel your efforts towards achieving excellence.
- **Eat Healthy Food:** Fuel your body and mind with nutritious food that nourishes and energizes.

### Nurturing Minds, Building Futures: A Commitment to Positive Education and Lifelong Learning

**Dr. Jyotsana, Principal, Blue Global International School, Delhi**

I urge you to approach the Board Examinations with a spirit of resilience, determination, and optimism. Stay true to yourself, stay focused on your goals, and let your light shine brightly as you illuminate the path to your dreams. Wishing you all the very best for your exams and for all your future endeavours!

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### BNPS Ram Vihar Pioneers STEM for Innovation and Critical Thinking

As part of its transformative skill-building interventions in the institution, **Bharat National Public School, Ram Vihar** has introduced STEM, focused on innovation and critical thinking, in grades 6 to 8. The program has been initiated through a partnership with Navjyoti India Foundation, a leading NGO in Delhi. As an inclusive program, STEM, initiated by the school, is being done with not only the children of BNPS, but also children from low-income communities, whose education is facilitated by Hope Foundation. These children are supported by BNPS in the school campus. Following the pedagogy of hands-on-learning, the STEM sessions are being delivered to equip children with scientific and electronic tools that they need to thrive in an increasingly technology-driven and innovation centric world. As part of the program, children from each grade visit the STEM lab, specially set up for the practical exercises, once every week where they are divided into working groups.

Interesting models, developed through this exercise, will be displayed by children in the Science exhibition organized by the school.

Scan the code for all the latest updates

### Saai Memorial Girls School celebrated Grandparents Day

**Saai Memorial Girls School, Sai Bhawan, Geeta Colony,** celebrated the Grandparents Day. The program started with the address of the Principal Dr. Meenakshi Keswani and the Director, Bhawna Mansharamani. The scintillating dance and drama performances of primary class students were truly breathtaking. A group of grandparents presented an astounding dance performance for which they were felicitated with trophies and a certificate of appreciation. Prizes were distributed for academic, sports and co-curricular achievements. The function concluded with the vote of thanks proposed by the Principal, Dr. Meenakshi Keswani. She encouraged the students to respect and value the presence of the great foundations of the families.

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# Open interpretation area to be developed at Ridge

Jasjeev Gandhiok

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**NEW DELHI:** Delhi's forest and wildlife department will landscape a 1.5 hectare area at the Kamla Nehru Ridge in north Delhi to create an open interpretation area, which will consist of a cactus garden, herbal garden and large pond, officials aware of the matter said on Sunday.

An area will also be dedicated to native species that grow predominantly in the rocky terrain of the Aravallis, they added.

The forest department operates a government nursery at the Kamla Nehru Ridge and the department said a natural revamp of the area is planned, not only to educate visitors at the nursery about the different species available, but also to start educational tours for students.

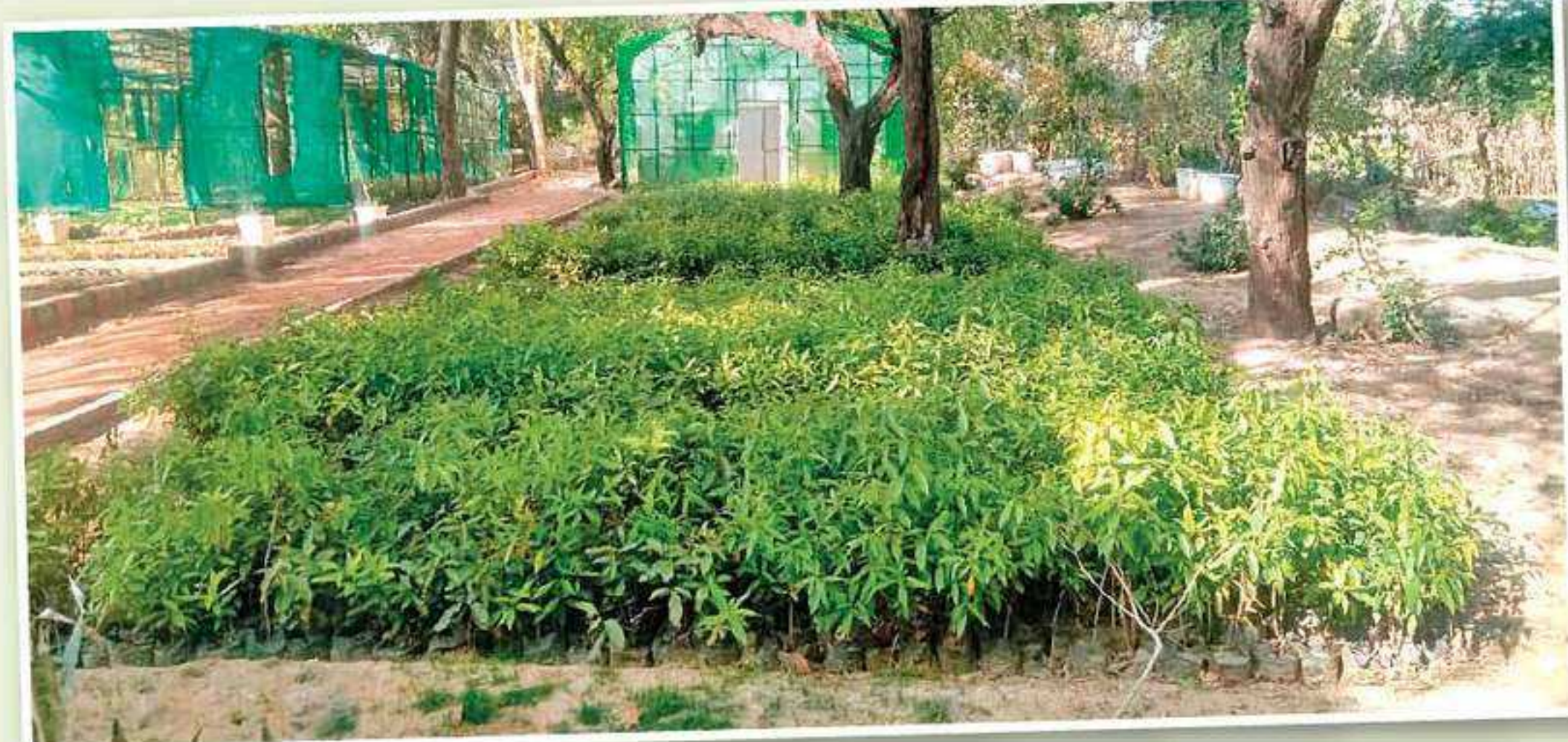
The Delhi government currently has 14 nurseries across the city, where free plants are distributed by the forest department, officials said.

A senior forest department official at the Kamla Nehru Ridge on condition of anonymity said that a tender has been floated to landscape around 1.5 hectares out of the three-hectare area occupied by the nursery, which will not only allow them to showcase over 3,000 species of shrubs, medicinal plants and trees, but also facilitate educational tours.

The Kamla Nehru Ridge is also called the Northern Ridge. Delhi's Ridge areas, the broken extension of the Aravallis into Delhi, are divided into four

## New landscaping project

The forest and wildlife department will be landscaping a 1.5 hectare area at the Kamla Nehru Ridge, to be completed within one year.



**1** Cactus garden with cacti found naturally in the Aravallis

**2** Herbal garden with species that can be planted in pots, or taken free of cost from the nursery

**3** A pond with fully-functional ecosystem

**3,000+** types of shrubs, herbs, grasses and tree species

An area will also be dedicated to native species that grow predominantly in the rocky terrain of the Aravallis

zones — Central Ridge, Northern Ridge, South Central Ridge and Southern Ridge.

"We have been gathering feedback from visitors coming to the nursery and one of the key suggestions was to make dedicated open spaces for plants where people could come and view them and learn more about them. Keeping that in mind, we have not only decided to plant a variety of shrubs, medicinal plants and trees in the open to showcase them for visitors, but also to create dedi-

cated zones, where cactus, herbal plants and native Aravalli plants suited for a rocky terrain will be grown. A fully functional pond ecosystem will also be replicated with different flora," said the senior official.

The official said no permanent structures will be built in the area, including the need for a physical centre, as the Ridge was a protected forest. Instead, open spaces will be used to give guided tours. The project is likely to take one year to complete.

"The path laying will also be done using only bajra and instead of creating an indoor interpretation centre, we plan to give tours out in the open. This will particularly be beneficial for students, who can see the different types of ecosystems that exist in Delhi and the native species that are found in the northern Ridge and other parts of Delhi," the official said, adding that a tender has been floated earlier this month and is likely to be awarded by next month.

# Gang of vehicle-lifters busted in Noida

Saptarshi Das

saptarshi.das@hindustantimes.com

**NOIDA:** Noida Police on Sunday said it arrested four alleged interstate vehicle lifters and confiscated five cars.

According to deputy commissioner of police (Noida) Vidya Sagar Mishra, the suspects are

part of an organised gang that steals cars in the Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR).

Police registered an FIR under Section 379 of the IPC at Sector 39 police station, Noida. Police identified the suspects by their single names — Iqbal, Raju, Raees, and Yameen — adding that they are aged between 25-40 years.

The DCP said that the suspects would first break the glass window of the cars and then with an Auto Diagnostic Tool (ADT) scan the system, and unlock the car.

The suspects, who stole four-wheelers from Noida, Ghaziabad, and NCR, were arrested on Saturday from near an under-construction building in Sector 39.

"Their friend Deepak used to sell the stolen cars in other states," said officers aware of the case.

Apart from the five cars, police also recovered a saw, two hammers, two guns, and one live cartridge, among other things. The suspects are repeat offenders and used to buy their tools from Delhi," the officers said.

## Delhiwale

EXPERIENCE YOUR CITY LIKE NEVER BEFORE



Mayank Austen Soofi



## New in HKV

On the evolving world of a city hangout

### { PUBLIC INTEREST }

Outside, Jack Kerouac's poster stares at you from a glass wall. Inside, black shelves are stacked with Nietzsche, Hunter S. Thompson, William S Burroughs, etc.

Delhi's newest bookstore opened ten days ago. Promenade Books at Hauz Khas village transports the visitor to the HKV that was.

Today, the bustling village is full of noisy cafes and teenage couples, but until a decade ago it was more mature, with a lot more art galleries, experimental restaurants (miss you, Gunpowder!), and a handful of alternative bookstores. Yodakin was run by an independent publisher, and for some time was manned by an arthouse actor, who would sit at the counter poring over some brainy paperback, his head tilted in a way that one could see the tattoo on the back of his neck. Toddy Shop was not a bookstore but a bar that regularly hosted poetry evenings hosted by author Jeet Thayil, and where the bills would come in poetry books. Kumzum bookstore, which has lately launched a series of sprawling outlets in posh locales, started in HKV as a travel café, with a radical "pay what you

like" scheme for coffee, chai and cookies.

Today, all of these places are as much a part of HKV's rich past as the 14th century tomb of emperor Feroze Shah Tughlak, the village's historic heart.

The brand new Promenade brings back a glimpse of that old HKV. This evening, the place is packed with young browsers. It is like entering some underground club on a weekend night, half-expecting your wrist to be stamped at the door. The bookstore's founder is the man in blue shorts wearing a T-shirt bearing the faces of the musicians of English rock band Blur. Abhay started as a publisher the previous year, eventually setting up the shop because "we needed to make a physical address where we could talk to people about books." Turning to a shelf crammed with the books he publishes, Abhay says "we bring back the books which have run out of print and have been forgotten like they never existed." Most of the writers are from Europe, he notes. Among the published authors are Frederick Rolfe, Henri Barbusse, and Ivan Bunin. The store will release a William J Locke title the next evening, with a suffrock session by university student Ahmed Mir. Last week, it celebrated Kerouac's 102nd birthday; a recording of the author's reading of *On the Road* played on loop for two hours.

Soon, more folks troop in. Somebody's fingers uncertainly tap on Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*. As challenging as Joyce, a voice cautions,



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

## HT Homage

In Loving and Everlasting Memory of

**SARDAR BALBIR SINGH KOHLI**  
Son of Sardar Inder Singh Kohli of Gujjarkhan

15th August 1941 - 18th March 2023

A man of great vision and compassion, a man who believed in living life king size, a man who touched everyone's heart with humility, a man who earned the goodwill of all.

A loving husband, a responsible brother, a supportive father, a doting grandfather, a loyal friend and an entrepreneur extraordinaire. Our pillar of strength and our sounding board. We cherish and miss every moment we got to spend with you.

In reverence and remembrance

Sdn. Inderjeet Kaur Kohli (Wife)      Rupinder Kaur & Amarpreet Singh Chadha  
Gurpreet Kaur & Jasjit Singh Kohli      Harpreet Kaur & Gurvinder Singh Kohli

Sdn. Harcharan Kaur Kohli & Family  
Sdn. Iqbal Kaur Kohli & Family  
Gurvinder Kaur & Surinderpal Singh Kohli (&Family)  
Urmeet Singh Kohli & Manmeet Singh Kohli (&Family)

All the Nieces, Nephews, Grand Children, Great Grand Children, Family & Friends  
Sardar Brothers, Sardar Silk House, Sardar India Pvt. Ltd.

On 10<sup>th</sup> Punyatithi 18.03.2024  
A tribute to a life well lived!

Daddy, your legacy is a symphony of love, resilience, and cherished moments. We honor you by upholding the values and traditions that made our family strong. Daddy you will always be in our heart... because in there you're still alive.

**Late Shri Kulvir Kulshreshtha**  
♦ 1<sup>st</sup> January 1936 to 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014 ♦

Always Remembered by:

Smt. Kushal Kanta Kulshreshtha (wife)  
Neeraj and Anubha (son-in-law and daughter)  
Dr. Akhil and Dr. Anjali (son and daughter in-law)  
Dr. Pramath and (late) Anuja (son-in-law and daughter)  
Grandkids:  
Yash, Vidhu and Niyathi, Niteesha and Eric, Vagisha, Varda.  
If you wish to Contact: 9990043077

11th Death Anniversary

**Surinder Singh Nijjar**  
(PAPA)  
05.11.54 - 18.03.13  
11 years since you left,  
we miss you everyday.  
Jaskinder Kaur,  
Sumanjeet Kaur,  
Gursartaj, Suhrid

In Loving Memory of  
our Beloved Father

**Late Shri Robert Sehgal ji**  
18.11.1957 - 23.03.2022

Always in our Hearts  
Kindly request you to join us for Shanti path followed by Lunch / Prasad on Date: 18 March 2024 Time: 11:30 AM Location: 9, Sehgal Colony, Rustam ji Sehgal Marg, Near Robert Sehgal Park, Civil Lines, Delhi - 110054

Remembered by:  
Mrs. Poonam Sehgal  
Rajeev Robert Sehgal  
Gautam Robert Sehgal  
9911062471, 9810062471

१६

**PRAYER MEETING**  
*Harinder Bir Singh Chhachhi*  
September 14, 1928 - March 16, 2024

on Tuesday, March 19, 2024, 12 noon  
at H Block, Gurdwara, DLF Phase 1, Gurugram

Mrs Jayanti Chhachhi      Aradhna  
Vikram, Vivek      Rhea  
Rachna, Shefali      Arnab

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Conditions Apply \*GST as applicable

# Foreign students attacked at Gujarat varsity over namaz, MEA steps in

**HT Correspondent**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**AHMEDABAD:** A group of people stormed the Gujarat University hostel in Ahmedabad late on Saturday and attacked international students who were offering namaz inside the premises, injuring five people during the melee, prompting the state police to begin a high-level probe on Sunday and arrest two men, even as the ministry of external affairs said it had taken note of the incident.



Police at the hostel campus where the students were allegedly assaulted, in Ahmedabad, on Sunday.

Two students - one from Sri Lanka and another from Tajikistan - were hospitalised after the attack, videos of which did the rounds on social media and drew widespread condemnation.

Police said they had arrested two people, Hitesh Mewada and Bharat Patel, both residents of Ahmedabad, for their alleged role in the attack, adding that they were on the hunt for more suspects.

Senior officers said the incident took place around 10.30pm on Saturday, when around 25 people broke into a block of the hostel, which houses around 75 of Gujarat University's 300 international students.

"Some students were sitting on a platform (within the hostel premises), offering namaz when the group entered, asked why they were praying there and told them to go to a mosque instead," said GS Malik, Ahmedabad com-

missioner of police, citing a preliminary investigation.

According to Malik, this "led to a verbal altercation" that then "escalated into stone-pelting and physical violence". "Some people in the group then barged into the rooms and began vandalising property," said Malik.

Gujarat University vice-chancellor Neeraj Gupta said, "This is the first time such an incident has happened. We have been running the Study Abroad Programme (SAP) since 2005. The government and police have taken strict action and two people have also been arrested."

"At the university we have made some administrative changes today (like decision to appoint ex-army men as security personnel and appointment of new hostel warden and new

co-ordinator for SAP) and we have also decided to form a Foreign Student Advisory committee," Gupta said.

An Afghan student said the men were shouting "Jai Shri Ram" as they "pushed the security guard out" of the building.

"Other international students who came to help were also attacked. Their rooms were ransacked and their personal devices, including laptops and cellphones damaged. Five students, including two from South Africa and one each from Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Sri Lanka, have been injured," the student said.

Several purported bits of footage from the incident went viral on social media and showed a group of people pelting stones and vandalising stationary motorcycles within the hostel's prem-

ises. One clip shows a person asking students if they should be praying in the hostel, prompting an aggressive response. Other videos showed the group leaving the college even as residents of the hostel demanded they be apprehended. "There are many videos of stone pelting and other incidents of vandalism. We are conducting a fair and neutral investigation, and the government is also of the view that strong action should be taken against those responsible for the violence," said Malik. Gujarat Police filed a case on Sunday night and booked the two arrested men under a slew of sections of the IPC.

Tarun Duggal, Ahmedabad deputy commissioner of police (zone 7), said, "The police have arrested two Ahmedabad residents, Hitesh Mewada and Bharat Patel, and booked them under multiple IPC sections, including 143 (unlawful assembly), 147 (rioting) and 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), among others." Gujarat home minister Harsh Sanghavi convened an urgent meeting with senior officials on Sunday afternoon, including the state's director general of police (DGP) and the joint commissioner of police (JCP). Sanghavi did not respond to phone calls seeking his comments on the matter.

Meanwhile, external affairs ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal in a post on X said the Gujarat government is taking strict action against the perpetra-

tors. "State government is taking strict action against the perpetrators," he said. He said the external affairs ministry is in touch with the Gujarat government over the matter. The attack also triggered a political storm.

Hyderabad MP and All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen chief Asaduddin Owaisi criticised the incident, questioning whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi and home minister Amit Shah will intervene.

"What a shame. Your devotion & religious slogans only come out when Muslims peacefully practice their religion... What is this, if not mass radicalisation? This is the home state of @AmitShah & @narendramodi, will they intervene to send a strong message?..." Owaisi said on X.

Reacting to the incident, Gujarat Congress spokesperson Manish Doshi said it was the failure of law and order by the ruling BJP government in Gujarat. "It's election time and the ruling BJP wants to divert from the real issues of the people and hence they are allowing communal forces to take over," alleged Doshi.

Gujarat BJP spokesperson Yamal Vyas said the government has taken swift action and already put two people behind bars who were responsible for the incident.

"The government will leave no stone unturned to ensure that peace and order is maintained. All culprits behind the incident will be punished," said Vyas.

{ FROM MALDIVES }

# 2nd batch of personnel to be pulled out by April 10

**Rezaul H Laskar**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** India and the Maldives on Sunday reviewed the process for replacing Indian military personnel who operate three aviation platforms in the Indian Ocean archipelago, with authorities in Male saying the second batch of personnel will be withdrawn by April 10.

The Indian side has begun replacing its military personnel with civilian technical staff following a demand by Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu for withdrawing all Indian military personnel from the country. Military personnel responsible for operating and maintaining one helicopter were withdrawn earlier this month.

The process for replacing the military personnel was reviewed during the third meeting of a bilateral high level core group at the foreign ministry in Male on Sunday. The Indian technical

**MORE THAN 80 INDIAN MILITARY PERSONNEL, INCLUDING PILOTS AND MAINTENANCE CREWS, WERE DEPLOYED IN THE MALDIVES**

staff are being deputed to enable the continued operation of Indian aviation platforms - two helicopters and an aircraft - that provide humanitarian and medical evacuation services to the people of Maldives, the external affairs ministry said in a readout.

A statement from the Maldivian foreign ministry said military personnel responsible for one aviation platform had been replaced with civilians, and personnel for the remaining two platforms will be replaced on April 10 and May 10. Muizzu, who has taken several steps to

bring the Maldives closer to China, had earlier demanded that all Indian military personnel should be withdrawn by March 15. More than 80 Indian military personnel, including pilots and maintenance crews, were deployed in the Maldives.

The two sides reached a compromise during an earlier meeting of the core group and agreed to withdraw the military personnel in batches by May 10.

During Sunday's meeting, the two sides also discussed wide-ranging issues related to bilateral cooperation, including expediting work on India-backed development projects in the Maldives through regular convening of joint monitoring mechanisms.

They also discussed efforts to boost bilateral trade and investment and enhance people-to-people links via capacity building and travel, external affairs ministry's readout said. Both sides agreed to hold the next meeting of core group in Delhi.

# Jaishankar defends CAA, rejects criticism by western countries

**Press Trust of India**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** External affairs minister S Jaishankar has rejected the criticism of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) by the US and other countries, adding that there are a "number of examples" in which many countries have fast-tracked citizenship.

The US on Thursday said it is concerned about the notification of CAA in India and is closely monitoring its implementation.

"Look, I am not questioning the imperfections or otherwise of their democracy or their principles or lack of it. I am questioning their understand-



S Jaishankar

Vanik amendment, which was about Jews from Soviet Union, the Lautenberg Amendment, Specter Amendment and "fast-tracking of Hungarians after the Hungarian revolution, fast-tracking of Cubans in 1960s".

"So, if you were to ask me, have other countries, other democracies, fast-tracked on the basis of ethnicity, faith, social attributes, I can give you any number of examples," the minister said.

He sought to put the context of the 1947 Partition which cleaved the Indian subcontinent into two independent nations India and Pakistan, and led to a massive bloodshed resulting in large-scale migrations across the border.

## Sandeshkhali case: Shahjahan's brother Alamgir sent to five-day CBI custody

**WEST BENGAL:** A court on Sunday sent suspended Trinamool Congress leader Shahjahan Sheikh's brother Sheikh Alamgir and two others, arrested by the CBI for assaulting ED officers during a raid in Sandeshkhali on January 5, to five days' custody of the central agency, police said. Basirhat sub-divisional court sent Alamgir, Sirajul Molla and Maifjul Molla to five-day CBI custody, they said. The CBI on Saturday arrested Alamgir and other two.

## Former secy of Uttarakhand chief minister booked under Gangsters Act

**DEHRADUN:** The Dehradun Police have invoked the Gangsters Act against former private secretary to Uttarakhand chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, Prakash Chand Upadhyay, and three others to confiscate their illegally earned properties. "The main accused, Saurabh Vats and PC Upadhyay, extorted from people on the promise of providing them government tenders... The accused worked as an organised gang," SSP Ajai Singh said.

## Indian Forest Service Association seeks CBI inquiry into suicide of IFS officer

**SHILLONG:** The Indian Forest Service Association (IFSA) has written to the Meghalaya chief secretary requesting a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) inquiry into the death of a 50-year-old IFS officer, who allegedly died by suicide on March 13. In the letter to Meghalaya chief secretary Donald P Wahlang, the IFSA urged the chief secretary to allocate the matter to the CBI for a "detailed and impartial inquiry."

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**NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY (Survey & Construction) Open E-Tender Notice**  
Dy. Chief Engineer (Const.), North-Western Railway, Bikaner for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-Tenders under Two packet system for the following works: 1. Tender No.: NWR-SC-BKN-21-2023-24 2. Name of the work with its location: Providing Project Management Services (PMS) for Major Upgradation of Bikaner Railway Station of Bikaner division of North-Western Railway. 3. Approx. cost of the work: Rs. 4,42,13,83.00 4. Bid Security to be deposited: Rs. 3,71,10,00.00 5. Date for submission of e-tender: On 29.04.2024 upto 15.00 hrs. 6. Date, time and place of pre bid conference: On 03.04.2024 at 11.30 AM in the office of Dy. Chief Engineer (Const.), North-Western Railway, Opposite Dhola Maru Hotel, 30 Civil Lines, Bikaner (Rajasthan) 7. Details and particulars of website where e-tender can be seen & filled up: www.ireps.gov.in 8. Official email address: dycec@bkn.railnet.gov.in Note: - 1. No manual tender will be accepted. 2. The Bid Security shall be deposited in cash through e-payment gateway or submitted as Bank Guarantee bond from a scheduled commercial bank of India or as mentioned in the tender documents. The bank guarantee bond should be issued in favour of FA & CAO/Construction, North Western Railway Jaipur otherwise tender will not be considered. 374-DG/24

**NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY E-Tender Notice**  
For and on behalf of President of Republic of India, Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/Construction-I North Western Railway, Jaipur invites E-Tender for the following works upto 15.00 Hrs. on the mentioned date. 1. Name of work: Tender No. EL/C/JP/DNRP-RTM/NL/T/12/23-24 Modification of LT/HT Electrical overhead Power line Track crossings by under ground cable in connection with new BG Line work between Dungaapur-Ratlam section. 2. Approximate cost of the Work: Rs. 31437867.00 3. Earnest Money to be deposited: Rs. 307200.00 4. Date of Completion of work: 24 Months 5. Date & Time of closing E-Tender Date: 23.04.2024 Upto 15.00 Hrs. Date & Time of opening E-Tender: 23.04.2024 at 15.30 Hrs. 6. The details of above E-Tender are available on Website: www.ireps.gov.in 368-DG/24

**NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY E-Tender Notice**  
For and on behalf of President of Republic of India, Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/Construction-I North Western Railway, Jaipur invites E-Tender for the following works upto 15.00 Hrs. on the mentioned date. 1. Name of work: Tender No. EL/C/JP/ABR-TRAH/NL/T/11/2024 Modification of LT/HT Electrical overhead Power line Track crossings by under ground cable from 30 to 60km between Abu Road and Taranga Hill Section in connection with new BG Line work. 2. Approximate cost of the Work: Rs. 40454869.00 3. Earnest Money to be deposited: Rs. 352300.00 4. Date of Completion of work: 30 Months 5. Date & Time of closing E-Tender Date: 23.04.2024 Upto 15.00 Hrs. Date & Time of opening E-Tender: 23.04.2024 at 15.30 Hrs. 6. The details of above E-Tender are available on Website: www.ireps.gov.in 369-DG/24

**NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY E-Tendering Tender Notice**  
Tender Notice No.: 16320232024 Date: 15.03.2024  
Divisional Railway Manager (Engineering)/North Central Railway/Prayagraj, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites E-TENDERS on prescribed form for the following work upto 13.30 hrs. on 26.04.2024. The details of the Tender are as under:-  
S.N.: 01 T.No.: 435 Approx Cost Rs.: 5124062.34 Bid Security: ₹102500.00  
Name of work: Improvement of Level crossing No 35 R & 424 by Rubberized metal crossing and Loading Leading and unloading of Miscellaneous P-way material and other item under SR. DEN/1/PR/J.  
Completion Period: 06 Month, Date of Opening of tender: 26.04.2024, Eligibility Criteria for similar work: Any work involving supply & fixing of rubberized surface on roads or Railway level crossing. 1. Tender on line can be submitted up to 13.30 hrs. of tender opening date. 2. The complete information along with tender document of above E-Tenders are available on Website www.ireps.gov.in upto 13.30 hrs. on the due date of tender opening. 516/24(DG)

**NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE**  
Tender Notice No. PRY/JB/RL/2023-24/09 Date: 12.03.2024  
Dy Chief Engineer/Bridge/Line/North Central Railway/Prayagraj acting for and on behalf of the President of India, invites E-TENDERS on prescribed form for the following work upto 14.30 hrs. on 08.04.2024. The details of the Tender are as under:-  
Tender No.: 2023-17, Name of work: Replacement of Riveted plate girder bridge No. 267 UP & DN by PSC slab at km 1025/21-23 in Kanpur-Rura section of Prayagraj Division.  
Approx. Cost of work (Rs.): 4,05,97,925.93 Bid Security (Rs.): 3,53,000/-  
Completion period: 06 Months, Date of Opening of tender: 08.04.2024, Eligibility Criteria for Similar work: Construction of any type of bridge. Note: (1) The complete information along with tender document of above E-Tenders are available on Website www.ireps.gov.in upto 14.30 hrs. on the due date of tender opening i.e. 08.04.2024. (2) Bids other than in the form of E-Bids shall not be accepted against above tenders. For this purpose, vendors are required to get themselves registered with IREPS website along with Digital Signature Certificate issued by CCA under IT Act-2000. (3) Rates entered into Financial Rate page and duly signed digitally shall be considered. Rates and any other financial entity in any other form/letter head if attached by vendors shall be straightway ignored and shall not be considered. (4) Document being attached should be signed by the tenderer on its body. (5) Payment of Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) & Tender Document Cost (TDC) in respect of e-tendering shall be accepted through net banking or payment gateway only. (6) In case of any difficulty helpdesk available on the website of IREPS may be approached. (7) On line tender can be submitted up to 14:30 hrs. on 08.04.2024. (8) Supplier of Goods and/or services would be a subject to GST Act. and Rules as applicable from time to time. (9) The tenderer has to submit necessary documents in compliance of clause 10 to 18 (Part-I) of GCC July/2020 mandatorily, otherwise offer will be treated as Incomplete offer and accordingly shall not be considered. 494/24 (P)

**NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY E-Tender Notice**  
Tender Notice No.: 15620232024 Date: 14.03.2024  
Divisional Railway Manager (Engineering)/North Central Railway/Prayagraj, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites the following E-Tenders on prescribed form for the following works upto 13.30 hrs. on 24.04.2024. The details of the tenders are as under:-  
Tender No.: 412 Name of Work: Combined Tender: (A) Turnout Sleeper renewal in RRR-TDL section under Sr. DEN/III/PR/J. (B) Nil work at ETW under ADE/ETW. (C) CTR (S) under ADE/ETW.  
Approx. Cost of Work (Rs.): 18297958.08, Bid Security (Rs.): 241500.00, Completion Period: 12 months, Date of Opening of tender: 24.04.2024, Similar work for Eligibility Criteria: P-way work. Note:- 1. The complete information along with tender document of above E-Tenders is available on website www.ireps.gov.in upto 13.30 hrs. on the due date of tender opening i.e. 24.04.2024. The tender shall be opened at or after 15:00 hrs. on due date. 2. Bids other than in the form of E-Bids shall not be accepted against above tenders. For this purpose, vendors are required to get themselves registered with IREPS website along with Digital Signature Certificates issued by CCA under IT Act-2000. 3. Rates entered into Financial Rate page and duly signed digitally shall be considered. Rates and any other financial entity in any other form/letter head if attached by vendors shall be straightway ignored and shall not be considered. 4. Tender No. 412 is having advertised value more than 50 Lakhs, therefore, Annexure-V & V (A) (Document Verification Certificate) are required. The supplier/contractor of goods and/or services would be subject to GST Act and Rules as applicable from time to time. 5. Document being attached should be signed by the tenderer on its body. 6. This tender notice has also been uploaded on www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in. 7. Cost of Tender document and Bid Security can be deposited Online through Internet Banking or Payment Gateway or Bank Guarantee Bond as detailed in para 12 of tender document. 8. In case of any difficulty helpdesk available on the website of IREPS may be approached. 9. Tender on line can be submitted up to 13:30 hrs. on 24.04.2024. 10. Along with other instructions given to Tenderers, Tenderers are required to Pay special attention on Para 12 to Tender Document for Bid Security Deposit. 11. E-Tender Forms shall be issued free of cost to all Tenderers. 12. For tender no. 412: The tenderer has to submit necessary documents in compliance of clause 10 to 18 (Part-I) of IRGCC-2022 (Works matter) mandatorily, otherwise their offer will be considered as incomplete Offer and accordingly shall not be considered. 496/24 (D)

**NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE**  
Tender Notice No.: GSU/Elect./PRY/JE-Tender Notice/2024/37 Date: 15.03.2024  
Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/GSU/N.C.R./Prayagraj, for and on behalf of the President of India, invite the following E-Tender, the details of the tenders are as under:-  
Tender No.: GSU-EL-WC-46-2024 Advertised Value: ₹ 32589932.10  
Description of work: 25 kV OHE Electrification work of 'Karma Stn' in between Lusa-Khairahi of CAR-CPU section under doubling work for splitting long block section in Prayagraj division.  
Bid Security: ₹ 313000.00, Completion Period: 03 Months, Bidding System: Single Packet, Tender Closing Date & Time: 05.04.2024 & 14.00 Hrs. Tender Opening Date & Time: 05.04.2024 & 15.00 Hrs.  
Note:- (1) The complete information along with tender document of above E-Tenders shall be available on Website www.ireps.gov.in 21 days prior to the date of opening of the tender. (2) Bids other than in the form of E-Bids shall not be accepted against above tenders. For this purpose, vendors are required to get themselves registered with IREPS website along with Digital Signature Certificate. (3) In case of any difficulty helpdesk available on the website of IREPS may be approached. 517/24 (A)

**NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY E-Tender Notice**  
Dated: 14.03.2024  
Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/Const.N.C. Rly/Prayagraj acting for and on behalf of the President of India, invite the following E-Tenders on prescribed form for the following work upto 15.30 hrs. on 08.04.2024. The details of the tender are as under:-  
Tender No.: EL-C-PRYJ-210-23-24  
Name of work: Electrical GPS work in connection with Construction of ORH at Railganga Colony & Type-III & Type-IV Quarters at 10th Marg, Nawab Yusuf Road Railway Colony.  
Tender Opening Date: 08.04.2024, Advertised value of work (In Rs.): 2,67,76,764.26, Bid Security (In Rs.): 2,83,900.00, Period of completion: 12 Months, Note:- 1. The complete information along with tender document of above E-Tenders are available on Website www.ireps.gov.in upto 15.30 hrs. on the due date of tender opening. 2. Bids other than in the form of E-Bids shall not be accepted against above Tenders. For this purpose, vendors are required to get themselves registered with IREPS website alongwith Digital Signature Certificate. 3. In case of any difficulty helpdesk available on the website of IREPS may be approached. 4. The tendered submitted valid Electrical Contractor License issued by any State Government/Central Government/Licensing Board along with their tender paper. 488/24 (D)

**NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE (Single Packet System)**  
No.: SIG-WS-Cont-AGC-98 Date: 15.03.2024  
Dy. Chief Signal & Telecom Engineer/Con/Agra, North Central Railway Unit, Agra for and on behalf of the President of India invites open e-Tender from reputed contractors with adequate experience and financial capability, for the following work on Single Packet System upto 15.00 hrs. on the opening date of E-tender mentioned therein. If date of opening is declared a holiday or offer could not be opened due to technical issue, the offers shall be opened on the next working day. The details of the Tender are as under:-  
Name of work: "Infringement removal/Utility shifting of Signalling & Telecom cables and equipment" in connection with Double line work in Agra Fort-Bandikuli section of Agra division of North Central Railway.  
Estimated cost of work: Rs. 19694495.53 only/Earnest Money: Rs. 248500.00/-  
Tender form cost: NIL., Completion Period: 24 Months., Availability of tender form: Tender forms shall be available on web site, www.ireps.gov.in, 21 days prior to date of opening of the tender., Closing Date/Time of Tender: 08.04.2024 before 15:00 Hrs., Tender Opening Date/Time: 08.04.2024 at 15:30 Hrs., Place of Opening: Through Online E-Portal www.ireps.gov.in in the office of Dy.CSTE/C/AGC Office, AGRA (UP), Validity of Offer: 60 days from date of opening., Right of Railway to deal with tender: Railway administration reserves the rights to postpone/modify or to cancel the tender without assigning any reasons.Tenderers who wish to participate in tenders invited on www.ireps.gov.in have to register on the website mandatorily. Please refer to website for more details. Tenderers can submit EMD only through online mode. Online payment of earnest money can be made through net banking, debit/credit card etc. Further particulars can be obtained from Indian Railways website www.ireps.gov.in. 526/24 (P)

**NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY E-Tender Notice**  
E-Tender Notice No. JHS/Br/L/2023-24/26 Date: 14.03.2024  
Dy. Chief Engineer/Bridge/Line/Jhansi, North Central Railway, Jhansi for and on behalf of President of India invites open E-tenders on the prescribed forms for the under noted work:-  
Tender No.: Br-JHS-2023-32 Name of Work: Mahoba-Khajuraho Section: Construction of ROB (End-to-End including approaches) in lieu of Level Crossing No. 2 at Km 1296/11-12.  
Tender No.: Br-JHS-2023-33 Name of Work: Mahoba-Khajuraho Section: Construction of ROB (End-to-End including approaches) in lieu of Level Crossing No. 3 at Km 1315/5-4.  
Approx. Cost of work: Rs. 37.52 Crores., Bid Security (Earnest Money): Rs. 20,26,100/-. Date of closing of Tender: 08.04.2024, Completion period: 12 Months, Eligibility Criteria for similar work: Any bridgework involving erection/launching or Regirding of open web girder. OR Any bridgework involving erection/launching or Regirding or Bowstring arch Bridge. Note: 1. The complete information along with tender document of above E-Tenders are available on Website www.ireps.gov.in upto 15:00 hrs. on the due date of tender closing i.e. 08.04.2024. 2. Bids other than in the form of E-Bids shall not be accepted against above tenders. For this purpose, vendors are required to get themselves registered with IREPS website along with Digital Signature Certificate issued by CCA under IT Act-2000. 3: Rates entered into Financial Rate page and duly signed digitally shall be considered. Rates and any other financial entity in any other form / letter head if attached by vendors shall be straightway ignored and shall not be considered. 4: Document being attached should be signed by the tenderer on its body. 5: Payment of Bid Security (Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) in respect of e-tendering shall be accepted through net banking or payment gateway only. 6: In case of any difficulty helpdesk available on the website of IREPS may be approached. 7: Tender on line can be submitted up to 15.00 hrs. on dated 08.04.2024. 515/24 (AN)

**DISTRICT POLICE HEADQUARTERS SAMBA LOOK OUT NOTICE**  
SHO P/S Bari Brahmna has intimated vide letter No. 487/5-1/PSBB Dated 02.03.2024, that one lady namely Radha Devi D/O Jagan Nath R/O Ward No. 9 Doollian, Bari-Brahmana district Samba has been missing from the market of Bari Brahmna. Her search was conducted but not traced out till date and her missing report has been entered at P/S Bari-Brahmana vide DDR No. 07 dated 02.03.2024. Through the medium of this LOOK OUT NOTICE, it is informed to all the Police Establishments/General Public that any information related to the missing lady may be communicated on following contacts:-  
1. PCR Samba - 01923-246333, 9541649001  
2. SSP Samba's email ID: ssp@samba@jkpolice.gov.in  
3. SHO P/S Bari Brahmna - 94191-38824  
The description roll along with photograph of missing lady is as under:-  
Name: Radha Devi  
Father Name: Jagan Nath  
Address: Ward No. 09, Doollian, Bari, Brahmna  
Age: 21 years  
Height: 4'-9" feet (approx)  
Complexion: Wheatish  
Face: Oval  
Hair: Black  
Built: Slim  
Clothes: Salwar Kamiz Colour Green Light.  
No. CB/Look/2024/ Dated: 03.2024  
Sd/-  
Sr. Superintendent of Police Samba  
DIP-J-16210-23

# Fresh details offer peek at donor details of 11 parties

Sreedev Krishnakumar

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: New data uploaded by the Election Commission (EC) on Sunday revealed donor details for at least some of the parties, something that was missing in the data released on March 14.

Donor details have been made available for 11 parties. Of these, eight have submitted data pertaining to the period before April 12, 2019, and three parties — Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), Janata Dal (Secular) or JD(S) and Maharashtra Gomantak Party (MGP) — have submitted data till September 30, 2023. The newly submitted data connects some of the biggest electoral bond donors to their recipients.

Among the three parties that have revealed donors up to September 2023, the DMK is the biggest recipient with bond donations of ₹662.5 crore, followed by the JD(S) (₹89.8 crore) and the MGP (₹55 lakh).

The two biggest donors for the DMK during this period contributed over 90% of the party's bond receipts. They were Future Gaming and Hotel Services Pvt Ltd, which donated 77% (₹509 crore) of the party's bond receipts, and Megha Engineering & Infrastructure Limited, which donated 16% (₹105 crore).

Similarly, JD(S) received around 80% of its ₹89.8 crore bond donations from just two companies: Megha Engineering & Infrastructure Limited and the Embassy Group of Companies. The former donated 56% of the JD(S)'s bond receipts (₹50 crore) and the latter 24.5% (₹22 crore).

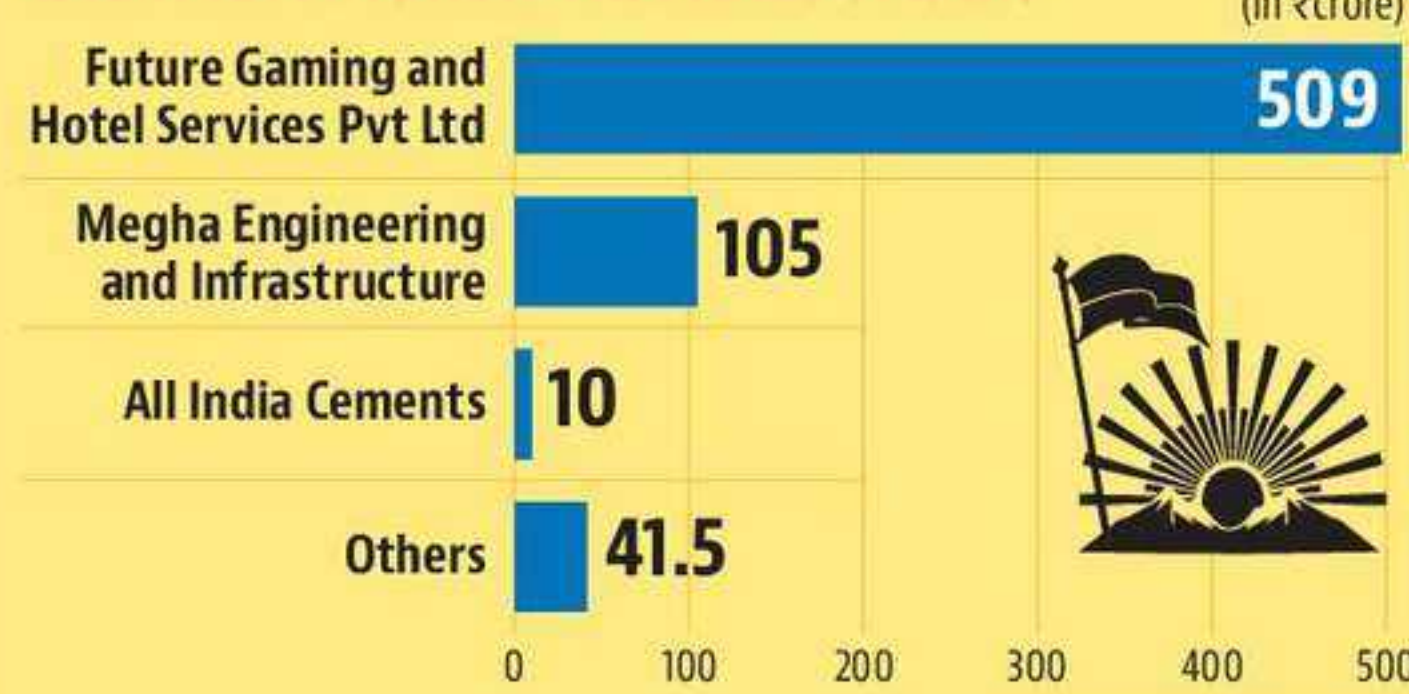
The MGP received bond donations from just two companies: ₹35 lakh from VM Salgaocar & Brother Pvt Ltd and ₹20 lakh from VS Dempo & Company Pvt Ltd.

The top three recipients for the period up to April 12, 2019 for whom donor details have been made available are the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Janata Dal (United), and Samajwadi Party. They have revealed donors for ₹37.75 crore, ₹13 crore and ₹10.84 crore, respectively.

The top three donors for the NCP were Bajaj Finserv, Atula Chordia, owner of the Panchshil Group, and Infina Infrastructure. They donated ₹7.5 crore, ₹5 crore and ₹5 crore, respectively.

## Donor details in latest data tranche

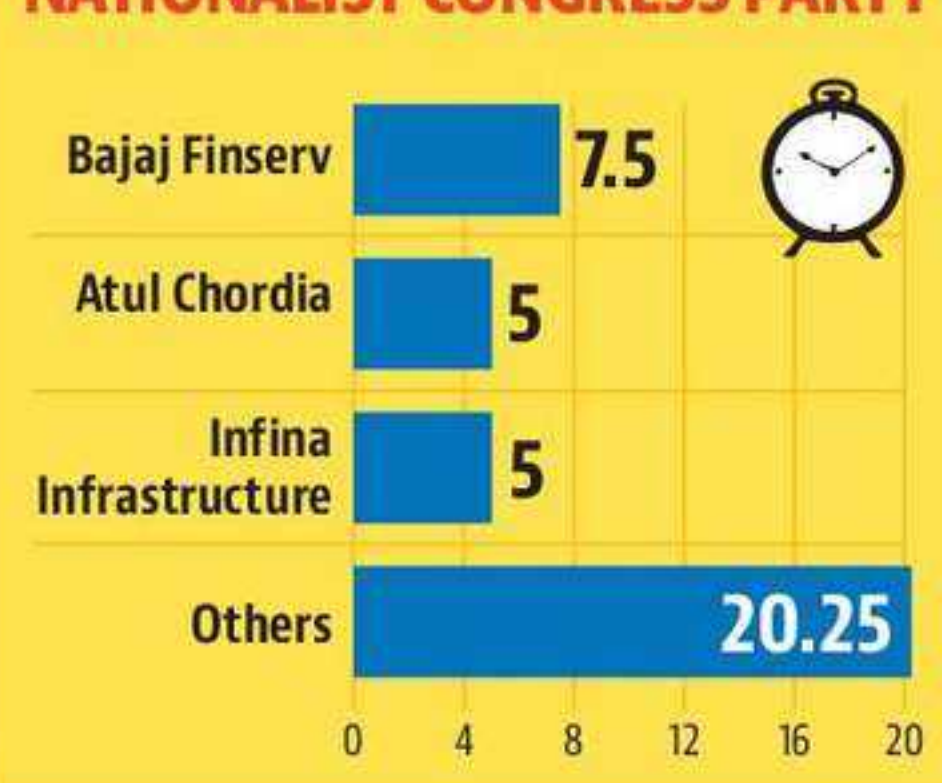
### DRAVIDA MUNNETRA KAZHAGAM



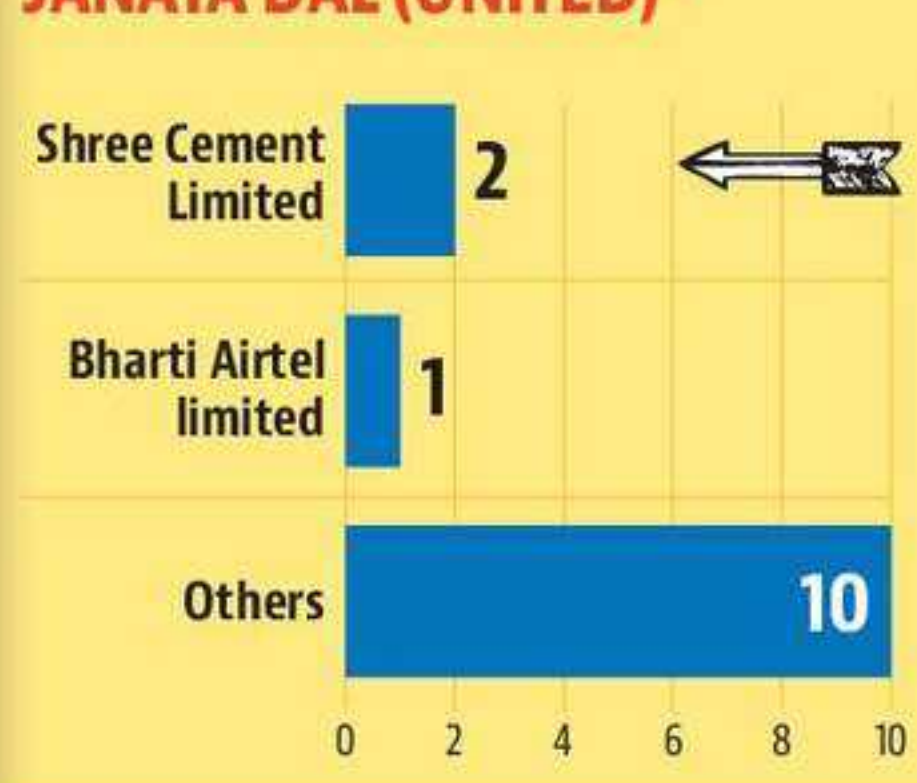
### JANATA DAL (SECULAR)



### NATIONALIST CONGRESS PARTY\*



### JANATA DAL (UNITED)\*



### SAMAJWADI PARTY\*



and ₹5 crore, respectively, of the total ₹37.75 crore for which the party has revealed donors.

The top donors for the Janata Dal (United) included Shree Cement, which donated ₹2 crore, and Bharti Airtel, which donated ₹1 crore. Another ₹10 crore were donated by donors whose identity has not been made available.

The top donors for the Samajwadi Party were San Beverages, which donated ₹30 lakh, and AK Traders and KS Traders which donated ₹10 lakh each.

The data released on Sunday also allows one to track the fraction of companies' total bond donations that went to parties who have revealed their bond donors.

For example, Future Gaming and Hotel Services Private Limited, owned by lottery magnate Santiago Martin, purchased electoral bonds worth ₹1,368 crore from April 12, 2019 to January 11, 2024. It was the biggest purchaser in this period. At least ₹509 crore (37%) of this went to the DMK, which has revealed receipts of donations from April 15, 2019 to September 30, 2023,

but not for the period after. The company appears in the list of the DMK's donors in every fiscal year since 2020-21. The DMK came into power in Tamil Nadu in May 2021.

Meanwhile, the second-biggest purchaser of electoral bonds was an IPL Franchise. The Chennai Super Kings, owned by India Cements, donated ₹5 crore to the AIADMK. Meanwhile, the DMK received ₹10 crore from India Cements.

The list of donors even includes an IPL Franchise. The Chennai Super Kings, owned by India Cements, donated ₹5 crore to the AIADMK. Meanwhile, the DMK received ₹10 crore from India Cements.

To be sure, the data here only includes parties that revealed their donor details for electoral bonds. Most political parties claimed they had no access to information about their donors. Some also refused to share information citing their donors' wish to remain anonymous.

## Not aware who donated ₹10 crore, JD(U) tells EC

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Janata Dal (United) or JD(U) told the Election Commission that it was not aware of the identity of the donor or donors that gave electoral bonds worth ₹10 crore to the party, saying that "somebody" handed over a sealed envelope with 10 bonds of ₹1 crore each at its Patna office in April 2019, which it encashed within days.

The poll panel on Sunday made public the sealed disclosures made by political parties about the electoral bonds redeemed by them between March 2018 and November 2023. In its reply submitted on May 30, 2019, the Nitish Kumar-led party said that it received donations worth Rs 13 crore through electoral bonds. It, how-

ever, added that it did not have the details of the donor or donors that gave bonds totalling ₹10 crore.

"Somebody came to our office on 03-04-2019 at Patna and handed over a sealed envelope and when it was opened we found a bunch containing 10 Electoral Bonds of Rupees One Crore each. Accordingly as per Gazette Notification of the Govt of India we opened an account in SBI Main Branch, Patna and deposited it which was credited to our party account on 10 04 2019. In this view of the situation we are unable to provide any more detail about the Donors," the JD(U) said in its disclosure.

The JD(U) added that it received the remaining ₹3 crore in three bonds, two ₹1 crore bonds from Ajmer-based Shree Cement Limited, and one ₹1 crore bond from Bharti Airtel.

## BETWEEN MAR 2018 AND JAN 2024, BJP REDEEMED 50% OF BOND DONATIONS, REVEALS EC DATA

Abhishek Jha and Aditi Agrawal

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Electoral bonds worth ₹16,492 crore were redeemed in the thirty phases of their sale between March 1, 2018 and January 11, 2024 and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) redeemed 50% of them at ₹8,252 crore, according to data published by the Election Commission of India on March 14 and 17.

The Congress accounted for 11.8% (₹1,952 crore) while the All India Trinamool Congress (TMC) accounted for 10.4% (₹1,708 crore). The year the scheme was launched (FY18), only three parties got electoral bond donations: the BJP (95%), Congress (2.3%) and JD(S) (2.7%). The BJP thus received the biggest fillip ahead of the 2019 general elections.

The Lok Sabha elections were announced on March 10, 2019 and were held in seven phases from April 11 to May 19. Until May 10, electoral bonds had been sold in 10 tranches across 110 days. Parties redeemed bonds purchased in the last tranche before the elections ended up to May 22 because bonds could be redeemed 15 days from the date of issue. From the inception of the scheme up to May 22, 2019, the total value of bonds redeemed by parties was ₹5,831 crore. The BJP benefited the most ahead of the 2019 polls as it redeemed 68% (₹3,963 crore) of all bonds redeemed. The Congress redeemed 12% (₹698 crore), and the TMC 2.6% (₹150 crore).

Between FY18 and FY20, the TMC encashed less money through electoral bonds than the Congress but every year since then until FY23, the TMC encashed double or more than double the electoral bonds that the Congress did. The TMC ceased to be a national party in April 2023 but it still accounted for 13.6% (₹612 crore) of all bonds redeemed in FY24 while the BJP and the Congress accounted for 37.4% (₹1,686 crore) and 18.4% (₹828 crore), respectively.

THE BJP BENEFITED THE MOST AHEAD OF THE 2019 POLLS AS IT REDEEMED 68% OF ALL THE BONDS REDEEMED

## { MAHADEV APP CASE }

# Ex-CM Baghel rejects FIR against him as 'politically motivated'

Ritesh Mishra

letters@hindustantimes.com

RAIPUR: Former Chhattisgarh chief minister and senior Congress leader Bhupesh Baghel on Sunday said the case filed against him in the Mahadev Online Book app scam was politically motivated and done at the behest of the BJP ahead of the Lok Sabha elections.

HT reported on Sunday that the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the state police filed a case against Baghel under various sections pertaining to cheating, criminal conspiracy, breach of trust, and forgery under the Indian Penal Code (IPC), and Sections 7 and 11 of the Prevention of Corruption Act in connection with the alleged ₹6,000 crore scam.

"The FIR against me was lodged on March 4 by EOW then why was it not published on the EOW website till now? My name was later added under pressure. This means the BJP fears losing Rajnandgaon and Chhattisgarh seats [in the Lok Sabha polls] because they know my candidature will have an impact across the state," Baghel, who is set to contest the Lok Sabha polls from Rajnandgaon, said.

Those named along with Baghel in the FIR include Mahadev promoters Sourabh Chandrakar and Ravi Uppal. 16 other named accused persons, and "unnamed" bureaucrats, police officers, and officers on special duty (OSDs) during his tenure as the CM, HT reported on Sunday.

"In the FIR, my name was mentioned as an accused in sixth place. The content of the FIR, in which the names of the promoters of the app have been mentioned, does not have my name. The FIR is politically motivated, I was deliberately implicated under pressure. It was done due to political vendetta," the former CM said.

The BJP dismissed Baghel's allegation, saying that the investigation agencies were working independently.

"There is nothing political in the case titled against Baghel. We all know that the accused of Mahadev betting app case has also released a video naming Baghel... He could have named



MARCH 17: HT reported on Sunday that the EOW of the state police filed a case against Bhupesh Baghel

anyone. The investigation agencies are doing their job," said BJP spokesperson Sachinand Upsane.

People familiar with the development earlier told HT that the case against Baghel was filed after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) sent two references to the state police, on January 8 and 30 this year, based on its findings that allegedly reveal the involvement of state government functionaries at the top level for allowing illegal activities of those running the betting app in lieu of alleged "protection money".

Baghel rejected the charge and said that during his tenure as the CM, the state police took strict action against the accused as they registered 72 FIRs in connection with the case and arrested around 450 people.

So far, the ED has filed two charge sheets in the case, including one against Chandrakar and Uppal. The ED has alleged in its charge sheet that Chandrakar got married at Ras Al Khaimah, UAE, in February 2023 and about ₹200 crore in cash was spent for this event and private jets were hired to ferry his relatives from India to the UAE and celebrities were paid to perform at the wedding.

The projected proceeds of crime in the case are about ₹6,000 crore. So far, assets worth ₹572.41 crore have been seized or frozen by the ED in this case.



Sajjan Jindal  
RAPE CASE AGAINST SAJJAN JINDAL IS FALSE, SAY COPS, FILE A CLOSURE REPORT

Megha Sood

letters@hindustantimes.com

MUMBAI: The Mumbai Police have filed a closure report in the rape case against Sajjan Jindal, the managing director of the JSW Group, and concluded that the complainant attempted to frame him.

According to the complaint filed by the woman, an actor, she first met Jindal in October 2021 in Dubai and they remained in touch. The actor alleged that Jindal forced himself on her at the company's head office in the Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC) in January 2022, when she had gone there for a meeting.

On December 13 last year, based on the woman's complaint, the police registered an FIR against Jindal under sections 376 (rape), 354 (outraging modesty of a woman) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code. Jindal, however, dismissed the allegations as "false and baseless".

On Saturday, the police dismissed the case as "false". In its closure report filed at the Bandra Metropolitan Magistrate Court on Saturday, the police said that though the complainant had promised to present evidence of Jindal's culpability in the court herself, she had failed to do so.

The complainant also did not appear to record her statement under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, despite repeated reminders, the report said.

Citing testimonies collected from witnesses present at the alleged scene of crime and from the evidence obtained during their investigation, the police concluded that there "was no wrongdoing with the woman", and Jindal was not even present at the place that day.

{ RAJNATH SINGH } DEFENCE MINISTER

I congratulate the Indian Navy and brave crew onboard the ships and aircraft, including MARCOs, for their decisive & determined actions.

—after navy rescues ship hijacked by Somali pirates

## Influencers may soon be booked for gambling ads

Zia Haq

ziahq@htlive.com

NEW DELHI: Social media influencers could face action for endorsing online gambling amid growing instances, the country's consumer protection watchdog has stated in an advisory to online platforms and advertising intermediaries, people familiar with the matter said.

The statutory Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has told self-regulatory bodies and advertising intermediaries that "increasing instances" of direct and surrogate endorsements of betting and gambling, both banned under Public Gambling Act of 1867, had come to its notice.

The watchdog has mounted a watch and endusers could face stringent action, including fine and prosecutions, an official said, declining to be named.

The authority has asked online advertisement intermediaries not to target Indian audiences with betting ads. "Advertisement of online betting platforms and apps promotes an activity that is predominantly banned and carries significant financial and socio-economic implications on consumers, particularly the youth," the advisory stated.

Social media influencers and celebrities found to be endorsing gambling online will be

THE CCPA HAS ASKED ONLINE ADVERTISING INTERMEDIARIES NOT TO TARGET INDIAN AUDIENCES WITH BETTING ADS

"equally liable" under various provisions and rules under the Consumer Protection Act 2019, according to the advisory.

The advisory has asked these platforms and influencers to immediately refrain from showing such advertisements or promotional content in any form whatsoever, failing with the government would be constrained to take action under various statutes, an official of the consumer affairs ministry said.

"The law on online gaming is not uniform across the country, but online gambling is prohibited in majority of the states," said Ashok Paul, a lawyer specialising in cyber laws. Sikkim regulated and licensed all forms of online gaming and betting through legislation in 2008.

Telangana government had banned all forms of online games played for stakes with the Gaming Act of 2017. Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, too, have banned all online games played for stakes.

## Hosabale re-elected as RSS gen secretary for 3 more yrs

Pradip Kumar Maitra

letters@hindustantimes.com

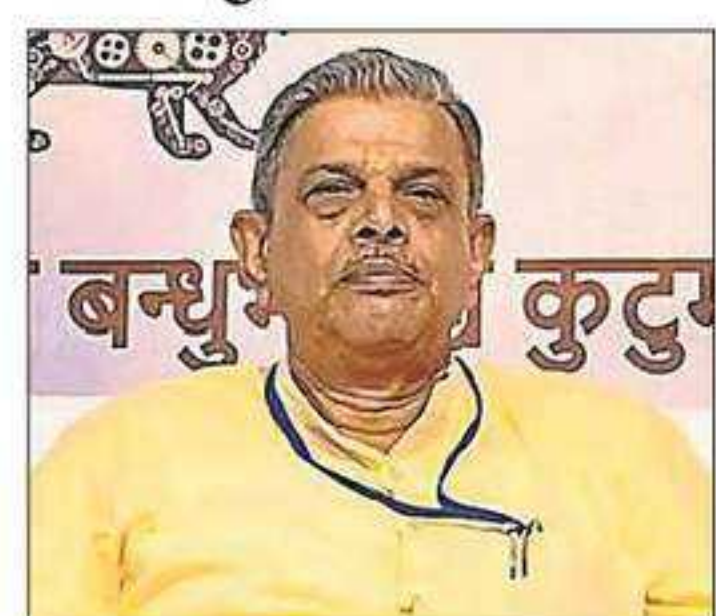
NAGPUR: Dattatreya Hosabale was on Sunday re-elected as the sarkaryavah (general secretary) of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) until 2027. Hosabale has held this position since 2021, when he succeeded Suresh 'Bhaiyyaji' Joshi.

The decision was taken during the RSS's three-day Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha — the highest decision-making body of the Sangh Parivar — in Nagpur.

"The RSS Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha (ABPS) re-elected (2024-2027) Shri Dattatreya Hosabaleji for the post of Sarkaryavah. He has been discharging the responsibility of Sarkaryavah since 2021," the RSS said in a post on X.

In the Sangh, the general secretary is the deputy to the chief or the sarsanghchalak (RSS chief), which is currently held by Mohan Bhagwat, but is largely seen as a key figure in decision making and every day running of the organisation.

Addressing a press conference, Hosabale said: "Sangh is getting into the hearts of the people and the impact of the Sangh is also increasing in the society. The way people welcomed us across the



Dattatreya Hosabale

country during the 'Akshat Vitaran' before the Pran Pratishtha of Ram Lalla shows the environment of the country."

According to people aware of the matter, Hosabale's skills as a planner and an organisational leader, displayed during his stint with the RSS's students wing — Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad.

"Under Hosabale's leadership, the RSS has prioritised fostering unity and equality within society, advocating for initiatives like 'one temple, one well, and one cremation ground' in every village to promote social cohesion. His emphasis on soft Hindutva and engagement with diverse stakeholders, including industrialists and public figures, underscores his vision for a harmonious and inclusive society," said a functionary, requesting anonymity.

## 2 BRS MPs, MLA join Congress in Telangana

Srinivasa Rao Apparasu

letters@hindustantimes.com

HYDERABAD: The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) suffered a massive jolt on Sunday when two of its MPs — Pasunuri Dayakar from Warangal and G Ranjith Reddy from Chevella — and Khairatabad MLA DNagender resigned in a span of a few hours and joined the ruling Congress in Telangana.

Earlier, three other sitting Lok Sabha MPs had quit the BRS — Venkatesh Netha from Peddapalli, Potuganti Ramulu from Nagarkurnool and B B Patil from Zaheerabad. While Netha joined the Congress party, Ramulu and Patil joined the Bharatiya Janata Party.

In his resignation letter addressed to BRS president and former chief minister K Chandrababhan Reddy, Ranjith Reddy said: "Unfortunately, due to the current political circumstances in the state of Telangana, I have come to the difficult decision to pursue an alternative path. It is with a heavy heart that I hereby submit my resignation from the BRS Party and relinquish my membership."

Nagender, meanwhile, did not submit any resignation letter to the party. But, he, along with Reddy, went to the residence of PCC president and chief minister A Revanth Reddy and joined the Congress.

## Cabinet sends poll dates to Prez for notification

HT Correspondent

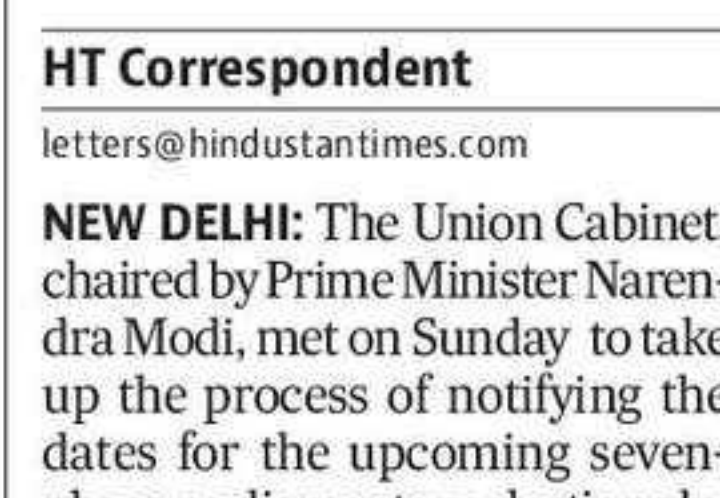
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, met on Sunday to take up the process of notifying the dates for the upcoming seven-phase parliamentary elections by sending the Election Commission's recommendations to President Droupadi Murmu for her approval, as required by the law.

On Saturday, the Election Commission had announced the dates for what will be arguably the world's largest election, beginning April 19, with nearly a billion people eligible to vote. Polling will go on in various phases till June 1 and votes counted on June 4.

"We address you at a precious moment, when we as a nation are set to reiterate our pledge to electoral democracy, when Indians will together express their will once again," Rajiv Kumar, who heads the Election Commission, had told reporters announcing the poll schedule.

The Cabinet meeting, the last one during the current term of the National Democratic Alliance government, took up a proposal by the Union law ministry to notify the polls to elect the 18th Lok Sabha (lower house). The notification and president's approval of the poll schedule will



President Droupadi Murmu's approval of the poll schedule will set the ball rolling for the general elections.

set the ball rolling for the general elections in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who leads the National Democratic Alliance, will seek a third straight term.

The first notification is likely to be issued on March 20 for the first phase of polls on April 19 for 102 seats. Once a poll date is notified, the process of filing nomination by candidates can begin.

According to a person familiar with the developments, no agenda or papers were circulated ahead of the brief meeting, where the Union law secretary was present. The Cabinet recommended to the President that notifications for the different phases of polls be issued, the person said.

According to rules, the Election Commission sends its recommendations to notify the Lok Sabha elections to the Union law ministry.

## 2 years after Moosewala's death, his parents welcome a baby boy

Pardeep Singh Mahal

letters@hindustantimes.com



Sidhu Moosewala's father Balkaur Singh with his newly born son, on Sunday.

FARIDKOT: Sidhu Moosewala's parents, Balkaur Singh and Charan Kaur, welcomed a baby boy on Sunday, nearly two years after the singer was killed in Punjab.

In a post shared on Facebook, Moosewala's father Balkaur Singh said: "With the blessings of millions of souls who love Shubdeep, the Almighty has put Shubh's younger brother in our bag. With the blessings of Waheguru, the family is healthy and thankful to all the well-wishers for their immense love."

Singer and politician Shubdeep Singh Sidhu, better known as Sidhu Moosewala, was the only son of the couple. He was gunned down near his native village on May 29, 2022, in a crime that sent shockwaves through the state and prompted the government to announce a crackdown on gangsters who were held responsible for the sensational crime. The assailants fired over 30 rounds at him, and he was found slumped in the driver's seat by locals. He was 28 at that time.

It was in the same year that he had contested the Punjab assembly elections on a Congress ticket from Mansa but lost.

# INDIA launches joint attack on BJP in Mumbai solidarity show

Faisal Malik  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**MUMBAI:** A day after the Election Commission of India announced the schedule for the world's largest democratic exercise, the Lok Sabha elections, the opposition alliance launched its joint campaign from Mumbai's iconic Shivaji Park that saw the attendance of several senior leaders and a thousands-strong crowd.

On a day the Congress leader Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra culminated in Mumbai after 63 days, opposition parties used the rally to display a show of strength and counter allegations of cracks appearing in the Indian National Development Inclusive Alliance (INDIA).

Taking to the dais, Rahul Gandhi said the opposition is not fighting against the Bharatiya Janata Party or Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but against the system they have created.

"People believe that we are against a political party or fighting against Narendra Modi. It is not true. They have created a face in Modi's name," he said, as he attacked Modi over corruption, electoral bonds, crony capitalism and alleged manipulation of electronic voting machines (EVM).

The former Congress president alleged that PM Modi had a "monopoly over corruption". "Electoral bonds are nothing but national level extortion. They used to run it in four ways by taking percentage from companies for allotting contracts, by issuing threats with the help of ED, CBI, taking cut through shell companies and taking money after giving contracts," Gandhi said.

The Congress leader urged the people to stand up against the Modi government. "You all have to stand up. You are Bharat Mata".



(From left) National Conference chief Farooq Abdullah, Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray, Tamil Nadu CM and DMK chief MK Stalin, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar and other Opposition leaders during a rally in Mumbai on Sunday.

It is our responsibility as well," he said. "I am ready to do whatever you want me to do, I will come wherever you want."

The other leaders in attendance were Tamil Nadu chief minister MK Stalin (DMK), Jharkhand CM Champai Soren (JMM), former Bihar deputy chief minister Tejashwi Yadav (RJD), former Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray (Shiv Sena UBT), NCP (SP) president Sharad Pawar, AAP leader Saurabh Bhardwaj, CPI general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya, National Conference president Farooq Abdullah, PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti, Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi chief Prakash Ambedkar and former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren's wife Kalpana Soren.

The entire top brass of the Congress, including party chief Mallikarjun Kharge, was also present at the rally. Speaking at the rally, Kharge used the BJP's poll slogan "Modi ki guarantee" to highlight that the ruling BJP wants the country to be run by corporates. "Modi's guarantee is for the rich, while the opposition grouping's guarantee is for the common man. I must tell Sharad Pawar and Uddhav Thackeray that those who left them shouldn't be taken back," he said.

Kharge asked people to vote in large numbers and cast their ballot cautiously, saying that "another term for Modi will mean the upcoming polls will be the last elections in the country". Mahatma Gandhi gave the "Quit India" call from Mumbai

and INDIA leaders should vow here to oust BJP from power, said NCP founder Sharad Pawar in his address. "BJP has never fulfilled the assurances given to the people. Those who don't honour commitments should be thrown out of power. Modi Guarantee has no security," he said.

Former Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, who heads the Shiv Sena (UBT) said, "When people unite, dictatorship ends. A country shouldn't be known after an individual. But now instead of Bharat Sarkar, it is being called Modi Sarkar." Speaking at the rally, Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejashwi Yadav said governments are being toppled with the help of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

"Our fight is against the ideology of hate, not personally against PM Modi or (Union Home Minister) Amit Shah," said the former Bihar deputy chief minister.

Tamil Nadu CM Stalin described the electoral bonds as "white collar corruption" of the ruling BJP and said their alliance would form a secular, federal and inclusive government at the Centre. In a post on X, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav also extended support to the bloc's members. "...We announce from here that all of us who want the unity and progress of the country...will defeat the BJP in a historic way," he said.

With inputs from Saurabha Kulshrestha

# Delicacies of India: One state at a time

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**NEW DELHI:** Zac O'Yeah is a Swedish novelist, rock musician, and author of the Majestic Trilogy — a trio of detective stories set in his adopted home of Bengaluru. And if that were not enough, he's also the author of the brand-new book, The Great Indian Food Trip: Around a Subcontinent à la Carte.

O'Yeah was the featured guest on last week's episode of Grand Tamasha, a weekly podcast co-produced by HT and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. In the book, O'Yeah catalogues his travels crisscrossing India on a gluttonous search for the best food and drink — from the goat's brain of Mumbai's Irani cafes to the signature masala dosas of Mysore. The book offers readers a mouth-watering, whirlwind tour of Indian cuisine.

One unusual delicacy O'Yeah dwells on in the book is pickled mussels from coastal Kerala. "I managed to somehow find them in the palm jungle just outside of Thalassery in a factory where they were pickling mussels," he

**IN THE LATEST EPISODE OF GRAND TAMASHA, THE GUEST RECOUNTS VARIOUS DISHES WHILE WANDERING THE PARTS OF INDIA**

recounted. "They sell them in these nice jars that say something like 'super-hot', as a warning to customers. Understandably, you don't get them in many shops. If you try it, it is super-hot — and basically your hair flies off."

O'Yeah also spoke about the simple pleasure of dining at Koshy's, the beloved Bengaluru café, and the surprising "pizza-lovers' paradise" that is Pudukkottai.

He also recounted his boozy night drinking caju, a spirit distilled from cashew fruit, in Goa with celebrated writers Orhan Pamuk and Amitav Ghosh.

Grand Tamasha host Milan Vaishnav ended the episode by asking O'Yeah to name five Indian dishes he would need to survive if he were ever stranded



GRAND TAMASHA

on a desert island. "If there is one dish one can never get tired of, that is dal-roti. When you walk in the Himalayas and you get hungry and tired at the end of the day, there's nothing like dal-roti. It's fabulous comfort food and it's also rich in protein," he explained.

Next on the list are vada sambar and curd rice, which the author calls soothing and comforting.

"I always think of what RK Narayan, the Indian novelist, used to say: 'the most beautiful sound in the world is when the curd drips on the rice,'" remarked O'Yeah.

Rounding out the list are thick, Punjabi-style lassi and kebabs. When pressed to name his favourite kebabs, O'Yeah referenced his adopted hometown of Bengaluru. "There's a fellow who stands in the slaughterhouse area...on a corner and cooks these amazing kalmi kebabs. They're the best kebabs east of Istanbul, and he sells them for ₹80 for two skewers."



Scan the QR for listening to the latest episode of Grand Tamasha

## 65k paramilitary personnel to be sent to Bengal for LS polls

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**NEW DELHI:** The Centre will send nearly 65,000 personnel from paramilitary forces to West Bengal for security arrangements during the Lok Sabha elections, making it the largest deployment among all states after Jammu and Kashmir, officials aware of the matter said.

As part of the deployment during the first and second phase of polling on April 19 and 26, around 30,000 personnel from three paramilitary forces have already reached the state to prevent violence. Polling in West Bengal for the 42 seats will be held across all seven phases.

"The deployment from the third phase will be random and increased because of the areas that are hypersensitive and have a history of violence during the elections," an official said, requesting anonymity.

"Personnel from the BSF (Border Security Force), CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force) and SSB (Sashastra Seema Bal) have already reached the state."

Polling in constituencies like Murshidabad, which has reported violence in the past, will be held in third phase on May 7, while elections for the Basirhat constituency, which includes violence-hit Sandeshkhali, is scheduled on June 1, the



Polling in West Bengal for the 42 seats will be held across all seven phases starting from April 19.

last phase which includes areas under the North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas districts, which has reported poll violence in recent years.

Tight security in West Bengal is also required because of its location as a state that shares its boundaries with three countries, Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan, a second official said, declining to be named.

The Election Commission on Saturday said new check points will be set up by the forces near the international border and drones will be used near border areas to curb smuggling of articles that could be used in the elections.

The poll overseer did not share data of the total security personnel to be inducted for

election duty, but said the number would be adequate.

Apart from West Bengal, Jammu and Kashmir will have around 50,000 people from paramilitary forces deployed to ensure elections are free of violence.

"Places like Jammu and Kashmir already have CAPFs (central armed police forces). Additional forces will be sent to meet the requirement. The pattern will be like Chhattisgarh and Manipur," the second official said. "Chhattisgarh being a Naxal affected state already has around 200 companies. They will now be attached for polling duty. An additional 30-40 companies will help them. Similarly, in Manipur, there are over 150 companies already in the state."

## 27-yr-old Karnataka man burnt alive over relationship; 8 booked

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**BENGALURU:** A 27-year-old man has died after he was allegedly set afire by the relatives of a woman he was in a relationship with, in Shivamogga district of Karnataka, police said on Sunday, adding that eight people have been booked in the case.

Police said the incident took place at Togarsi in Shikaripura taluk on Friday night, and the deceased has been identified as Veeresh Kumar, a resident of Gadikoppa and who was a cab driver.

According to the complaint lodged by Veeresh's mother Madavi, her son was in a relationship with his distant relative Ankita (20) for the last five years, but the couple faced opposition from Ankita's family members.

"Ankita and Veeresh, who belonged to the same caste, decided to take their relationship forward despite family opposition, hoping their families would agree once they are married," police said, quoting from the complaint.

"On Thursday, Ankita's brother Tharvesh and his accomplices visited Veeresh's residence in Gadikoppa, and asked him to delete all photos and videos of

the couple from his mobile phone, citing potential dishonour," the complaint said. "Later that evening, Veeresh received a call from Ankita's family, asking him to urgently reach their house in Togarsi due to an emergency. However, when Veeresh reached Togarsi, he was abducted, restrained, and burned alive inside his Innova car," it added.

On Friday, as Veeresh failed to return home, Madavi filed a missing persons complaint. Veeresh's charred body was later found inside a burnt car near Togarsi area, on Saturday morning, following which the Shivalakoppa police lodged a complaint against eight people, including Praveen. "We have booked eight people under sections 504 (insult) 506 (criminal intimidation), 302 (murder), and 201 (cause of disappearance of evidence of an offence) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)," inspector N Ramesh said.

COUPLE FACED OPPOSITION FROM WOMAN'S FAMILY AS THEY WERE DISTANT RELATIVES: COPS



K Ponmudi

## TN GUV REFUSES TO SWEAR IN MLA PONMUDI AS MIN

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**CHENNAI:** Tamil Nadu governor RN Ravi on Sunday refused to swear in K Ponmudi as minister in MK Stalin-led Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) cabinet, an official aware of the matter said on Sunday.

The Raj Bhavan has not released an official statement on the matter as of now.

"The governor has sent a letter that he cannot administer the oath of office to him (Ponmudi) to be minister since his conviction has only been stayed," a senior government officer aware of the matter said.

The official said that further course of action will be decided in the coming days.

On March 13, Tamil Nadu reinstated Ponmudi as an MLA, following the Supreme Court's order on March 11, suspending his conviction and four-year jail sentence in a disproportionate assets (DA) case.

The Madras high court had found him guilty in December last year which had led to his immediate disqualification as a legislator and a minister.

Ponmudi was elected from the Tirukkoyilur assembly constituency and served as the higher education minister before conviction.

Last week, the assembly secretary had notified Tirukkoyilur constituency as vacant and forwarded it to the Election Commission. But Ponmudi received relief from the top court and the order copy was released last Wednesday.

## Elections 2024: A push towards greener polls

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**NEW DELHI:** Now that the election dates have been announced, one might ask, how is it possible to add the green factor into the elections? General election after general election, the election commission has been issuing guidelines to make elections greener. Reducing the election footprint is vague and hard.

It is inevitable that many candidates will travel by air. Moreover, using any material at this scale, also has a large footprint. So what can be done? To cut down on election emissions, the greatest push must come not from the election commission, but from voters.

They must demand that their candidates should transparently share their greener campaign efforts. It also demonstrates how they prioritise the environment. As people who will face the brunt of climate

**THE ELECTION COMMISSION HAS BEEN ISSUING GUIDELINES TO REDUCE THE ELECTION FOOTPRINT AND MAKE IT GREENER**

crisis and who will spend money on its impacts ranging from heat, lack of water, health and floods, the voter should engage with candidates for common good. Yet, this is also difficult at this late stage. It is hard to change several value chains.

All of these require deep think policy incentives and innovation. I believe that the 2024 elections can be a launch pad for the world's greenest elections in 2029.

(The writer is the founder and director of Chintan Environmental Research and Action Group)

## SMUGGLER SHOT DEAD BY BSF IN TRIPURA: OFFICIAL

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**AGARTALA:** An alleged Bangladeshi smuggler was killed during a clash with the Border Security Force (BSF) in Unakoti district of Tripura on Sunday, an official said.

BSF troops were on duty near the border outpost of Magroli in Kailashahar when they observed a group of 15-20 men approaching the border fence from the Indian side carrying suspicious articles, the official added.

Despite warnings by the BSF jawans to stop, they did not stop, became aggressive, and surrounded the BSF personnel on duty. "In response to the imminent danger to life, one BSF jawan opened fire killing one of the smugglers," the official added.

Angered by the incident, the other smugglers attacked the BSF jawan, but other personnel arrived at the scene and opened fire again, forcing the attackers to flee. The deceased has been identified as Saddam Hussein (23) from Dastaki village in Bangladesh's Moulvibazar district.

## India's food regulator looks to train tea planters to help reduce pesticide levels

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**NEW DELHI:** Tea planters in the country are being sensitized and trained to reduce pesticide levels in tea, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) said in a statement after conducting such a workshop in Coonoor district of Tamil Nadu.

A session was held on Friday to ensure safe and hygienic production of tea and strengthen awareness on the basics of integrated pest management and good agricultural practices for tea, the food standards watchdog said. "It was supported by the Tea Board and Confederation of Indian Industry Food and Agriculture Centre of Excellence," it said.

There have been reports in the past when both international and domestic buyers rejected consignments due to excessive presence of pesticides and chemicals. The food regulator has been working on a plan to rectify this and training tea growers is a part of it.



A session took place in Tamil Nadu's Coonoor.

The training included information on maximum residue levels for pesticides and measures to keep the harmful chemical within that range.

"Wide ranging discussions were held which included insights into FSSAI notifications on Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs) for pesticides, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a recommended time gap between pesticide spraying and tea leaf plucking. During the session, the Small Tea Growers were sensitized about the significance of safe use of pesticides adhering to the FSSAI norms on MRLs," the statement said.

Last year, the national food regulator had issued directions

under section 16(5) of Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, regarding operationalisation of limits of pesticide use in tea. It focused on five pesticide that are being used by tea growers in the country, such as Emamectin Benzoate (MRL= 0.06 mg/kg), Fenpyroximate (MRL= 6.0 mg/kg), Hexaconazole (MRL= 5 mg/kg), Propiconazole (6.0 mg/kg), and Quinalphos (MRL= 0.7 mg/kg).

"Based on representation received and considering the fact that five pesticides are widely used for crop protection in tea plantations and that the MRL of these pesticides have been revised upwards on the basis of data... it has been decided to operationalise the MRL for tea with immediate effect," the regulator said in a notification issued last year. Based on manufacturing processes, tea can be broadly classified into three categories: black, oolong and green. Due to the environmental and climatic conditions in which tea is cultivated, plantations are prone to pests. The tea plant is attacked

by at least 1,000 species of phytophagous insects and mites, scientific studies have shown.

To manage this problem, planters have been resorting to use of high volumes of pesticides that cause the presence of higher than prescribed limits of pesticide residue in tea. Pesticides are harmful for human health and are known to cause allergies, aggravated asthma symptoms, and certain types of cancer.

To improve the quality of tea and increasing its safe and hygienic production, the food regulator along with industry partners plans to take forward a comprehensive capacity building initiative in various clusters across tea growing areas in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam and West Bengal.

India is the second largest tea producer (producing nearly 900,000 tonnes a year), with 20% of global tea produced in Darjeeling, the Nilgiris and Assam. Tea is the world's second highest consumed beverage with the highest consumption in China, India, Turkey and Pakistan.

## MARRIED WOMAN GANG-RAPED IN MP, ATTEMPTS SUICIDE

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**BETUL:** A 38-year-old married woman was gang-raped by two persons following which she consumed pesticide in Betul district of Madhya Pradesh, police said on Sunday.

The incident occurred in Bordhehi police station limits on Saturday and one of the two accused has been arrested, said sub divisional officer of police (SDOP) Shalini Paraste.

"The woman was coming home on Saturday evening from a farm plot when two persons, one of them known to her, offered to give her a lift on their scooter. The accused, however, took her to a deserted place and raped her," she said.

"Following the incident, she consumed pesticide and is admitted in Betul's district hospital. The police and tehsildar recorded the statements of the victim in the hospital and registered a zero FIR," the SDOP informed. The case will be forwarded to Bordhehi police station for further action, she added.

# IT ministry tests parental control app, progress to be reviewed today

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**NEW DELHI:** The ministry of electronics and information technology is testing an app called SafeNet, which will allow parents to set content filters for their children, access their live location, and keep a watch on their calls and messages, the progress of which will be reviewed on Monday.

At a November meeting convened by the department of telecommunications, an industry body recommended that mobile, computer and laptop manufacturers should preload this app. The progress will be reviewed in a meeting on March 18, according to the minutes of the November meeting that HT has seen.

The SafeNet app has been developed by the Centre for Internet Studies and Artificial Intelligence of the Kerala-based Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, with R&D support from MeitY.

"MEITY has developed an application named 'Safenet' for parental control for PC/tablets/mobile phones for use by parents which is under testing. All the participants were served with document of Safenet, provided by MEITY, to take their valuable comments immediately so that MEITY may launch (including uploading the App on Google Playstore [sic]) the App

**PARENTS CAN SET CONTENT FILTERS FOR THEIR KIDS, ACCESS THEIR LIVE LOCATION, AND KEEP A WATCH ON THEIR CALLS AND MESSAGES VIA THE SAFENET APP**

at the earliest," read the minutes of the meeting convened at Sanchar Bhawan on November 23, 2023. As per the minutes of the meeting, the Internet Service Providers Association of India suggested that the app should come pre-installed in mobile phones, laptops and personal computers. The industry body requested the ministry to "take appropriate action with respective manufacturers". Members of the association include Airtel, Vodafone Idea, Tata Communications, ACT Fibernet and Hathway, among others.

In the November meeting, telecom department officials told participants that the Prime Minister's office had directed to "incorporate parental controls in data usage" by July this year.

In the meeting, the department of school education was requested to issue instructions to all schools through their respective boards to raise awareness on

parental control filter solutions through display boards, parent teacher meetings, WhatsApp groups, and other communication tools.

At a previous meeting on this issue on August 29, it was decided that MeitY may "arrange to develop" an app for parental control. It was also decided that telecom and internet service providers would "provide details of configuration in mobile/computers with regard to parental control on their website through PPT/short videos, etc."

The SafeNet app allows parents to set up content filters for their children's phones, get detailed YouTube activity insights, manage how much time a child spends on each domain, and block "age-inappropriate" content, according to its website.

SafeNet has also set up three custom domain name servers (DNS) with a graded approach to filtering that can be implemented at network level in different institutions.

Through the "primary" DNS, recommended for schools, more than 70 million domains and more than 34 categories can be blocked. Through the "secondary" DNS, recommended for colleges and research organisations, more than 40 million domains and more than 21 categories can be blocked. The third

DNS, called "ternary" on the SafeNet website, allows everything except terrorism, nudity, and porn and blocks more than 4 million domains. HT has not tested these filters.

"Such apps, if widely available on all devices, without verification of legitimate parent-child relationships, can lead to incidences of intimate partner violence, so enough safeguards need to be built to avoid abuse of these tools," said Aparajita Bharti, founding partner of the Quantum Hub Consulting. She has worked extensively on protecting children online.

Apps meant for parental control are often used as stalkerware, which are used by abusers to monitor and track their victims without the victim's knowledge and consent.

"Countries around the world are exploring device level parental controls. However, there are competing concerns to be balanced such as overall safety and well being of children and privacy of children from their parents, excessive content censorship," Bharti said.

Before deploying such tools, it is important to address "unintended consequences" by engaging with child rights experts, educators, adolescents and civil society organisations who work with children in distress, she added.

## { BOILER BLAST IN REWARI }

# Contractor booked, Haryana CM orders magisterial probe

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**REWARI (HARYANA):** The police registered a case on Sunday in connection with the boiler explosion at an auto parts manufacturing unit in Rewari district of Haryana even as chief minister Nayab Singh Saini ordered a magisterial probe into the incident, said officials.

At least 40 workers suffered burn injuries during the incident that took place at the unit in

Dharuhera industrial area of Rewari on Saturday, said police.

According to the police, the contractor and others have been booked and the first information report was registered at Dharuhera police station on Sunday based on a complaint filed by Raj Kumar, a labourer from Gonda district of Uttar Pradesh.

Complainant Raj Kumar said that he was hired through a contractor by the name of Shivam.

"There had been blasts in the dust collector on two previous

occasions though no one had suffered any injury then. The incidents were brought to the notice of the factory's contractor and other officials concerned. But they remained negligent and no attention was paid," he said.

An FIR was registered against the contractor and others under the Indian Penal Code on Sunday, the police said. Meanwhile, an official said, "Haryana chief minister Nayab Singh Saini has ordered a probe under a subdivisional magistrate into the case".

## DATE FOR SIKKIM, ARUNACHAL POLL RESULTS CHANGED

**NEW DELHI:** The Election Commission on Sunday changed the date of counting of votes in the Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim assembly elections from June 4 to June 2.

The decision was taken because the term of the two assemblies is till June 2, which means elections have to be wrapped up on or before that date, said the EC secretary.

The date of counting of votes was changed from June 4 to June 2 and the date before which the election will be completed was changed from June 6 to June 2 as well. The two states go to polls on April 19. AGENCIES

## { FROM PAGE 1 }

### ELECTORAL BONDS

scheme would ensure the donors' identity remained hidden from the beneficiaries.

Of the parties that submitted details to the poll body between May and July 2019, to comply with the Supreme Court's interim order dated April 12, 2019, eight revealed names of their donors.

These were the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Janata Dal (Secular), Janata Dal (United), Samajwadi Party, Rashtriya Janata Dal, Sikkin Democratic Fund and All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK). The Congress's head office did not reveal names of donors but its Goa unit said it received ₹30 lakh from VM Salgaocar and Brother Pvt Ltd, a mining company, in April 2019.

In November 2023, while complying with the Supreme Court's order dated November 2, 2023, the number of such parties dwindled to six. The AIADMK, JD(S), and SDF gave details of donors again and the JD(S) was the only party to receive donations through bonds after its previous submission. Three other parties — Jammu & Kashmir National Conference, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and Maharashtra Gomantak Party — gave details of their donors in 2023 though they had not made any submissions in 2019.

Of the ₹656.5 crore that Tamil Nadu's ruling party DMK received between April 2019 and October 2023, ₹509 crore, or 77.5%, was donated by Future Gaming and Hotel Services Pvt Ltd, run by the Coimbatore-based Santiago Martin. Between April 12, 2019 and February 2024, the lottery firm bought bonds worth ₹1,368 crore, of which 37.2% was donated to the DMK.

In its submission to the poll body dated November 14, 2023, the DMK prefaced the details of the donors and wrote, "The Scheme also does not require the details of the donor to be furnished to the donee."

Under these circumstances the donors did not strictly adhere to the requirement of furnishing their details whenever they handed over the electoral bonds to us. Be that as it may, following the direction of Hon'ble Supreme Court, we contacted our donors and we were able to collect the details from them."

The MGP got bonds worth ₹35 lakh from VM Salgaocar and Brother, and another ₹20 lakh from VS Demppo and Company Pvt Ltd, another mining and steel company in January 2022. In 2009, Vedanta-controlled Sesa Goa bought Demppo's mining operations.

Between April 12, 2019 and February 15, 2024, VM Salgaocar and Brother bought bonds worth ₹1.5 crore while an associated company, VM Salgaocar Corporation Private Limited bought bonds worth ₹4.45 crore. In the same duration, the chairperson of the Demppo Group, Srinivas Vasudeva Demppo bought bonds worth ₹1.25 crore and three entities linked to Demppo — Demppo Industries Private Limited, Vasudeva Demppo Family Private Trust, and Demppo Private Limited Navhind Papers and Publications (which published The Navhind Times in Goa) — bought bonds worth ₹25 lakh.

Telangana-based Megha Engineering and Infrastructures Limited, which bought bonds worth ₹96 crore (without including bonds bought by its wholly owned subsidiaries) between April 12, 2019 and February 2024, of which it donated ₹105 crore or 10.9%. It also donated ₹50 crore to JD(S) in March 2019 and April 2023.

Most parties claimed in their submissions they had no information about the donors. Some others suggested they had the information but could not share it as their donors wished to remain anonymous.

In its submission dated May 27, 2019, the All India Trinamool Congress, while claiming that it did not have the details of its donors, wrote, "[M]ost of these bonds were sent to our office and dropped in the drop box or sent through messengers from various persons who wished to support our party, many of whom prefer to remain anonymous. Thus we are not in possession of the names and other details of the buyers."

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which has emerged as the biggest recipient of funds under the scheme and has accounted for the redemption of 50% of the value of all bonds redeemed, refused to give details of its donors in both the 2019 and 2023 submissions. In its July 6, 2019 submission, it said that under the Income Tax Act, 1961, political parties have been exempted from the need to maintain the details of donations received through electoral bonds. It reiterated, "It is

duly submitted that the Electoral Bonds were introduced with the aim of bringing only accounted for funds in political funding while protecting the donors from any consequences, therefrom."

To be sure, in a letter dated May 26, 2017, the then director of expenditure at the poll body, Vikram Batra had written to the secretary of the legislative department in the ministry of law and justice, expressing misgivings about the amendments to the IT Act through which the scheme was enabled.

"I am directed to draw your attention to the Finance Act, 2017, which has introduced certain amendments in the Income Tax Act, the Representation of the People Act 1951 and the Companies Act, 2013 and will have serious impact on Transparency aspect of political parties," he had written.

The new documents showed that in at least one case, an electoral trust donated to a political party. India's largest electoral trust, donated ten ₹10 lakh bonds for a total of ₹1 crore to the Rashtriya Janata Dal in April 2019.

Electoral trusts are mandated to report who contributes to them and which political parties the trust contributes to, but they do not specify which donor's donation was used as a contribution for which party. News agency Reuters recently identified 18 transactions between 2019 and 2022 in which eight corporate groups made large donations to the trust. Within days, Prudent issued cheques for the same amounts to the BJP.

The Goa Forward Party, in its May 2019 submission about electoral bonds, said it received a cheque of ₹50 lakh from Prudent Electoral Trust in its HDFC Bank account. To be sure, electoral bonds can be encashed by political parties only in their special accounts in the State Bank of India.

### MODI IN ANDHRA

At his first rally in the state ahead of the summer's general elections, the Prime Minister said that the Opposition's alliance was one formed out of necessity and, without naming anyone, alleged that the Congress and the state's ruling YSR Congress Party led by chief minister Jagan Mohan Reddy were being run by the same family.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led NDA takes everyone along, "but the Congress party's only agenda is to use and throw allies. Today, the Congress had to make the INDI alliance (INDIA bloc) out of necessity, but their mindset remains the same," the PM said at the "Praja Galam" (people's voice) rally at Boppudi village in Palnadu district of Andhra Pradesh.

There is no cohesion within the INDI bloc as partners fight with one another in different states, he said. "You can see what the Left and the Congress tell each other in Kerala. In Bengal, what the TMC (Trinamool Congress) and the Left say against each other and the kind of language Congress and AAP (Aam Aadmi Party) use against each other in Punjab. Before the elections those people, who for their own benefit fight this way then what will they do after the elections you can guess," he charged.

The PM is on a five-day trip across five states in southern

India — a region where the BJP hopes to make inroads to fulfil a target of 370 seats for itself and 400 for the NDA.

Modi's thrust in southern India comes at a time when the BJP hopes to hold on to its Lok Sabha stronghold in Karnataka, where it won 25 of 28 Lok Sabha seats in 2019, but also wants to expand its footprint in states where it has thus far had limited influence. In Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, which have a total of 101 parliamentary seats on offer, the BJP won four in 2019.

The NDA moves ahead keeping regional aspirations and national progress in mind, the PM said, and added that the country will witness many "big decisions" once the BJP-led alliance is voted for a third term in power.

The entire world is discussing the development brought about in the state under the NDA government in the last decade, he said.

Asserting that the NDA's aim is for a "Viksit Bharat" (developed India), he said a double engine government will ensure a "Viksit Andhra Pradesh".

"We have been working for you day and night, for the development of Andhra Pradesh. The aim of NDA is to build a developed Andhra Pradesh for developed India," the PM said.

PM Modi also said that having a double-engine government of NDA in Andhra Pradesh will give further strength to the development of the state.

Pointing at that TDP president Naidu and Jana Sena Party chief Pawan Kalyan, the PM

said the two leaders had been fighting for the rights of the people and for the development of the state, as he asserted that the people of the state have decided to re-elect the NDA.

"The support of the BJP in this election, our partners are continuously increasing, the strength of NDA is increasing, both Chandrababu Naidu and Pawan Kalyan have been supporting the rights of the people here, for a long time," he said.

"In this election, the people of Andhra Pradesh have decided two things: first, to bring back the NDA government in Delhi and secondly, they want to bring down the present government in the state, with which they are fed up," Modi said.

The three parties have entered an alliance for the upcoming Lok Sabha and assembly polls, with the TDP returning to the NDA fold after six years. The BJP will contest six Lok Sabha seats and 10 assembly seats, while the TDP will contest 17 seats and 144 assembly seats. Janasena will contest two Lok Sabha and 21 assembly seats.

The PM warned people against getting carried away by the Congress and its promises.

"You should remember one thing. The Congress and Jagan's party (YSRCP) in Andhra Pradesh are no different but are the same. Both the parties are being run by the members of the same family. They are in this act together," he said.

Taking a dig at CM Reddy's government, PM Modi alleged that there is a competition among ministers on indulging in corruption. "Here a competition on corruption is going on among the ministers of the state government," the PM alleged.

"In the last five years, the state has been hit and it has lagged. The people have decided to oust the current state government," he said.

The state will vote for the simultaneous Legislative Assembly and Lok Sabha polls scheduled on May 13.

The Prime Minister reiterated that when the results of the general elections are declared on June 4, it would be 400 seats for the NDA. "Now, the nation is saying: '4 June Ko 400 Paar', 'For a developed India... 400 Paar. For a developed Andhra Pradesh... 400 Paar,' he said.

The PM has set a target of winning 370 seats for the BJP and 400 for the NDA.

He then went on to list to the development projects undertaken by his government in the last five years for to uplift the poor. He also pointed out that the Centre has set up various higher institutions in the state that will change the course of the lives of youth.

"These institutions are going to change the course of lives for the youth of Andhra Pradesh. For all of these, you all should come together and make all the NDA candidates victorious in the upcoming election. All the MLAs of NDA will work for you and your welfare. This is Modi's guarantee," he said.

The PM criticised Congress for disrespecting Andhra Pradesh's pride and emphasized his government's commitment to honouring it. He mentioned issuing a commemorative coin for NTR's centenary and conferring the Bharat Ratna on PV Narasimha Rao by the NDA government.

Addressing the rally, Naidu said the TDP joined hands with the JSP and the BJP to liberate the state from the destructive regime of the YSRCP. "The flags of three parties might be different, but the agenda of the three parties is the same, which is welfare, development and protecting democracy. The verdict to be given by the people in the upcoming elections will decide the future of the state," he said.

Naidu also lauded Modi as a powerful leader who was turning India into a Vishwaguru (world leader).

"He is the leader that the world has appreciated. India found the right leader like Narendra Modi at the right time. We pledge to be with Modi in all his decisions," he said.

He exuded confidence that the NDA would get 400 plus MP seats in the country. "The responsibility is on the people to make the NDA win 25 out of 25 seats in AP," he said.

Kalyan, meanwhile, alleged that the state had suffered due to lack of development, mounting corruption and lawlessness in the last five years. Modi, however, was going to establish Rama Rajya, he said. "The Kurukshetra battle has begun," he said, and appealed to the people to support the NDA.

**THERE IS NO COHESION WITHIN THE INDI BLOC AS PARTNERS FIGHT WITH ONE ANOTHER IN DIFFERENT STATES, THE PM SAID**

### BUNTY CHOR

more than 25km away using CCTV mapping. It was an endless process since we were analysing footage from Kotla Mubarakpur to Uttam Nagar area (where the CCTV trail led the cops)," the DCP said.

Police combed through footage for two days before they found the scooter Kumar was riding — details of which they had got from the CCTV footage. However, police said, it had no number plate and visuals of the suspect were a "blur".

"We could only get the make, colour and a sticker on the scooter. Our team then reached Uttam Nagar and took the help of informers and locals to identify the suspect. We managed to zero in on Kumar and found he was often seen in the Matiala area. A team was sent there and they caught him when he was spotted in the area with his stolen items. He was arrested on Saturday," DCP Meena said.

During interrogation, police learnt more details of Kumar's exploits, unearthing a trail of unsolved robberies, previous stints in jail, and a change in his modus operandi.

For instance, two days before the Kotla Mubarakpur incident, Kumar stole a car engine in Okhla and fired at a man who tried to fend him off. As a result, police in the southeast district were also looking for him after the victim was severely injured, said a senior police officer who was not authorised to speak to the media.

Senior officers said Kumar would target multiple cars and car owners in the night and is an "expert" in breaking into cars. "Also, he was only stealing car parts and wasn't stealing the entire car. It is difficult to trace a thief who's not captured in CCTVs," an officer said.

Previously, Kumar's records revealed, he was involved in more than 40 cases of theft and robbery of car engines and parts. This was when he worked with gangs and associates. But they kept getting caught. He had been arrested at least 3-4 times, police said. So he decided to go his own way.

"He worked with a gang but they would often get caught. He was released in September last year and decided not to work with a gang to evade arrest. He thought working with other criminals would increase the risk of them being caught," said the officer.

Since September, DCP Meena said, Kumar had been operating as a lone wolf and committed over 200 robberies, adding that cases where he was involved were lodged across south Delhi, including Lajpat Nagar, RK Puram, Palam, Okhla, Hauz Khas, and Hazrat Nizamuddin.

"To prevent being attacked by the victim or the police, he started keeping two pistols. We have recovered them. According to the initial enquiry, he has fired at two people. We are checking if he has hurt others," said the senior officer quoted earlier. Police also recovered from his residence in Matiala two hammers, keys, screwdrivers, a ring spanner, and other tools Kumar used to break into cars.

Police said Kumar mainly targeted high-end cars and trucks since their engines sell for a good price. Based on Kumar's interrogation, police also arrested Mohammad Yamin from Chawri Bazaar. Yamin, police said, Yamin was the "receiver" of the stolen items and would sell the engines to workshops, car dealers and repair shops in Central Delhi.

Kumar told police that he hails from the Farrukhabad, Uttar Pradesh, but left his village after he failed in class 10 in 2014. He then came to Delhi and began living in Matiala.

"He came to Delhi with a friend to get a job but wasn't able to earn much. He was hired as a security guard at a residential area. He also got addicted to drugs. To survive and buy more drugs, he decided to steal car engines. He and his friends would often get caught and sent to jail. After his release, he would go back to theft and robberies. Last year, he bought firearms and ammunition with his money and started targeting more people," another officer said.

Kumar's long string of burglaries is reminiscent of the career of Devender Singh, better known as Bunty Chor, who was infamous for at least 500 burglaries across the country, with half of them in his hometown, Delhi. He had been arrested over a dozen times, escaped custody six times and convicted thrice — enough to inspire a Bollywood film.

### CORRECTION

A report in Sunday's edition erroneously mentioned an incorrect date of voting in Noida. Voting will be held on April 26. The error is regretted.

### NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY

#### E-Tender Notice

For and on behalf of President of Republic of India, Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/Construction-1) North Western Railway, Jaipur invites E-Tender for the following works upto 15.00 Hrs. on the mentioned date. 1. Name of work : Tender No. EL/CJ/R/DO-GGC/EPC/RE/01/2023-24/Design, Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of Railway Electrification Work of 2x25kV AC OHE Traction System along with 132/55kV Traction Substation, Sectioning Posts (SPs), Sub-Sectioning Posts (SSPs) and SCADA over Dausa (Excl.)-Gangapuri City (Excl.) Line Section of Jaipur Division, North Western Railway". 2. Approximate cost of the Work : Rs.1286203212.41 3. Earnest Money to be deposited: Rs.6581100.00 4. Date of Completion of work: 18 Months 5. Pre bid conference date & Venue : 23/04/2024 at 11.00 (AM) at Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer (Construction-1) Rail Nirman Bhawan, Jagatpura, Jaipur- 302017 6. Date & Time of closing E-Tender : 24.05.2024 Upto 15.00 Hrs. Date & Time of opening E-Tender : 24.05.2024 at 15.30 Hrs. 7.The details of above E-Tender are available on Website: www.ireps.gov.in 367-DG/24

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### Centre for Railway Information Systems

Chandigarh, New Delhi-110021  
Tel: 2410617, 2410452

#### Corrigendum

1. Tender No. 01235356 for "Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Crew voice & Video Recording System (CVRS) integrated with Railway Driver Assistance System (RDAS) in Locomotives with 03 years warranty followed by 05 years CAMC". Tender Closing Date/Time stands revised/extended upto 11.04.2024 (15:30hrs.) Corrigendum issued for other aspects also.

2. Tender No. 01235357 for "Supply, Installation & Commissioning of IP based Closed Circuit Television Surveillance System (CCTVSS) in EMU/MEMU Coaches AND Crew voices & Video Recording System (CVRS) integrated with/without Railway Driver Assistance System (RDAS) in Driver Cabs of Driving Motor Coaches with 03 years Warranty followed by 05 years Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract (CAMC). Total number of EMU/MEMU Coaches is 8563. Tender Closing Date/Time stands revised/extended upto 11.04.2024 (15:30hrs.) Corrigendum issued for other aspects also. For further details, please visit IREPS website (www.ireps.gov.in).

3. Tender No. 01245066 for Supply, Installation & Commissioning of IP based Closed Circuit Television Surveillance System (CCTVSS) in EMU/MEMU Coaches AND Crew voices & Video Recording System (CVRS) integrated with/without Railway Driver Assistance System (RDAS) in Driver Cabs of Driving Motor Coaches with 03 years Warranty followed by 05 years Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract (CAMC). Total number of EMU/MEMU Coaches is 8563. Tender Closing Date/Time stands revised/extended upto 11.04.2024 (15:30hrs.) Corrigendum issued for other aspects also. For further details, please visit IREPS website (www.ireps.gov.in).

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### CHANGE OF NAME

**I. SONAL** Abrol D/o Shri H.C. Abrol R/o JB-18 D, LIG Flats, Hari Enclave, Hari Nagar, New Delhi-110064 affirm that Sonal, Sonal Bhardwaj and Sonal Abrol all three names are mine, in future I will be known as Sonal Abrol

**I. VRIJENDRA** Kumar Singh S/o Shri Santosh Kumar Singh R/o House No. E-175, Gali No. 4th Pusta, Near Gatta Factory, Sonia Vihar, Saba Pur, Delhi-110094 I have Changed My Name Vrijendra Kumar Singh To Vijendra Kumar Singh For All Future Purposes.

**I. MALI** Dipikaben Manubhai, W/o- No.8037813L PNR Thakor Hapur Sinh, R/o- VIII + PO- Rumi, Teh Bhabhar, Dist- Banaskantha, Gujarat 385320, have changed my name from Mali Dipikaben Manubhai to Thakor Dipikaben Hapursinh, vide affidavit dated 16/03/2024 before Notary Public Delhi.

**I. SADHNA** W/o Shri Purushottam Kumar Garg R/o 11072, Gali No. 8, Subhash Park, Naveen Shahdara, Delhi-32. Sadhna & Sadhana Singh both names are same & one person

**I. SHAILY** C/o Balkishan R/o H.No. 419, Masjid Colony, Village- Uncha Gaon, Ballabgarh, Faridabad, Haryana-121004 have changed my name from Shaily to Shailly all future purposes.

### CHANGE OF NAME

**I. SANDEEP** Kumar Goel S/o- Daya Nand Goel, R/o- C-4-G/129-B, Janakpuri, Delhi-110058, declare that Abhinna Goel is my minor daughter, in her Passport (Passport No. 56401802), my name is erroneously written as Sandeep Goel, whereas my actual name is Sandeep Kumar Goel.

**I. CHITRA** Goel W/o- Sandeep Kumar Goel, R/o- C-4-G/129-B, Janakpuri, Delhi-110058, declare that Abhinna Goel is my minor daughter, in her Passport (Passport No. 56401802), my name is erroneously written as Chitra, whereas my actual name is Chitra Goel.

**I. SUBHASH** Chandra sharma, sidhharth vihar, sec-09, block no-22, 9/1839, vridhavan enclave, gazabad, pin code-201009 has announced that now my son has known divyansh sharma date of birth 29-04-2013 instead of divyanshu, date of birth 29-04-2011

**I. NO.14661790K** Huv Zile Singh, R/o- VIII- Jatahapur, PO-Inchhapuri, Thana & Teh- Patauli, Distt- Gurgaon, Haryana- 122414, have changed my minor son's name from Ritesh Kumar To Ritesh, vide affidavit dated 16/03/2024 before Notary Public Delhi.

**I. KOULESHWAR** Singh F/O JC-473500N NB Sub (CI) Kanhaiya Kumar Singh R/o VIII- Devichak, Po- Fatwah, Distt- Patna, Bihar- 803201, declare that I have changed my name from Kouleshwar Singh to Kuleshwar Singh (DOB. 10-06-1950) for all future purposes vide affidavit before public notary Delhi dt 13-03-2024

### CHANGE OF NAME

**buzz**

**Pawan Hans Ltd launches operations under RCS UDAN in Manipur**  
Pawan Hans Limited (PHL), India's leading helicopter service provider, proudly announces the commencement of its operations under RCS-UDAN in Manipur, further bolstering connectivity in the Northeast region. The launch of services in Manipur marks another milestone in PHL's commitment to providing efficient and affordable air transportation across India. The flight will originate from Imphal.

**Bharat Electronics Limited receives orders worth Rs 1,940.35 Cr**  
Navaratna DPSU Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) have entered into a contract valued at Rs 847.70 Cr plus taxes with Larsen & Toubro Limited (L&T) for the supply of 14 cutting-edge Communication and Electronic Warfare (EW) sensors and systems. These state-of-the-art systems, manufactured domestically by BEL, will be installed on three Cadet Training Ships for the Indian Navy.

**Pakistani boat with narcotics apprehended in joint operation**  
In an overnight joint operation during March 11-12, ICG, based on intelligence inputs, apprehended a Pakistani Boat with 6 crew and narcotics onboard, worth approx Rs 480 Cr. It was apprehended about 350 km from Porbandar into Arabian Sea in a sea-air coordinated operation involving ICG ships and Dornier Aircraft. The operation exhibited between ICG, NCB and ATS Gujarat.

**Garment Technology Expo concludes with good visitor turnout**  
The Garment Technology Expo was organised at NSIC Exhibition Complex Okhla Industrial Estate. The largest industry show in the subcontinent was held from March 8-11, which provided all the technologies of garment making under one roof. The exhibition was spread over 1 lakh square feet and consisted of 4 halls. It is South Asia's most comprehensive apparel technology expo.

**ESAF celebrates 32<sup>nd</sup> Foundation Day**  
ESAF Foundation celebrated its 32<sup>nd</sup> Foundation Day alongside ESAF Small Finance Bank, commemorating its 7<sup>th</sup> anniversary, in a program held at Lulu International Convention Centre, Thrissur. Dr CV Ananda Bose, Governor of West Bengal, extended his regards via an online message, acknowledging ESAF Bank's pivotal role.

**CISF marks its 55<sup>th</sup> Raising Day with a Day Parade at CISF RTC, Bhilai**

CISF marked its 55<sup>th</sup> Raising Day with a solemn ceremonial function held at CISF RTC, Bhilai (CG). MoS (Home Affairs) Nityanand Rai was the Chief Guest of the Raising Day Parade organised in the state of Chhattisgarh for the first time at RTC Bhilai. The MoS (Home Affairs) took the salute and reviewed the parade. The historic occasion witnessed the presence of esteemed guests, including Secretary, Consumer Affairs, the DGP of Chhattisgarh State Police, senior officers of CAPF, State Police and other officials of



various departments. Upon his arrival at RTC Bhilai, the MoS (Home) paid homage to the fallen heroes at the Brave Heart Memorial, laying a wreath in their honour.

**ICG enhances capabilities with acquisition of ALHs**

The Indian Coast Guard has taken a significant step in enhancing its operational capabilities with the signing of a contract for the acquisition of nine Advanced Light Helicopters Mk-III, along with Operational Role Equipment, Engineering Support Package, and Performance Based Logistics from HAL Bangalore.



Power Grid Corporation of India Limited has signed an MoU with Rajasthan Rajya Vidyut Prasaran Nigam Limited (RVPNL) at a function held in Jaipur. It was signed in presence of RK Singh, Union Minister of Power, New & Renewable Energy, Bhajanlal Sharma, Chief Minister, Rajasthan, among others.

**POWERGRID signs MoU with RVPNL**



In continuation with the initiative of "Capacity Building Through Meaningful Training" for the Friendly Foreign Countries (FFCs), the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) is conducting two specially designed courses under the aegis of Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC).

**"The Cottage" celebrates Women's Day with great zeal**



"The Cottage" marked the International Women's Day, with great enthusiasm. Priya Hingorani, Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India inaugurated the

**52 officers & sailors arrive for training by ICG**



festivities in the presence of Manoj Lal, Managing Director, the Central Cottage Industries Corporation of India, who also addressed the gathering.

**REC signs MoU with Govt of Rajasthan**



REC Limited, a Maharatna CPSE under the Ministry of Power and a leading NBFC, signed an MoU on March 10 in Jaipur with the Govt of Rajasthan, to finance projects across power and non-power infrastructure sectors with an investment of up to Rs 20,000 crore per annum for a period of six years, extending up to 2030.

**DG ICG attends 18<sup>th</sup> Governing Council Meeting of ReCAAP**

The Indian high-level delegation led by DG Rakesh Pal, AVSM, PTM, TM, Director General Indian Coast Guard, Indian Governor to the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) Information Sharing Centre (ISC) participated in the 18<sup>th</sup> edition of the Governing Council Meeting (GCM) from March 12-15 at Singapore. It is significant to highlight that, the Indian Coast Guard Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre



(MRCC) Mumbai is designated as the Focal Point (FP) India under the ReCAAP. The event was attended by several esteemed dignitaries.

**IREDA celebrates 38<sup>th</sup> Foundation Day**



Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd (IREDA) celebrated its 38<sup>th</sup> Foundation Day on March 11, marking a significant milestone in its journey towards fostering renewable energy development in India. The occasion was graced by Pradip Kumar Das, Chairman & Managing Director.

**SCOPE - GIZ, Germany organises a workshop**



Taking its Green Skilling endeavour to the next mile, the Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE) in association with GIZ, Germany successfully organised a Workshop on 'Decarbonisation of India's Public Sector Enterprises and the Role of Green Hydrogen' at SCOPE Complex in New Delhi.



In the presence of Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare, Ravi Dadhich, CEO, PMBI and Ravi Tyagi, CGM, SIDBI signed MoUs on March 12 to provide credit assistance for working capital and project costs at an affordable interest rate to 11,000 JAKS.



NSIC celebrated International Women's Day with on March 8 at NSIC Corporate Office. On the eve of Women's Day, an interactive session with all women employees was organised underscoring the pivotal role of women entrepreneurs and women employees.



NCRTC marked Women's Day with activities focused on the theme "Invest in Women - Accelerate Progress." An interactive training session was complemented with insights from Dr Praveen Kumari Singh, Additional Secretary of the Central Vigilance Commission.



PM Modi virtually inaugurated Jan Aushadhi Kendras at Railway Stations across different parts of the country and dedicated them to the nation. The move aims to enhance the welfare of incoming and outgoing passengers and generate employment opportunities in adjoining areas.



Union Minister for Heavy Industries Dr Mahendra Nath Pandey dedicated the Capital Goods Accelerator & Training Centre at the SASTRA campus in Thanjavur. The minister pointed out a huge potential for Rs 1,50,000 crore import substitution in the capital goods sector.



International Women's Day was celebrated with full vigour by Rail Vikas Nigam Ltd. It witnessed participation by all the organisation's women employees and senior officers' wives. A renowned gynaecologist took a session on the buzzword "cervical cancer" and the role of HPV vaccines.



RK Agrawal, CMD, WAPCOS & NPCC along with senior women employees enthusiastically celebrated Women's Day at WAPCOS Corporate Office, Gurugram. Debashree Mukherjee, Secretary (DoWR, RD&GR) and Richa Misra, JS&FA (DoWR, RD&GR) were present on the occasion.



Sandip Mehta, MD, Hengst India, Christopher Heine, Group CEO, Hengst Filtration and Rajinder Singh Sachdeva, COO, VE Commercial Vehicles Ltd were in attendance at the inauguration of the cutting-edge facility of Hengst Filtration facility in Yelahanka, Bengaluru.

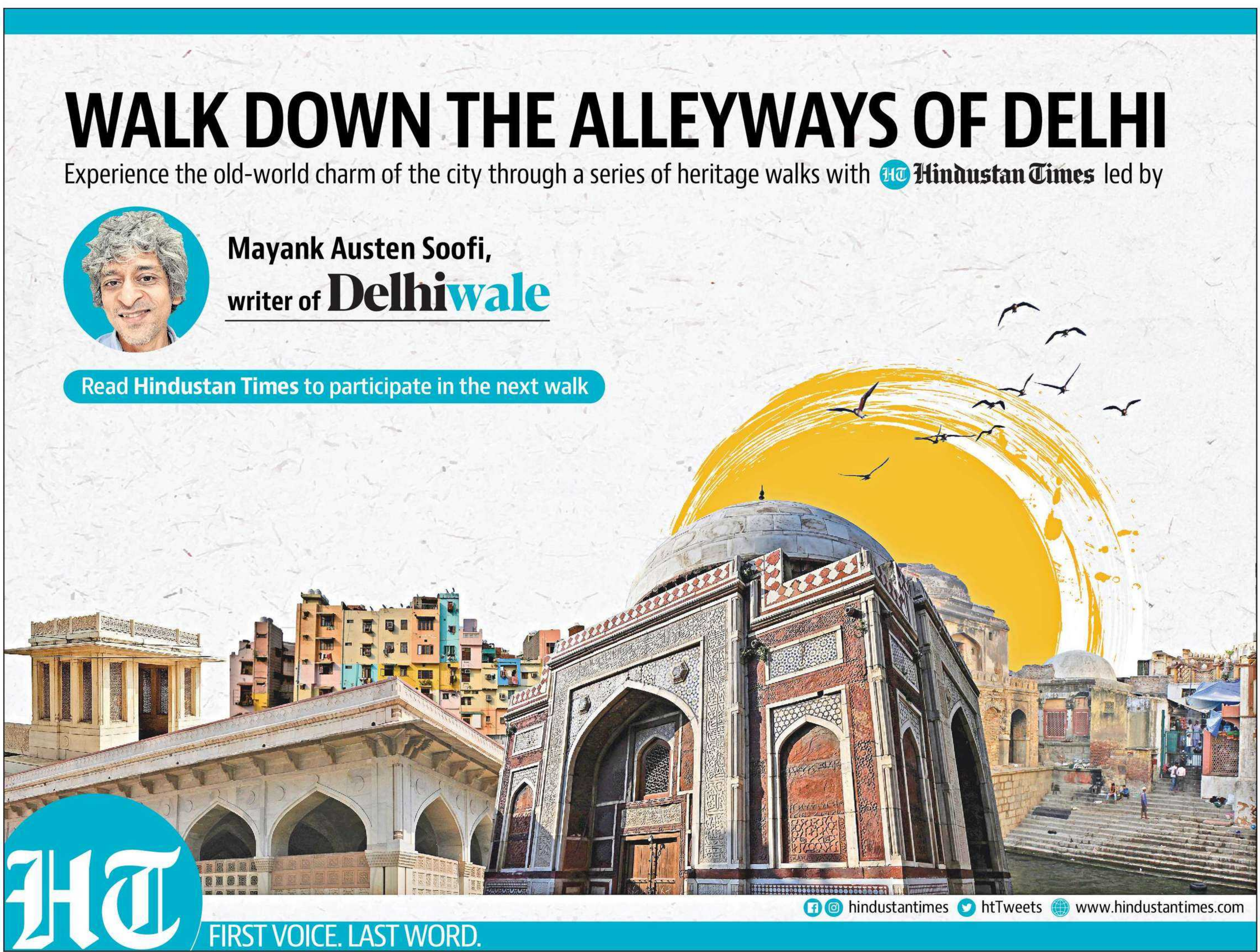
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{ OUR TAKE }

## BJP's new pitch for South India

Governance with an emphasis on battling corruption may be the theme of the NDA's campaign in the Opposition's backyard

Just as the Election Commission of India was announcing the polling dates, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was addressing rallies in Karnataka and Telangana, castigating the Opposition for corruption and dynastic politics. For Modi, southern India is the last frontier in his bid to expand the BJP's electoral footprint. The five states and the Union Territory of Puducherry, which elect 130 Lok Sabha members, have been resisting the BJP's political and ideological advancement—Karnataka, the only state in southern India to elect the BJP to office, is an exception. The party needs more seats from this region to ensure that it touches the 370 mark Modi has set, and for the "400 paar" (beyond 400 seats) slogan he has given to the NDA to be met. Having nearly saturated the gains from the rest of India, winning in the South is central to the BJP's Mandate 2024 plan.

Three factors are creating hurdles for the Modi juggernaut in the South: One, organisation; two, ideology; three, language. All three are connected. The southern states were born in the crucible of linguistic subnationalism, which allowed regional parties to flourish while limiting the appeal of the BJP and its unitarian agendas. Modi seems to recognise that Hindutva may not be enough to defeat linguistic subnationalism in the short run even if the government's muscular nationalism and Ram temple have found traction among a section of the electorate. Hence, he has been focussing on governance issues during his many recent, and frequent, trips to the southern states. He has spoken about welfare guarantees and the benefits of double-engine *sarkars*. Though regional parties have been pioneers of welfare politics, they have also been tainted by corruption allegations—the Karnataka BJP is no different. The governance pitch with emphasis on corruption, the BJP seems to think, is better suited to win the South, especially since hardline Hindutva failed to deliver in the Karnataka assembly polls last year.

The BJP has also done some smart alliance-building in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. In Telangana, where the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) is in a shambles after the assembly poll defeat and now the arrest of K Kavitha, the daughter of party founder K Chandrashekar Rao, the BJP sees the scope for a bipolar contest, with the party pitted against the Congress. In a national election, this may turn out to be advantageous to the BJP.

In 2019, the BJP won just 29 of 130 LS seats in the South. It held a majority in Parliament even without these, but increasing the tally is essential to further diminish the Opposition.

## A needed reform for digital competition

With rising digitalisation of markets, the proposed Digital Competition Act (DCA) can provide a much-needed reform. Large digital markets have emerged in India, and can grow further given its mammoth internet-user population. These markets are dominated by a few players who operate on both the supply and demand sides. Their innovations often manifest as anti-competitive practices.

The 2002 Competition Act's *ex post* approach—the regulator acts when abuse of dominance occurs—was adequate for the earlier, almost exclusively physical markets. But, digital markets need a different regulatory orientation, an *ex ante* approach to prevent the building of dominance as they are driven by network effects and get skewed much faster in favour of dominant players or incumbents. The *ex post* approach is simply ineffective here, with its time-consuming processes. Also, where the existing law does take an *ex ante* route, in approval of specific mergers by the Competition Commission of India (CCI), it doesn't impact the digital markets much—the acquisition of smaller start-ups by the hegemony often doesn't meet the thresholds for notification before the CCI.

Of course, digital markets have many avatars (the metaverse markets are different from plain vanilla platforms) and law can't always play catch-up. But, the current state of the digital markets needs a DCA-like fix. The Act must not prevent genuine competitive advances, but companies must realise their innovation can't be geared towards monopoly.

## Another election nears with change in the air

The Kovind panel has proposed simultaneous polls. Any such change should factor in all possible consequences so that intention and outcome are in harmony

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has announced the schedule for the 18th general elections. Like last time, the commission will hold the poll in seven phases. Voting in the first phase, for 102 constituencies, will take place on April 19, and the last set of votes will be cast on June 1. The vacancies created in the ECI by the retirement of Anup Chandra Pandey (on February 14) and the resignation of Arun Goel (on March 9) possibly delayed the announcement of the general elections.

With the ECI announcement, the Model Code of Conduct kicked in. It prevents ministers from laying foundation stones for projects and the government from issuing advertisements highlighting its achievement at the cost of the public exchequer. The ECI timetable also provides the dates from which candidates must adhere to expenditure limits for their campaigns. In this election, Lok Sabha hopefuls can spend up to Rs 95 lakh in larger states and Rs 75 lakh in smaller states. Two days before voting in the seven phases, political parties and candidates must stop campaigning to give voters quiet time to decide before they vote.

The ECI will count the votes on June 4, and the results will be out on the same day. In the last four Lok Sabha elections (2004 to 2019), the gap between election announcement and result declaration was roughly 74 days. In 1999, when the general elections took place in September-October, this period lasted 86 days. One of the shortest gaps, of 66 days, was in the 1998 elections, which the ECI conducted in four phases. This time, the gap will be 80 days. It will delay the constitution of the Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim legislative assemblies—their terms end on June 2. There will be less time available for government formation in Andhra Pradesh (AP) and at the national level since the term of the AP legislature expires on June 11 and for the Lok Sabha on June 16.

Earlier this month, another significant development related to the general elections occurred. The high-level committee headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind submitted its One Nation One Election report. The committee suggested a framework for simultaneously holding the elections to the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies. It recommends that the process kick off from a specified date, after which the Lok Sabha will have its five-year tenure, which will be called its full term.

The term of individual state legislatures will end with the tenure of the Lok Sabha. This way, both elections will take place in a synchronised manner. After this specified date, if a gov-

ernment loses a no-confidence motion and resigns, then mid-term, elections will occur. The newly elected legislature will only be in office for the unexpired portion of the full five-year term.

The Kovind panel noted that simultaneous elections "will fundamentally transform the electoral process and overall governance. They will optimise scarce resources and encourage voters to participate in the electoral process in larger numbers. Disruptions to governance and policy paralysis resulting from the application of the Model Code of Conduct and its adverse impact on economic growth will be mitigated". It is up to the next government to see which of the panel's recommendations it will want to take up.

But, before taking any policy action, it should undergo a careful evaluation to check whether it would fulfil its intended purpose. For example, it is common knowledge that candidates contesting elections spend beyond the expenditure limit. In this and earlier elections, parties have declared their candidates before the ECI announced the polls. This move allows candidates to start spending money before the ECI can start counting it towards their expenditure limit. Similarly, in a phased election, there is no question of a quiet period for voters. If campaigning stops in one area, the star campaigners of parties are moved to other regions. Traditional and new media then carry the message to the voters where polling will occur, defeating the purpose of the quiet period. These are



Chakshu Roy



Nani Palkhivala called elections the heartbeat of democracy. Therefore, any change in something so critical should avoid a surprise

two simple examples of well-intentioned actions failing in their purpose.

Policy actions can often have unintended consequences. Some can defeat the purpose of the action or have undesirable results. Robert Merton, a Harvard professor, examined this theory in a 1936 paper titled *The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Social Action*. He identified a few sources of unanticipated consequences, like ignorance, analytical errors, and the "imperious immediacy of interest". The last one refers to prioritising short-term gain over long-term consequences.

The mechanism proposed by the Kovind panel could also have unanticipated consequences. For example, legislators are already being horse-traded after polls where no political party gets a clear mandate. Will this trend become more pronounced when parties realise there will be a higher political cost if they do not seize the opportunity to form a government at the beginning of the five-year cycle? Would it increase political pressure on the Governor and the non-partisan office of the Speaker?

Under the proposed simultaneous polls scheme, a government that comes into power after a mid-term election will have a shorter tenure. What will be the incentive of such a government to take tough policy decisions when it will have less time to prove its governance record? It could resort to populist short-term measures to win the next election. Such mid-term polls would reduce the time for legislatures to function. Since elections will have to be held again at the end of five years to maintain the synchronous calendar, it will not reduce but add to any perceived inefficiencies caused by the polls.

Renowned jurist Nani Palkhivala called elections the heartbeat of democracy. Therefore, any change in something so critical should avoid a surprise. The changes in our electoral system should be rigorously evaluated to ensure that the intention and the outcome are in harmony.

Chakshu Roy is the head of legislative and civic engagement, PRS Legislative Research. The views expressed are personal

## A Delhi-Tokyo-Seoul trilateral in the making

During his back-to-back visits to Seoul and Tokyo recently, external affairs minister, S Jaishankar, set the tone and agenda for future cooperation with two of India's major partners in the Indo-Pacific. The visit was part of the 10th India-Republic of Korea Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) where Jaishankar met with Cho Tae-yul, minister of foreign affairs of the Republic of Korea, and the 16th India-Japan Foreign Ministers Strategic Dialogue where Jaishankar engaged in discussions with the foreign minister of Japan, Yoko Kamikawa. Also on the agenda was participation in the first Raisina Roundtable@Tokyo organised jointly by the foreign ministries of India and Japan which brought together business leaders, think tanks, and academia, as part of Track II efforts to deepen bilateral ties and strengthen regional cooperation.

While India's relations with both Japan and South Korea have been important with the steady deepening of ties over the years, bilateral cooperation has witnessed a definitive upswing in recent times with an expansion in the scope of partnerships with both countries, laying the foundations of a potential trilateral framework of cooperation. Key aspects of New Delhi's partnership with Seoul include semiconductors, green hydrogen, nuclear capabilities, and critical and emerging technologies. With Tokyo, the focus is on defence and digital technologies, clean energy, high-speed rail, industrial competitiveness, and connectivity. Semiconductors and supply chain resilience are common aspects of cooperation that New Delhi wants to build upon.

Japan and South Korea play pivotal roles in India's Indo-Pacific outreach, contributing significantly to the region's strategic landscape across various dimensions. Japan, as a longstanding economic partner, has been integral to India's economic development in critical aspects such as infrastructure development and technology transfer, and investments contributing substantially to India's growth trajectory and aligning with its vision for sustainable development in the Indo-Pacific. Japan has been a key player in India's economic development with a long-term focus on infrastructure projects. Both countries share similar concerns about regional stability and advocate for a rules-based order. The Quad partnership, which includes Japan, aligns with India's broader outreach goals, emphasising the importance of upholding international norms, ensuring freedom of navigation, addressing security challenges, and fostering economic growth. Japan's participation in Quad strengthens the collective voice advocating for a free and open Indo-Pa-

OVER 2022 AND 2023, TOKYO AND SEOUL HAVE UNDERTAKEN GRADUAL, YET INTENTIONAL, STEPS TO LOOK BEYOND THE DIFFICULTIES THAT HAVE STRAINED THEIR BILATERAL TIES FOR DECADES

cific, reinforcing India's position in the region. Collaborative endeavours between the two in maritime security enhance India's capacity to address challenges in the Indian Ocean and strengthen the participation and efforts of New Delhi and Tokyo on multilateral platforms in the Indo-Pacific.

South Korea, while not part of Quad, holds strategic importance through its regional influence and diplomatic ties. Economic collaboration with South Korea, driven by its advanced technological capabilities, contributes significantly to India's economic and technological advancements in the Indo-Pacific. The New Southern Policy of South Korea, initiated in 2017, emphasises enhancing ties with Southeast Asian nations and India, showcasing the growing importance of India in South Korea's regional engagement.

Most importantly, with the adoption of its own Indo-Pacific strategy, Seoul has demonstrated its intent to partner with other democratic and like-minded countries in the region under the broad architecture of the Indo-Pacific narrative. Arguably, the most significant takeaway from Jaishankar's visits is the emphasis he placed on the building and developing of contemporary opportunities during his meetings in both Seoul and Tokyo. His focal point underscores a forward-looking approach that recognises the rapidly evolving global landscape and the need for nations to proactively shape their trajectories. The emphasis on contemporary opportunities serves as a testament to India's commitment to adapting to emerging challenges and harnessing the potential for collaboration in key areas indicating the positioning of India as an important player in the global arena, ready to capitalise on emerging trends and navigate the complexities of the 21st century. It underscores a commitment to innovation, technological collaboration, and a proactive approach in shaping the future trajectory of India's relations with South Korea and Japan.

Over the course of 2022 and 2023, Tokyo and Seoul have undertaken gradual, yet intentional, steps to look beyond the difficulties that have strained their bilateral ties for decades. This shift reflects a recognition of the need to work together more effectively and collectively respond to regional opportunities and concerns signifying a maturing of diplomatic relations. From India's perspective, this evolving synergy holds immense significance as a more cohesive and cooperative East Asia translates into a more conducive environment for India. It opens the door for a revival of trilateral cooperation among the three countries, an idea that originated first in 2011 but had thus far been dormant. As the geopolitical landscape in the Indo-Pacific continues to evolve, a New Delhi-Seoul-Tokyo trilateral collaboration provides a flexible and dynamic framework for adapting to emerging challenges and opportunities.

Harsh V Pant is vice president, studies and foreign policy, Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi and professor of international relations with King's India Institute at King's College London. Pratinashree Basu is an associate fellow, Indo-Pacific, at Observer Research Foundation, Kolkata. The views expressed are personal

{ KAMALA HARRIS } VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE US

I believe that the promise of America includes equal justice under the law. And for too many, our criminal justice system has failed to live up to that.



{ STRAIGHTFORWARD }

Shashi Shekhar



## The political message in electoral bonds findings

On March 14, two days ahead of the announcement of general elections, the Election Commission of India (ECI) made public the data on electoral bonds it received from State Bank of India (SBI). Can this cause a political storm?

Before answering that question, let us look at the complete chain of events in the electoral bonds matter. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government led by Narendra Modi, in its first term, implemented the electoral bond scheme to "legalise" donations made to political parties. Even before the scheme was notified, the Opposition alleged that it was aimed at supporting the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The Association for Democratic Reforms, which has worked for electoral reforms for years, approached the Supreme Court (SC) against the move. The court took seven years—including the six years since the bond scheme was implemented—to deliver a verdict. In its February 15 order, the court rejected the scheme as unconstitutional.

The data released on March 14 does not reveal the complete story. The first data set gives the name of the bond buyer, while the second gives details of the recipient parties. The linkages between the two are lacking. The SC has sent a notice to SBI asking why it didn't provide unique numbers linking donors to their political contributions.

Are some secrets waiting to be revealed in the coming days? Perhaps. But the story that has emerged so far is exciting in itself. Those expecting to see the names of industrial bigwigs benefiting from the government were disappointed. It is natural in such a situation to wonder what the more than 1,250 firms that purchased electoral bonds totalling ₹12,155 crore between April 12, 2019, and February 15, 2024, really do. What are their business interests? On top of the list is Future Gaming and Hotels Services Pvt. Ltd. It purchased bonds worth ₹1,368 crore. Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Ltd invested ₹966 crore, while Quick Supply Chain Pvt. Ltd bought bonds for ₹410 crore. Until today, the names of these companies have rarely been discussed by the public. Future Gaming, the largest contributor, runs a lottery business headquartered in Coimbatore.

Tamil Nadu and was founded by Santiago Martin, a lottery king. Martin's story is astonishing. In his early days, he used to do petty jobs in Myanmar. In 1988, he returned home and opened a lottery firm, the success of which was beyond all expectations. Martin has often been the subject of controversy. Is he so pro-democracy that he purchased bonds worth over ₹1,300 crore from lottery money and donated it to political parties?

According to initial information, three of the top five bond buyers purchased the bonds following action taken by the Enforcement Directorate or the Income Tax department. Also, the first 20 donors bought bonds worth ₹5,830 crore, representing 48% of the overall transaction. Which parties were given these bonds?

Data shows the BJP has received 47.5% of total donations, the Trinamool Congress 12.6%, and the Congress 11.1%. Bharat Rashtra Samithi, led by K Chandrashekar Rao, finished fourth with ₹1,215 crore, while the Biju Janata Dal ranks fifth, with ₹776 crore.

If you ask anyone which is the second largest political party after the BJP, the majority would say the Congress. Oddly, the Congress is third while Mamata Banerjee's TMC, in power only in West Bengal, is second. The question also arises as to how the parties running relatively small states such as Telangana and Odisha rose to fourth and fifth place, respectively. Information available so far shows the majority of bond purchases have been made by businesses that needed government assistance. Is this money spent to further personal gain? We'll have to wait a few more days for an answer to this.

Finally, let us return to the question raised in the beginning. It will be intriguing how the Opposition leverages this matter in the upcoming election. Given that all parties were involved in the game, simply proclaiming one's innocence can potentially lead to complications. This scenario presents a collective predicament, in which both donors and recipients find themselves in an equally awkward position.

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



### Russians vote to cement Putin's rule amid Ukraine war, protests over Navalny



People queue outside the Russian embassy on the final day of the presidential election in Russia, in Berlin, Germany; Yulia Navalnaya (centre), widow of Alexey Navalny, stands in a queue with people protesting in front of the Russian embassy in Berlin (right top) and an aftermath of fresh aerial attacks on Belgorod, Russia, on Sunday. Russia voted on Sunday on the final day of an election to extend Vladimir Putin's rule to three decades, as Ukraine launched fresh drone attacks and some Russians spoiled their ballots in protest. The three-day vote was marred by a surge in fatal Ukrainian bombardment, incursions into Russian territory by pro-Kyiv sabotage groups and vandalism at polling stations. The Kremlin had cast the election as an opportunity for Russians to show they were behind the attack on Ukraine, where voting was held in Russian-held areas.

REUTERS, AP, AFP



### AT LEAST 21 DEAD IN AFGHANISTAN AS BUS COLLIDES WITH TANKER, 38 INJURED

Agence France-Presse  
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**LASHKAR GAH, AFGHANISTAN:** At least 21 people were killed and 38 injured on Sunday when a bus collided with a fuel tanker truck and burst into flames in southern Afghanistan.

"Twenty-one people were killed... in a traffic accident between a passenger bus, a tanker and a motorbike" on a main highway through Grishk district in southern Helmand province, Mohammad Qasim Riyaz, a spokesman for the provincial governor, told AFP.

Of the 38 people injured, 11 were seriously hurt, according to the provincial information department.

The accident occurred in the early hours of the morning on a key highway that sees traffic between the western city of Herat through southern provinces to the capital Kabul, provincial officials said.

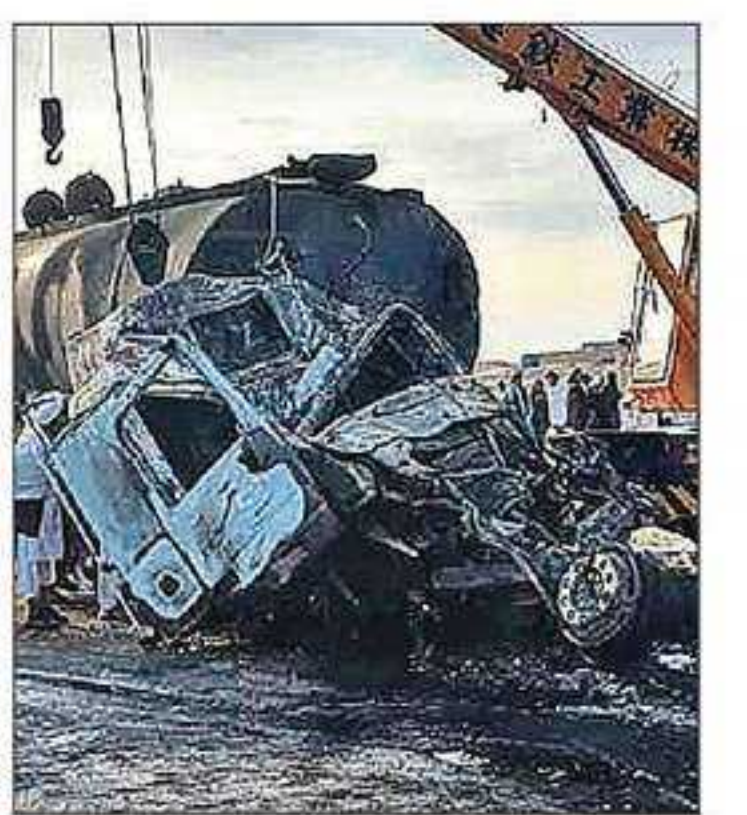
The passenger bus was travelling from Herat to Kabul when it first collided with a motorbike carrying two people, killing both riders, Helmand traffic management officials said, according to the information department.

The bus driver lost control and crashed with a tanker truck travelling in the opposite direction, sparking a fire.

The accident killed three people on the tanker and 16 bus passengers.

Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid expressed regret over the accident and wished the injured a quick recovery, in a post on X.

"We seriously ask drivers to be careful while driving and to follow traffic rules," he said.



The wreckage of a bus and oil tanker on the Herat-Kandahar highway in Grishk district of Helmand province.

AFP

# Israeli premier vows to invade Rafah despite world pressure

Joe Biden, who has backed Israel during the war, has said an invasion of Rafah would be a 'red line' unless credible civilian protection plans are in place

Agencies  
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**JERUSALEM/GAZA STRIP:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed on Sunday to send ground forces into Gaza's southern Rafah city despite international fears for the fate of Palestinian civilians sheltering there.

The right-wing premier, whose security and war cabinets were also due to discuss latest international efforts towards a truce deal, stressed that "no amount of international pressure will stop us from realising all the goals of the war".

"To do this, we will also operate in Rafah," he told a cabinet meeting, before he was set to meet visiting German Chancellor Olaf Scholz for talks on the war raging since Hamas militants attacked Israel from Gaza on October 7.

His comments came as talks were expected to resume in Doha towards a truce in Gaza, where Israel has pursued a campaign against Hamas militants for more than five months.

International envoys were planning to meet in Qatar to revive stalled talks for a ceasefire and hostage release deal.



Palestinians search the rubble of a house following overnight Israeli bombardment, west of the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, on Saturday.

AFP

A Hamas proposal calls for an Israeli withdrawal from "all cities and populated areas" in Gaza during a six-week truce and for more humanitarian aid, according to an official from the Palestinian group.

Israel has repeatedly threatened to launch a ground offensive against Hamas in Rafah, now home to nearly 1.5 million mostly displaced Gazans sheltering near the Egyptian border.

US President Joe Biden, who has backed Israel during the war, has said an invasion of Rafah would be a "red line" unless credible civilian protection plans are in place.

Washington, which provides Israel with billions of dollars in military assistance, has said it cannot support a Rafah operation without a "credible, achievable, executable plan" to shelter civilians.

UN World Health Organisation chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus urged Israel "in the name of humanity" not to launch a Rafah invasion, warning that "this humanitarian catastrophe must not be allowed to worsen".

**Israeli prime minister criticises US Senate leader**  
As tensions have risen with Washington, Netanyahu also criticised the US Senate leader for urging the Israeli government to hold new elections, calling the comments "totally inappropriate".

"We're not a banana republic," Netanyahu told CNN, blasting the remarks by Democratic Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, the highest-ranking elected Jewish American in history.

Schumer, who visited Israel

after October 7, had also called Netanyahu an obstacle to peace.

Netanyahu leads a coalition of religious and ultra-nationalist parties. His failure to bring home the hostages taken by Hamas militants during their attack has led to mounting protests within his country as well as domestic calls for early elections.

Netanyahu's office said on Friday he had approved the military's plan for an operation in Rafah, though no timeline was given.

**31,645 people killed in Gaza Strip since Oct 7**  
Rafah is the last major population centre in Gaza yet to be subjected to a ground assault in the war, which was triggered by Hamas's unprecedented October 7 attack on southern Israel.

The attack resulted in the

### US destroys Houthi drone in latest Red Sea skirmish

**WASHINGTON:** The US shot down a drone fired by Yemen's Houthi rebels towards the Red Sea and destroyed more of their weaponry on Saturday, its military said.

The statement came after the Houthis had earlier claimed a drone attack on a US destroyer in the Red Sea.

Later on Saturday night, US military "destroyed five unmanned surface vessels and one" drone in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

AFP

deaths of about 1,160 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of Israeli figures.

Hamas took about 250 Israeli and foreign hostages on October 7, and Israel believes about 130 of those remain in Gaza including 32 presumed dead.

Israel's military campaign has killed at least 31,645 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

Netanyahu on Sunday also criticised "those in the international community who are trying to stop the war now" by "making false accusations" against Israel and its military.

Israel has faced consistent criticism for civilian casualties in Gaza as well as stark aid shortages that have fuelled fears of famine.

### US shootings: 2 people killed in Washington, 1 dead in Indianapolis

Associated Press  
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**WASHINGTON:** Two people have been killed and five others injured in a shooting in the nation's capital early on Sunday. Police were looking for a single gunman after seven people were shot around 3am (local time) in the Shaw neighbourhood of Washington.

The five people who were injured were all taken to local hospitals, said Jeffrey Carroll, the executive assistant chief of the Metropolitan Police Department. All the victims are adults, he said.

Meanwhile, police in Indianapolis arrested a suspect in connection with an early morning shooting at a bar that killed one person and injured five others on Saturday, police said.

Nicholas Fulk, 25, was arrested on a preliminary charge of murder hours after

the shooting at Landsharks on Broad Ripple Avenue around 1:30am (local time), police said. "Detectives used technology, including public and private safety cameras, B-link cameras, automatic licence plate readers and some good old-fashioned police work to track down the suspect," Indianapolis Metro Police Department Chief Christopher Bailey said.

### Philadelphia shooter held in New Jersey: Police

A man suspected of fatally shooting three family members in their Philadelphia-area homes on Saturday was arrested in New Jersey after evading law enforcement for hours as police mobilised across two states, shutting down a parade and an amusement park and ordering some residents to stay in their homes.

The suspect was identified as 26-year-old Andre Gordon Jr.

# Trump warns of 'bloodbath' if he is not elected as prez

Agence France-Presse  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**OHIO:** Donald Trump told a rally in Ohio on Saturday that November's presidential election will be the "most important date" in US history, painting his campaign for the White House as a turning point for the country.

Days after securing his position as the presumptive Republican nominee, the former president also warned of a "bloodbath" if he is not elected — though it was not clear what he was referring to, with the remark coming in the middle of comments about threats to the US auto industry.

"The date — remember this, November 5 — I believe it's going to be the most important date in the history of our country," the 77-year-old told rallygoers in Vandalia, Ohio, repeating well-worn criticisms that his rival, President Joe Biden, is the "worst" president.

Criticising what he said were Chinese plans to build cars in Mexico and sell them to Americans, he stated: "We're going to put a 100% tariff on every single car that comes across the line, and you're not going to be able to sell those cars if I get elected."

"Now if I don't get elected it's going to be a bloodbath for the whole — that's going to be the least of it, it's going to be a bloodbath for the country. That'll be the least of it. But they're not going to sell those cars."

As Trump's comment gained traction on social media, Biden's campaign released a statement calling the Republican a "loser" at the ballot box in 2020 who then "doubles down on his threats of political violence". "He wants another January 6 but the American people are going to give him another electoral defeat this November because they continue to reject his extremism, his affection for violence, and his thirst for revenge," the campaign said, referring to the deadly attack on



Former US president Donald Trump speaks during a Buckeye Values PAC Rally in Vandalia, Ohio, on Saturday.

AFP

the US Capitol by Trump supporters in 2021.

Earlier this month, Trump and Biden each won enough delegates to clinch their party nominations in the 2024 presidential race, all but assuring a rematch and setting up one of the longest election campaigns in US history.

Among the issues Trump is campaigning on is sweeping reform of what he calls Biden's "horror show" immigration policies, despite the ex-president successfully pressuring Republicans to block a bill in Congress that included the toughest border security measures in decades.

On Saturday, Trump invoked the border again as he reached out to minorities who have traditionally voted Democrat.

He said Biden had "repeatedly stabbed African-American voters in the back" by granting work permits to "millions" of immigrants, warning that they and Hispanic Americans "are going to be the ones that suffer the most."

For decades Ohio had been seen as a bellwether battleground state, though it has trended more strongly Republican since Trump's White House win in 2016.

### BIDEN ROASTS EX-PREZ TRUMP AT WASHINGTON PRESS DINNER

**WASHINGTON:** US President Joe Biden joked about Donald Trump and his own age at an annual media dinner on Saturday — before unleashing deadly serious criticisms of his rival in November's election.

"One candidate's too old and mentally unfit to be president," the 81-year-old Democrat quipped at the Gridiron Club in Washington. "The other guy's me."

Democrat Biden was making his first speech as president at the annual white tie gala for the US media and political elite, an event that Republican former president Trump addressed in 2018.

He also backed journalists whom Trump has repeatedly attacked, adding: "You are not the enemy of the people. You are a pillar of any free society."

Biden is trailing in a number of polls and faces voters' concerns about his age, which he has tried to address by highlighting 77-year-old Trump's recent verbal slip-ups.

AFP

### { STORY OF LOCAL ROMEO AND JULIET }

## Night of the ghosts: Town in Greece holds carnival to celebrate a legend

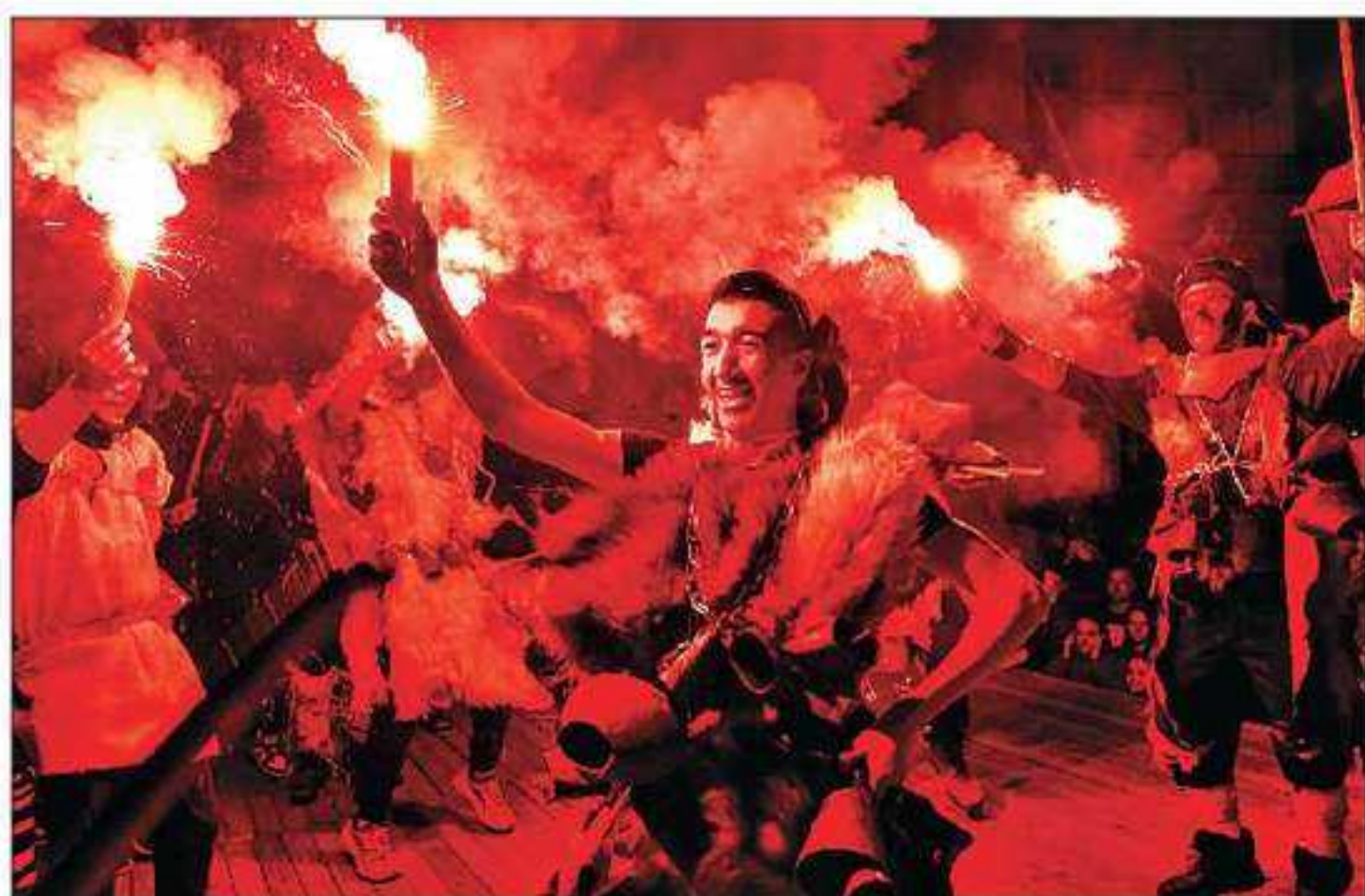
Agence France-Presse  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**AMFISSA, GREECE:** The clanking of cowbells signals the arrival of the ghost of Amfissa, as a sound system spits out the cries of ferocious beasts and crowds of carnival-goers brandish smartphones. In this small town in central Greece, close to the ancient sanctuary of Delphi, "Ghost Night" is the culmination of festivities celebrated across the country this weekend.

Amfissa's ghost is a giant monster made of cardboard, rope and fabric, parading through the night. The head is misshapen, teeth long and eyes bulging.

For the last three decades, the nocturnal revelries mark the story of the tragic destiny of a local Romeo and Juliet, held on the last Saturday before the start of Orthodox Lent.

The star-crossed lovers are called Constantis, a hard-working and conscientious tanner, and Lenio, a young girl from Amfissa. They have sworn an



Revellers parade in costumes, as they celebrate the Night of the Ghosts carnival in the remote town of Amfissa, Greece.

REUTERS

oath of love and fidelity, but one day, Lenio is struck by lightning and killed at Charmaina's well. In despair, Constantis commits suicide.

His ghost has since haunted the well and roamed the town making beastly cries that frighten the locals.

Many of Amfissa's 6,000 population dress as elves, tanners and ghosts using goatskins.

They fix horns to their heads, bells and chains on their belts. "We are celebrating a legend, not a custom" as in the rest of festive Greece, said Nikos Loupakos, Amfissa's deputy mayor.

"That's what makes us special." "We've been celebrating this legend for 29 years", said Costas Panayiotas, a 42-year-old fireman who leads the ghost through the streets.

### Venezuela's Maduro announces candidacy for July re-election

**CARACAS:** Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro will run for a second re-election to secure another six-year term in voting planned for July 28, the ruling Socialist party said on Saturday. "There's just one outcome, the people's victory on July 28," Maduro said.

### Australia's FM Penny Wong marries her long-time partner

**SYDNEY:** Australia's foreign minister Penny Wong, the country's first openly gay female parliamentarian, has married her partner Sophie Allouache, Wong said on Sunday. "We are delighted that so many of our family and friends could share this special day with us," Wong said on social media platform Instagram, alongside a photo of her and Allouache in wedding attire and holding a bouquet of flowers.



Ex-police officer Jimmy 'Barbecue' Cherizier

REUTERS

### Police conduct ops in Haiti capital against 'Barbecue' gang

**PORT-AU-PRINCE:** Police in Haiti have conducted an operation in a capital neighbourhood controlled by the notorious gang leader Jimmy Cherizier, known as "Barbecue," that left several criminals dead, an official said on Saturday. National police units entered the Delmas neighbourhood on Friday evening with the aim of unblocking a road, said Lionel Lazzare of the Haitian police union. Several "bandits" were killed, he said, without providing more details.

AFP

# Centre to procure masur, tur directly from farmers

600,000 tonnes of dal procurement comes against the backdrop of falling govt stocks

**Puja Das**  
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**NEW DELHI:** The Centre plans to procure 400,000 tonnes of raw tur dal and 200,000 tonnes of masur dal directly from farmers at the minimum assured procurement price (MAPP) or at the dynamic buffer procurement price (DBPP), whichever is higher, to boost stocks, a senior official told Mint.

The MAPP is the weighted average price of previous three trading days in a district, while the DBPP is the weighted average price of the day of procurement, three previous days and three subsequent trading days.

The MAPP and the DBPP are the weighted average of the modal price (70% weightage) and maximum price (30% weightage).

This comes against the backdrop of falling government buffer stocks amid firm market prices caused by lower production of some pulses, including tur.

"As part of the plan, these two pulses will be procured by the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of



Tur procurement started in January and so far both the agencies—NAFED and NCCF—have purchased around 8,000 tonnes of tur.

India Ltd (NAFED) and National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India Limited (NCCF) directly from pre-registered farmers," the official said.

Tur procurement started in January and so far both the agencies have procured around 8,000 tonnes of tur. Masur procurement is scheduled to start this month.

In January, union cooperation minister Amit Shah launched a multilingual electronic portal <https://esamridhi.in> through which farmers can sell tur dal to two government procurement agencies—NAFED and NCCF.

As decided then, the department of consumer affairs

(DoCA) will procure 80% of buffer requirement for tur and masur through these two agencies directly from farmers at the minimum support price (MSP) or at the prevailing market price, if prices are above the MSP.

The price of tur dal has been significantly high in the past year due to weather disturbances causing a fall in last season's production. The country may have produced 3.3 million tonnes (mt) of the pulses against a domestic consumption of 4.4-4.5 mt. Production of tur in the 2023-24 (July-June) crop year, too, is expected to fall due to a patchy monsoon, with the agriculture

ministry pegging it on par with the previous year's output.

While raw tur in key markets of the top growing regions of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh is being sold at ₹10,300-10,600 a quintal as compared with the MSP of ₹7,000 per quintal, the all-India average tur price in the retail market is as high as 32.4% on-year at ₹150.2 a kg.

However, the masur price in major mandis is hovering in the range of ₹5,900-5,950 per quintal as compared to its MSP of ₹6,425 a quintal and ₹93.6 per kg, an increase of 0.3% on-month and 1.2% on-year.

Prices quoted are as of Sunday and as per the consumer affairs ministry (for retail prices) and spot traders (for mandi prices).

Inflation in pulses eased to 18.9% in February from 19.5% in January; however, it was as low as 4.1% a year ago.

With the firm prices, the central stock as of 28 February had depleted to a little over 1.97 million tonnes against the buffer norm of 3.1 mt. This includes about 36,000 tonnes of tur and 616,000 tonnes of masur stock compared to 1 mt and 600,000 tonnes norm, respectively.

Queries sent to the consumer affairs department and agriculture ministry remained unanswered at press time.

# Coal inventory may hit 155mt by FY24: coal secy

**Rituraj Baruah & Subhash Narayan**  
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**NEW DELHI:** Coal stocks across power plants in the country will be enough to meet the anticipated surge in power demand in the upcoming summer, according to Amrit Lal Meena, secretary, union ministry of coal.

In an interview, he said the accretion of coal stock at plants will continue even during the summer and monsoon, in contrast to last year's depletion.

Total coal stocks may touch 155 million tonnes by the end of the fiscal, against 125mt last year, he added.

Noting that since November coal stocks at thermal plants have increased at a rapid pace, he said daily coal stock accretion stood at about 194,000 tonnes in the second half of February, compared with 26,000 tonnes in the corresponding period of last year.

Similarly in the first half of



**Amrit Lal Meena, secretary, Union ministry of coal.**

March, stocks grew by about 209,000 tonnes, compared with a depletion of 42,000 tonnes during the corresponding period of the last fiscal as temperatures rose in March last year.

"In the first 15 days of March last year, depletion of coal stock started because temperatures had increased. But this year, it has increased by 200,000 tonnes per day. This trend will continue, because capacity has increased significantly, both for production

and transportation. There is not much chance for depletion during April, May and June. This trend will continue even in monsoons," Meena said. However, the rate of daily increase in stocks may slow down in the monsoons.

Usually, with high power demand and coal consumption by plants, stocks at the plant-end deplete during the summers, while monsoon rain impacts both production and transportation of the mineral, adding to the fall in inventory.

The remark on having a healthy coal stock position in the high demand period gains significance as the union ministry of power has directed power generating companies to continue blending 6% imported coal till June amid projections of high power demand and concerns over logistical issues.

The peak power demand in the next fiscal is expected to touch 260 GW, a new high, and way above the 243 GW hit last year.

# SMARTPHONE EXPORTS FROM INDIA TO US REACH \$3.5 BN

**Press Trust of India**  
feedback@livemint.com

**NEW DELHI:** India's smartphone exports to the US jumped to USD 3.53 billion in April-December this fiscal against \$998 million in the same period last year, according to the Commerce Ministry data.

The increasing outbound shipments led to an increase in the smartphones' market share to 7.76 per cent during April-December this fiscal from 2 per cent in the same period of last year, the data showed.

Increasing exports have made India the third-biggest smartphone exporter to the US.

An official said that an increase in overall smartphone production has helped in pushing exports.

During the nine-month period of this fiscal, the share of China and Vietnam declined. The US smartphone imports from the top five suppliers also declined during April-December to \$45.1 billion from \$49.1 billion in FY'23. China exported \$35.1 billion worth of smartphones to the US market in April-December, down from \$38.26 billion last year. Vietnam's shipments of phones declined to \$5.47 billion in April-December 2023 from \$9.36 billion in the same period of the previous year. Other two major smartphone exporters to the US are South Korea and Hong Kong.

South Korea's exports to America during the period under review increased to \$858 million from \$432 million, while Hong Kong's sales are down to \$112 million from \$132 million in April-December 2022-23.

Smartphones started registering their presence in the Indian export basket in 2022-23 when shipments touched \$10.95 billion. With the continued momentum, exports have touched \$10.5 billion in April-December 2023-24.

After the announcement of the Product Linked Incentives (PLI) scheme and the entry of US-based iPhone maker Apple into domestic manufacturing, India is emerging as a major production hub for smartphones.

# India may soften stand on UK FTA

**Dhirendra Kumar**  
dhirendra.kumar@livemint.com

**NEW DELHI:** India is contemplating softening its stand on some of the contentious issues that have held up a free trade agreement with the UK, according to two people aware of the matter who expect the UK to do the same.

Both countries have underscored the significance of finding a "feasible solution" to speed up the process, they added.

"India is planning to soften its stand on some of the sticky issues in the trade negotiations with the UK. A similar approach is expected from its counterpart, without compromising their interests," one of the two people said, seeking anonymity. Signing the bilateral trade deal holds equal importance for both nations, he added.

India and the UK initiated FTA discussions in January 2022 to bolster the economic ties. Now,

they are in the midst of the 14th and what is expected to be the final round of discussions, which began on 10 January.

However, talks are currently on hold, and are expected to resume only after the Lok Sabha elections. Both countries are actively working towards a fair and balanced agreement, and are in favour of closing the deal at the earliest, considering its significance for both the economies, the second person said.

Mint reported on 7 March that the deal may be postponed until after the general elections if a consensus has not been found on outstanding issues.

Queries emailed to the spokesperson of the Union commerce ministry and a UK official did not elicit a response at press time.

"The window for concluding the FTA is narrowing, given the limited time between national elections on both sides. While technical negotiations have

brought us this far, a political grand bargain might be necessary to break the gridlock, and London might need a resolution more than New Delhi at this juncture," said Dr. Dattesh Parulekar, assistant professor of international relations, Goa University.

UK elections are due by end-January, 2025.

"India's recently signed EFTA agreement should exert pressure on the UK to seek a favourable outcome," he added. "The dimensions of mobility and visa facilitation privileges are crucial bottom-lines that will determine the fairness of this arrangement. Any attempt to link them with demands for expanded market access would be considered unethical and unsustainable."

To date, the two countries have been unable to resolve key issues, including demands for visas, mobility rights for Indian skilled professionals, and tariff cuts for British cars and whisky.

# Choose 'regular pay' when buying a life insurance policy

When we buy a life insurance policy, we are given two options to pay premiums - regular pay and limited pay. In regular pay, the premium payment and policy terms are the same. In limited pay, premium payment term is lower than the policy term. If a policy term is 30 years, the payment term could be 5, 7, 10 or 15 years. The insurance industry promotes the limited pay option because on the face of it the total premium outgo appears cheap. However, in reality, the regular pay option is economical. Understand the concept of time value of money to analyse the hidden cost in the limited pay option.

Compiled by **Aprajita Sharma**  
aprajita.sharma@livemint.com

	Regular pay	Limited pay
Policy term	30 years	30 years
Premium payment term	30 years	10 years
Premium	₹11,138	₹23,350
<b>Total premium outgo</b>	<b>₹3,34,140</b>	<b>₹2,33,500</b>

Premium outgo in regular pay is **43% higher** than that in limited pay.

Is it really?

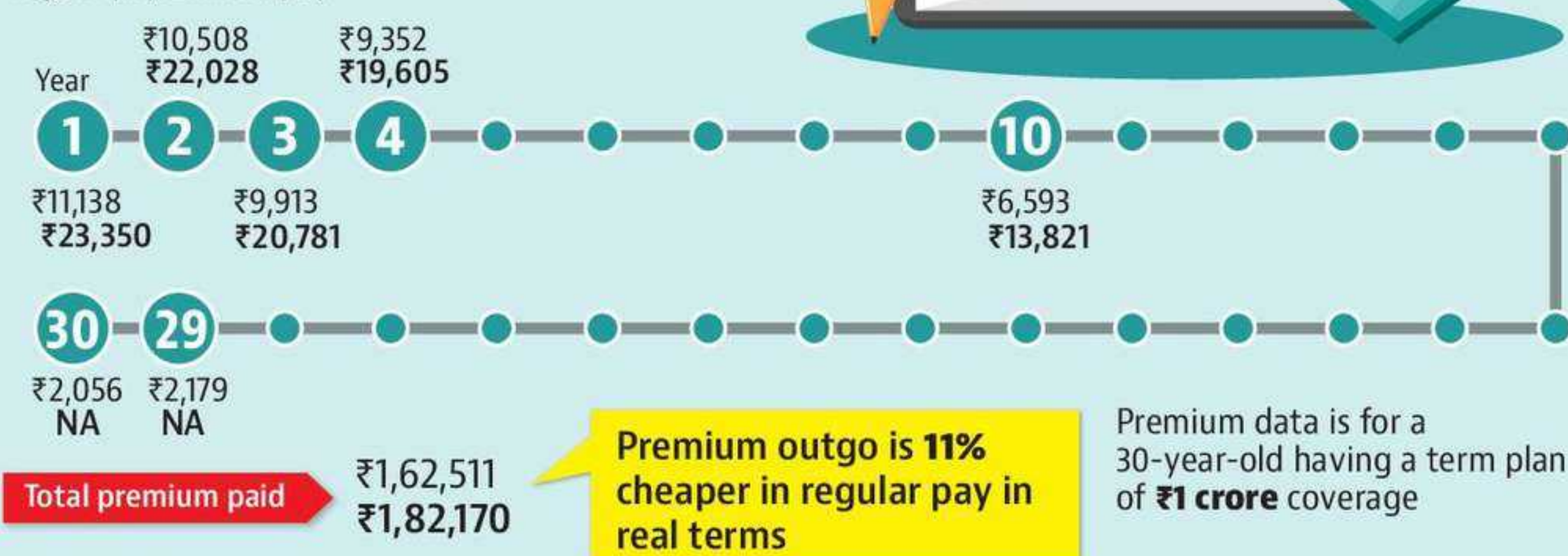
The hidden cost - Time value of money

Money loses its value every year by the inflation rate

Calculate total premium outgo in real terms factoring in the inflation

Assumed inflation rate **6%**

Regular pay/Limited pay



Graphic: Pranay Bhardwaj/Mint

Source: SahajMoney

**Upfront payment to insurers benefits them, not you**

**Regular pay gives you flexibility to stop your policy when you want**

**One can stop paying premiums after one's liabilities are over**



# ADANI TO INVEST \$14 BN IN FY25 ACROSS ITS COS

**Press Trust of India**  
feedback@livemint.com

**NEW DELHI:** Adani group plans to invest more than ₹1.2 lakh crore (about \$14 billion) across its portfolio companies that range from ports to energy, airports, commodities, cement and media in fiscal year starting April 1, as it doubles down on its \$100 billion investment guidance over the next 7-10 years to grow businesses, sources said.

The projected capital expenditure or capex for 2024-25 (April 2024 to March 2025) fiscal is 40% higher than what the portfolio is estimated to have incurred in FY24. According to analysts, the portfolio is estimated to have incurred a capex of around \$10 billion in FY24 that ends on March 31.

Sources said these investments will set the stage for exponential profit growth.

The group had previously guided a \$100 billion capex over the next 7-10 years. Most of this investment is going to go into group fast growing businesses—renewable, green hydrogen and airports. As much as 70% of the planned capex will go into its green portfolio and of the remaining 30%, the majority will be spent towards airports and ports businesses, they said.

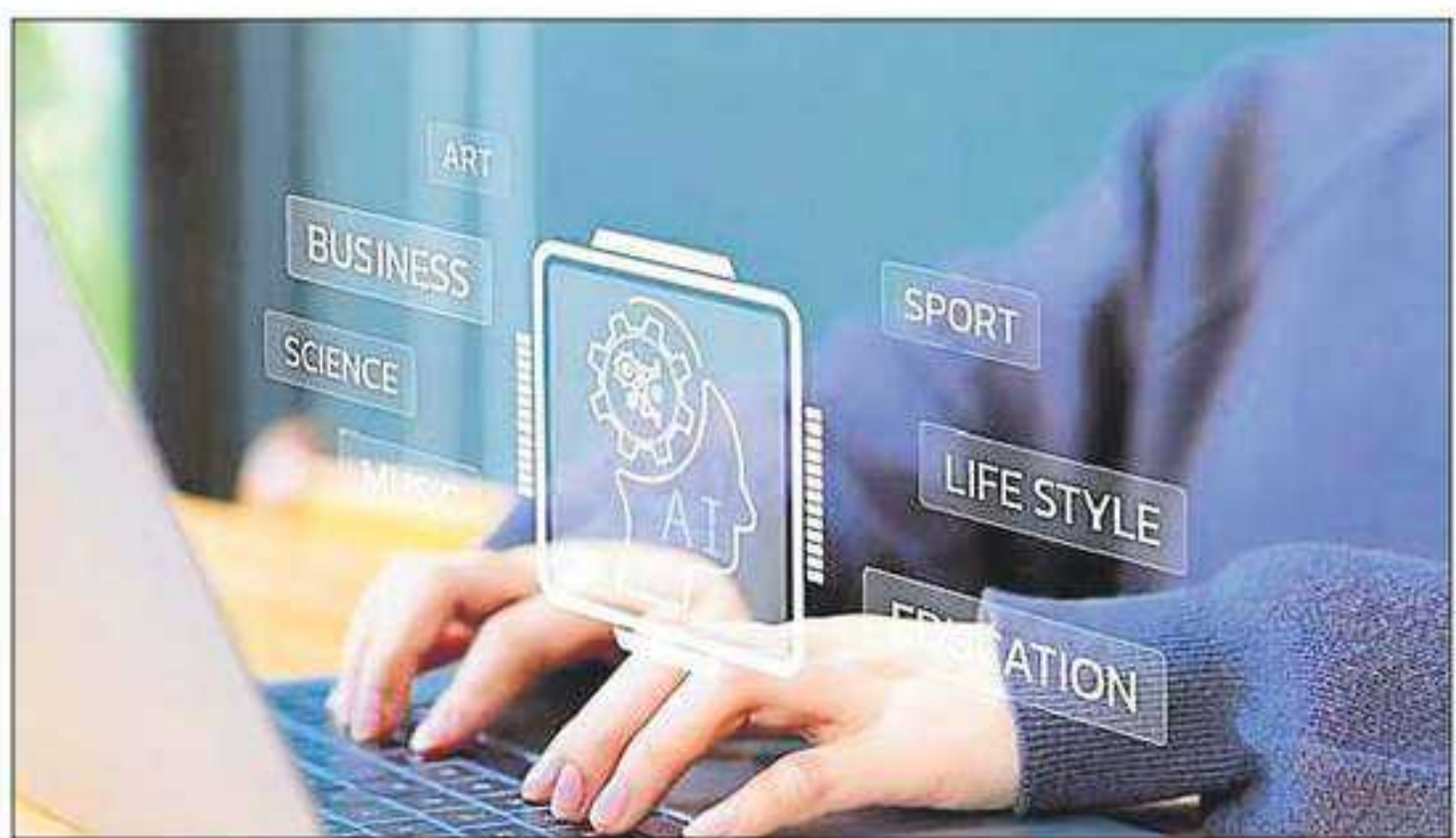
# Industry hails govt move to revise GenAI advisory

**Gulveen Aulakh**  
gulveen.aulakh@livemint.com

**NEW DELHI:** The government's move to amend its 1 March advisory mandating companies developing GenAI- and AI-based tools and features to take explicit government consent before releasing them in the market was welcomed by industry players, as they wouldn't now need to take any permission.

The amended advisory was issued on 15 March, which also removed the requirement of compliance within 15 days.

"It is good to see that the industry's feedback was taken and the AI advisory was revised. The earlier advisory would have severely reduced speed to market and dented the



The amended advisory was issued on 15 March, which also removed the requirement of compliance within 15 days.

innovation ecosystem," said Rohit Kumar, founding partner at The Quantum Hub, a public policy consulting firm.

He noted that the requirement to submit an action-tak-

en-report in the earlier letter also meant that it was not merely an "advisory".

Platforms and intermediaries equipped with artificial intelligence (AI) and generative

AI (GenAI) capabilities, such as Google and OpenAI, were told to obtain government approval before offering users services that enable the creation of deepfakes, the earlier advisory issued by the ministry of information technology and electronics had said.

The platforms were also mandated to label themselves as "under testing" and were also asked to secure explicit consent from users, making them aware of the potential errors inherent in the technology.

All platforms and intermediaries that utilize large language models (LLMs) and foundational models were to comply. These requirements continue to be part of the amended advisory. Additionally, the services

were required to not produce content that compromises the integrity of the electoral process or violates Indian law, highlighting concerns over misinformation and deepfakes influencing election outcomes.

Some executives said that elections were a high-risk period and so asking intermediaries to be extra careful before releasing untested models and appropriately labelling outputs was the right step taken by the government.

"While the revision is definitely a positive step, the whole episode highlights the need for procedural safeguards—to avoid quick reactions to incidents and instead adopt a more consultative approach to policy making," an executive, who did not wish to be identified, said.

## { THE CROSSWORDS }

### CRYPTIC CLUES

- ACROSS**
- Moon starrer? Perhaps (10)
  - Council saying evil is peculiar? (5)
  - Stop with the Spanish officer? (7)
  - Accurately defined new recipes? (7)
  - Music for a man to perform (5)
  - Having the edge? (6)
  - Trouble with a colour that's much admired (6)
  - Barbecue might be best (5)
  - They don't travel overland from San Remo (7)
  - Literary characters with a leaning to the right (7)
  - Wage earner who is beneath seeking earthly riches (5)
  - Fresh eggs a change from fruit? (10)
- DOWN**
- A sum Ben worked out for Ray (7)
  - They meet in the centre of the ring (5)
  - A metal machine operator in America perhaps (6)
  - She's no hard leftist (7)
  - Dispute arrest (3,2)
  - He contributes to the liquid assets of a bank (5,5)
  - Not slow to get a new purse with new coins (10)
  - Exiting feeling (7)
  - Language of love (7)
  - Relation puts us in the money (6)
  - Play luckily (5)
  - Dance, drink and get a bad head (5)

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### YESTERDAY'S SOLUTIONS (16809)

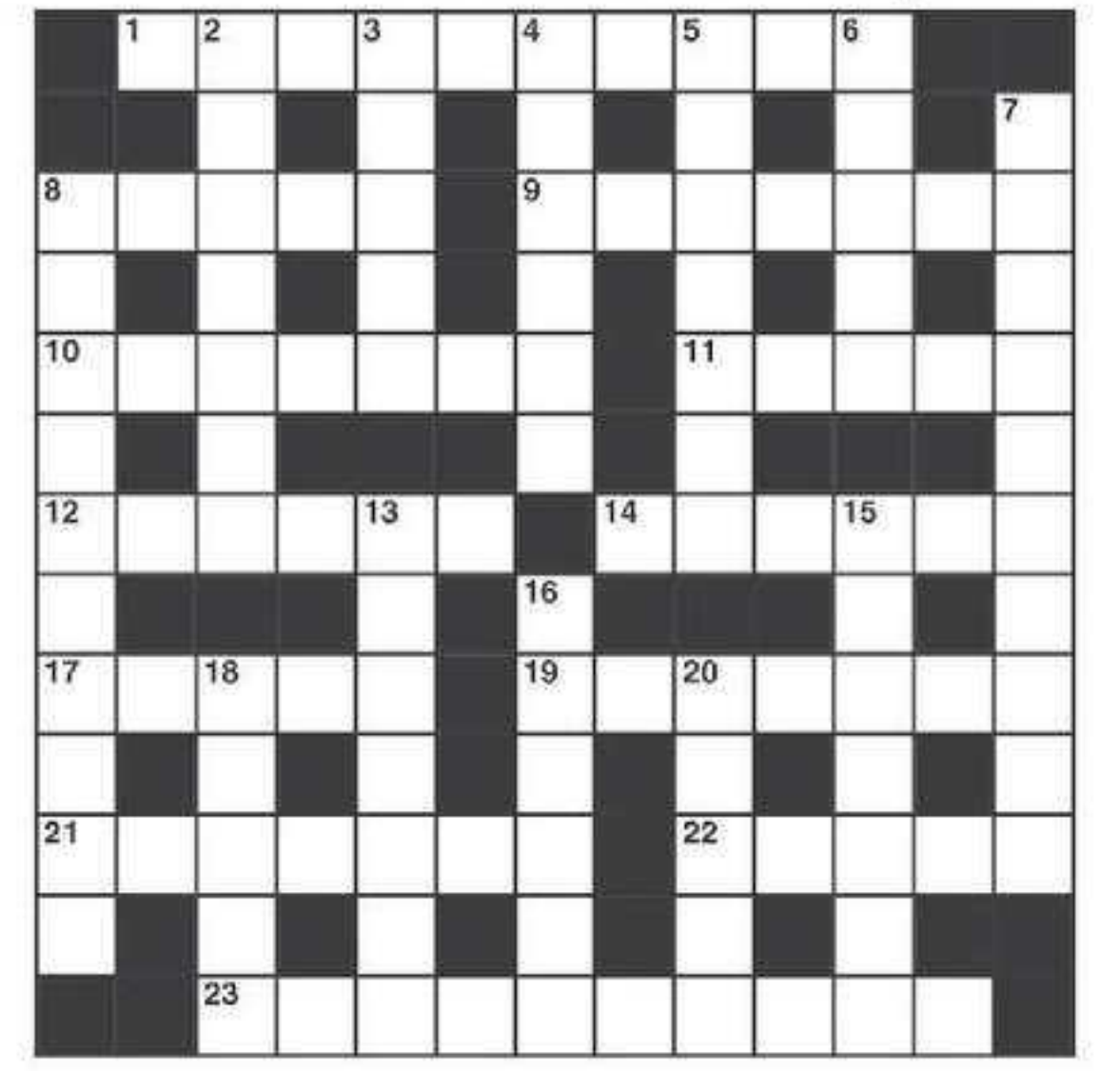
**CRYPTIC**

S	L	E	I	G	H	S	I	M	P	L	E
A	T	I	U	H	D	O	A				
M	A	D	O	N	N	A	E	A	R	N	S
U	E	S	H	A	T	I					
E	A	R	T	H	I	L	L	W	I	L	L
L	O	C	O	M	P	A	N	Y			
P	A	R	T	I	C	O	M	P	A	N	Y
S	A	N	T	H	E	E	S				
S	P	R	O	V	E	R	B	R	E	L	I
I	D	G	E	F	O	R					
L	A	Y	E	R	A	V	E	R	A	G	E
L	A	N	E	N	C	D	W				
S	H	E	A	T	H	S	T	A	S	I	S

**QUICK**

A	C	C	O	S	T	G	A	T	H	E	R
L	A	M	R	W	A	E					
M	A	R	C	O	N	I	F	O	R	U	M
O	A	T	G	U	I	D	O				
N	O	T	C	H	A	L	F	W	I	T	
G	O	E	T								
S	I	G	R	E	T	G	U	N	S		
S	N										
P	O	P	U	L	A	R					
R	A	I	A	E	U	O					
E	X	P	E	L	I	N	V	A	L	I	D
A	E	A	N	E	G	E					
D	I	R	E	C	T						

## PUZZLE 16810 © Gemini Crosswords 2018 All rights reserved



### QUICK CLUES

- ACROSS**
- Russian-born US composer (10)
  - US composer and bandmaster (5)
  - To refrain (7)
  - Subdue by force (7)
  - Of a former age (5)
  - Loathe (6)
  - Seize abruptly (6)
  - Composer of La Traviata (5)
  - Province of Canada (7)
  - Facsimile (7)
  - Confederation (5)
  - A Wagner opera (3,7)
- DOWN**
- Instrument played by 'Satchmo' (7)
  - Quickly (5)
  - Swarm over (6)
  - A cut of beef (7)
  - Give way (5)
  - A coiled brass instrument (6,4)
  - Italian violin maker (10)
  - Self-destructive action (7)
  - Small dog used by hunters (7)
  - Instrumental musical composition (6)
  - Fast (5)
  - Goods vehicle (5)

## { SUDOKU } DIFFICULTY LEVEL ★★★

			5	8				3
	2			3		8		
	7		2			4		
8		3			2			
2								4
	5			6		4		
	2		9		6			
6								
			4	8				

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

<b>MONDAY</b> Mainly clear sky 31°C   12°C	<b>TUESDAY</b> Partly cloudy sky 31°C   12°C	<b>WEDNESDAY</b> Partly cloudy sky 32°C   13°C
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## ALMANAC

Today is 18th March 2024  
 • 7 Ramadan, 1445  
 • 24 Phalguna, Krishna  
 Paksha 9  
 • Samvat 2080  
 Sunrise: Monday at 06:31 a.m.  
 Moonset: Monday at 12:18 p.m.  
 Moonset: Tuesday at 03:02 a.m.

## TEMPERATURE IN FOUR METROS

Delhi 31°C   12°C	Mumbai 35°C   23°C
Kolkata 3	

SPORT



Royal Challengers Bangalore players celebrate with the trophy after winning the Women's Premier League 2024 at the Arun Jaitley Stadium on Sunday.

{ STRAIGHT DRIVE }  
Amrit Mathur



# IPL is a game changer that keeps delivering

**D**uring the recent assembly elections, a political party's manifesto promised to bring IPL to the state. The cricket loving party lost, and fans missed out, but the public declaration confirms that IPL is huge; and riding on its runaway success, India is cricket's undisputed global boss.

When it started, people thought IPL was a disruptor which gave cricket a solid shake. Today, it is seen as a turning point in cricket's growth. IPL broke new ground because with it came private ownership, the (visible) owner/investor and the (invisible) market forces that determined the commercial value of players. In one stroke, the traditional ladder (junior to Ranji to Tests) was discarded and the traditional selection process went for a toss. The fate of cricketers was now in the hands of the person who moved the paddle in the IPL auction room.

The league's most profound impact has been on cricket's commerce. BCCI, owner of the league, makes heaps of money from media rights, franchise fee (Lucknow Super Giant pays ₹709 crore each year) and the 20% share of revenue (the top line) from the original eight teams. Team owners are also in a happy space because business is risk free, return of investment is great and profits are guaranteed. Commercially, in IPL there is no play and miss.

In IPL, all is well for all, all the time. Player Sensex is at an all-time high after Hardik Pan-

**WHEN IT STARTED, PEOPLE THOUGHT IPL WAS A DISRUPTOR WHICH GAVE CRICKET A SOLID SHAKE. TODAY, IT IS SEEN AS A TURNING POINT IN CRICKET'S GROWTH.**

dya's move to Mumbai Indians. Others too have hit paydirt, the latest to luck out being Uttar Pradesh's Sameer Rizvi (₹8.4 crore) and Jharkhand's Kumar Kushagra (₹7.2 crore) and Vidarbha's Shubham Dubey (₹5.8 crore).

As IPL is the fast track to fame and riches, young players have signed up with agents to secure 'placements'. Due to IPL, players are better prepared and ready, good enough to succeed even in the longer format. Cricket underwent a corporate changeover as well. Professional CEOs are hired to build the brand and deliver a positive balance sheet. The data analyst helps unearth talent, hires players and shapes team strategy. IPL team meetings are slick affairs with serious presentations made by experts.

Some dismiss this as unnecessary noise created by support staff wanting to appear busy. True to an extent, but there is no denying that many good practices have come into Ranji Trophy and domestic red-ball cricket is more professional.

IPL has made cricket open, allowing talented kids to force their way up. Looking at the larger picture, it has stretched the boundary and altered cricket in so many ways. That is why its template (cricket/commerce/entertainment cocktail) is a hit worldwide.

Cricket is currently struggling to adjust to the landslide support for T20 cricket. Initially, when the calendar got crowded, it was seen as a scheduling issue and traditional cricket tried to adjust to the new leagues. But now, with South Africa giving priority to its league over Tests, it's clear that T20 is the favoured option for all stakeholders.

India calling the shots because of IPL's influence is understandable. That it generates more money than the rest of the cricket world is known. What is not is that India has the biggest cricket set up in the world - more matches (across age groups) than the rest of the world put together. While Australia and SA have 6 first-class teams, and England 18, India had 38 with more than 1,000 first-class players. In size, scale and scope, India is far ahead of others.

Today, thanks to IPL, India has muscle and does not hesitate to use it. When ICC was dividing its income among members, India demanded and got its fair share. In the next financial cycle, India is to receive \$230 million annually, nearly 40% of ICC's yearly global revenue. The next best is England with 7%.

# Mandhana helps RCB end barren run in T20 leagues

Delhi Capitals lose their second WPL final in a row after a batting collapse with RCB winning the final at Kotla by 8 wickets

Shantanu Srivastava  
sportsdesk@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** The wait is over for Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB). The much-loved, much-debated franchise with the biggest stars and glitziest ad campaigns finally has a title, and it has taken them 16 years to get here. RCB Women have taken only a second edition of the Women's Premier League to come up victorious though.

Anil Kumble couldn't do it in 2009, Daniel Vettori in 2011, Virat Kohli in 2016. On a starlit Sunday night, cheered madly by a vociferous 29,000-strong crowd that had descended on the Ferozeshah Kotla in a sea of Delhi Capitals blue, the unassuming Smriti Mandhana took RCB to their first ever

title, beating the home favourites, league toppers and last edition's finalists with eight wickets and three balls remaining.

Having restricted DC to 113 runs inside 19 overs, RCB endured a few nervous moments in the chase, but a target of 114 was never going to realistically test them. Their ultra-defensive, safety-first approach meant the what should have been a sub-run-a-ball chase petered out in the middle overs, leaving them to go at seven an over in the last four overs. Importantly for them, RCB had Ellyse Perry in the middle to shepherd them through the defining phase.

Needing 19 off the last three overs, Perry found the crucial boundary off Jess Jonassen to bring the equation down to under run-a-ball going into the last two overs. Another four off Alice Caspey in the next over all but sealed the deal but RCB still needed five off the last over.

Arundhati Reddy conceded singles off the first two balls but when Richa Ghosh swung her length ball over cover for the winning hit, Kotla rose in unison,

reverberating with chants for the winners.

While Ghosh and Perry deservedly took the late glory, RCB's win was forged on the back of some exemplary middle overs bowling that, not for the first time this season, proved to be more than the sum of its parts.

Coming into Sunday's final, no RCB bowler featured among the top five wicket takers of the season, a list that had three DC bowlers led by South Africa's Marizanne Kapp (11 wickets). By the time the DC innings met its premature end, the RCB trio of Shreyanka Patil, Asha Shobhana and Sophie Molineux had all zoomed past Kapp's tally.

The three spinners produced a combined haul of 46/9 in 11 overs, breaking the back of DC batting and all but sealing RCB's date with history at the half-way.

DC got off to a flier thanks to a typically fearless 27-ball 44 from opener Shafali Verma. The belligerent 20-year-old lived up to her reputation on the big night, making full use of the field restrictions to pummel Renuka Singh, Perry

and Molineux for a six apiece inside the powerplay.

Renuka Singh and Perry, looking for early swing, kept pitching the ball up but the absence of any movement in the air and off the pitch meant Verma could plant her front foot and swing through the line. By the end of the powerplay, DC had motored to 61/0 and were looking good for an imposing total.

That didn't happen though. The slide began in the eighth over when Verma mistimed her slog sweep off Molineux and Georgia Wareham pounced a straightforward catch at long on. Two balls later, she tossed one up to Jemimah Rodrigues and the right hander missed her attempted sweep to be bowled. Next ball, Alice Caspey went for a paddle sweep but failed to connect and the ball thudded into the stumps. Having lost their top order in the space of four balls, DC batters went into a shell even as RCB tightened the noose.

The introduction of Shreyanka Patil exacerbated matters for the home side. The off-spinner who had played a pivotal role in RCB's win over defending champions

Mumbai Indians in the Eliminator, again came to the party. Not hesitant to flight the ball, Patil found the length quickly and got rid of DC skipper Meg Lanning in her first over. From 10-an-over, DC's run rate began to plunge alarmingly as Shobhana struck at the other end, her leg-breaks proving too good for Kapp and Jonassen.

Mandhana, getting the pulse of the game, rotated her spinners through the middle overs, offering little pace or room for DC batters to work with.

The middle-overs (6-16) produced returns of 39/7 for DC. Only three fours came in this period - two in the same over - including a 47-ball stretch of no boundaries. The slog overs were no different as DC lost the remaining side for the addition of 13 runs to put RCB on the cusp of history. And when the moment arrived, the women in red didn't disappoint.

**Brief scores:** Delhi Capitals 113 in 18.3 overs (Shafali Verma 44; Shreyanka Patil 4/12, Sophie Molineux 3/20). RCB 115/2 in 19.3 overs (Ellyse Perry 35\*). **RCB won by 8 wickets.**

# The next challenge for Pant: Getting back to his best

Vivek Krishnan  
vivek.krishnan@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** 453 days. That's how long it would have been since Rishabh Pant played a competitive game when he turns out for Delhi Capitals in their opening IPL game against Punjab Kings in Mullanpur, Mohali on March 23.

Or more appropriately, that's how quickly Pant will have managed to stage a comeback. To first appreciate how miraculous a recovery this has been, a flashback to the wee hours of December 30, 2022, is needed when Pant, driving from Delhi to meet his mother in Roorkee, suffered a horrific road accident that saw his car go up in flames and his body soaked in blood. By the time the grim news broke out that morning, cricket was farthest from anyone's mind because it was clear that Pant, then 25, had narrowly escaped death.

Two knee reconstruction procedures, a plastic surgery and countless rehab, strength and training sessions later, here we are - Pant, wearing 120 stitches across his forehead, has challenged the 18-month timeline orthopaedic specialist Dr Dinshaw Pardiwala, who operated on his right knee, had set for his return by getting back in 14 months.

From being bedridden in the initial weeks to walking with crutches to gradually getting back to training to now reaching a position where he's hoping to entertain crowds again with bat and gloves, Pant has pulled off a feat just as unbelievable as some of his stupendous knocks in a career that was hitting its peak when the accident occurred.

A long hiatus of this nature can break many strong individuals, but Pant is upbeat and back to flashing that wicked smile again, knowing that this is a second chance in life as well as cricket that he should enjoy and embrace wholeheartedly.

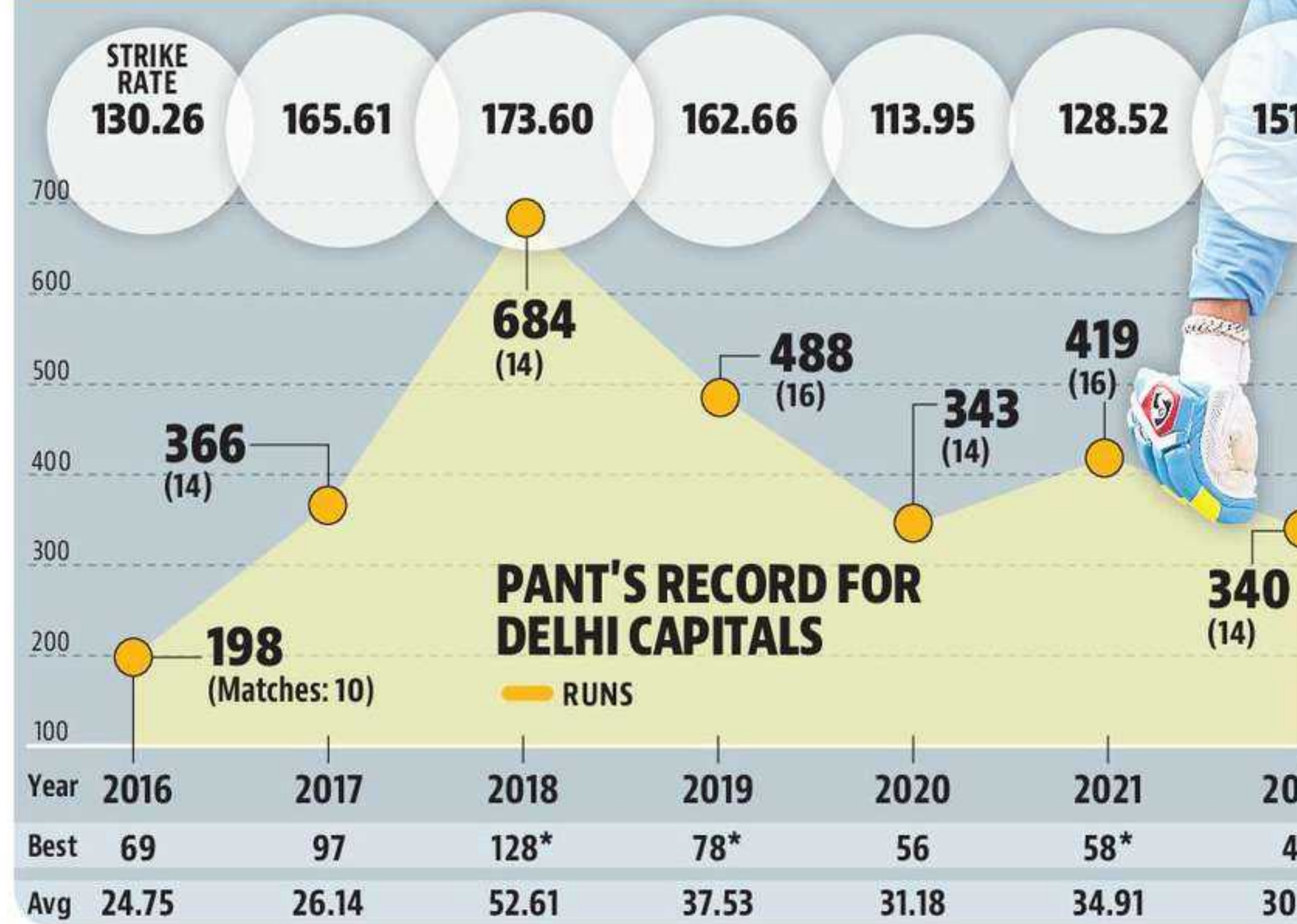
Even a month ago, Pant's immediate cricketing future seemed riddled with uncertainty given the reports that were swirling. Delhi Capitals co-owner Parth Jindal had gone on record to say Pant will only play as a batter during the first half of the IPL season. This was following the suggestions from officials within the Delhi Capitals camp that Pant may only be used as an Impact Player this season.

On March 12, any ambiguity was allayed as BCCI declared in a media release that Pant was fit to play IPL 2024 as a wicketkeeper-batter. The news brought expected cheer, for Pant was a proven match-winner at the time of his accident who had already achieved things in a short span that none of his predecessors had. For example, he is the only Indian wicketkeeper-batter with Test hundreds in England, Australia and South Africa. His unbeaten 89 against Australia at the Gabba in 2021, which landed India a landmark series win, is a knock that will go down in history as one of the greatest in the fourth innings of a Test.

While Pant has gratitude for simply being able to return to the field, it will be a travesty to his immense talent if he's unable to conjure the magic that made him stand out. And in the coming weeks, that's the battle he faces. Can Pant be the cricketer he was? From the short social media clips that Pant and DC have been sharing of his batting, he still has

## PANT'S CLOSE SHAVE AND COMEBACK

- Pre-dawn on Dec 30, 2022, Pant, driving to Roorkee from Delhi, was seriously injured after his car hit a divider and crashed
- Pant somehow got out before his car burst into flames, helped by two locals, Rajat Kumar and Nishu Kumar, whom he thanked
- After emergency care at a Roorkee hospital, he was shifted to Max, Dehradun. He had plastic surgery for facial injuries there
- He was subsequently flown to Mumbai, where he underwent a successful surgery on his right knee to reconstruct two torn ligaments



the trademark shots in his locker - the one-handed hook for six on the leg side, the bludgeons down the ground and the range of sweeps and paddles that can send captains into a tizzy about the fields to set. The caveat is these are just practice sessions, and a more accurate assessment of his readiness can only be arrived at in the heat of the battle.

Even if he recovers that special touch with the willow, the work behind the stumps is bound to ask questions of his right knee

and be far more taxing. As former Delhi player Devender Sharma - he runs the late Tarak Sinha's Sonnet Club in Delhi and is regarded as an "elder brother" by Pant - says: "It is difficult to keep wicket after a knee surgery. The challenge as a keeper is to go up and down constantly. Even when the ball doesn't come to you, you have to go up and down for 120 balls in a T20. And there are sideways movements as well. If your knee isn't right, keeping is impossible."

## From hospital bed to the tennis court, Shrivalli shows grit

Rutvik Mehta  
rutvik.mehta@htlive.com

**MUMBAI:** At around 9am on Sunday as she was being discharged from a hospital in Indore, India women's No. 5 tennis pro Shrivalli Bhamidipaty had a chat over phone with coach Vishal Uppal. "I asked her how are you feeling. She said I'm feeling terrible," Uppal said. "I then asked her what are you thinking. She said I'm thinking how can I beat Dalila (Jakupovic)."

At 10.30am, Shrivalli stood across Jakupovic to play the singles final of the ITF women's event after spending the night in hospital with high fever, food poisoning and heat stroke. She lost 6-3, 6-2 to the Slovenian second seed but after being on multiple IV drips, antibiotics and paracetamol all night, turning up and finishing the match showed something beyond the result for Uppal. "The fact that she stepped on the court told me that she is a fighter and is hungry in the mind," the former Davis Cupper and Fed Cup captain said.

"I wanted to give it a shot, and for her (Jakupovic) to earn the win," Shrivalli said. Withdrawing would perhaps have been the easier option (one that has been taken countless times on the pro tour), but not once did Shrivalli entertain the thought. "Throughout the night, I was stressed about not being able to play the final, but I didn't want to not turn up. I was so supportive, the spectators and the little girls who would see me play," she said.

## Deepika tops trials for WC and Olympics

Deepika Kumari

**SONEPAT:** Deepika Kumari, who missed last season after becoming a mother in Dec 2022, topped the selection trials for the upcoming World Cups and the Paris Olympics. The three-time

Olympian made the cut along with Bhajan Kaur, Anika Bhakat and Komalika Bari. B Dhiraj, who has secured the only Olympic quota for India, topped the men's recurve section. Tarundeep Rai, Pravin Jadhav and Mrinal Chauhan are the others.

## Kohli back in India, set to join RCB camp

**NEW DELHI:** Virat Kohli on Sunday returned to India, following the birth of his son Akaay, and is set to join RCB's training camp ahead of the upcoming IPL. Kohli had opted out of the India-England Test series citing "personal reasons".

## Shrivalli Bhamidipaty

Nao Hibino, strung a fine run in Indore too. Ranked 486, she took down top seed Irina Bara (ranked 175), fifth seed Justina Mikulskytė (249), whom she beat 6-0, 6-0, and seventh seed Polina Latcenko (301) to march into the final. She also won the doubles title partnering Vaidehi Chaudhari.

It was after the doubles final on Saturday that Shrivalli could barely stand. She had been sick for a couple of days, 103F temperature, vomiting and diarrhoea after playing most of her matches in the afternoons. All of which got worse on Saturday evening. "She was also shivering quite a bit, so we decided to get her admitted to a hospital," her father BRN Prasad said.

The bottles of drips through the night infused some fluids back into her system even as antibiotics took care of the fever. Shrivalli woke up deciding to step on court against the world No.213, but apart from the serves and returns, her on-court movement was hardly the same. She had nine break point opportunities but could convert just one. "I couldn't move much on the court. My body had lost a lot of fluids and it was also heavy from all the medication. I just felt a lot weaker," she said.

The 22-year-old, who had reached the second round of the WTA Mumbai Open last month as a qualifier stunning world No.94

Deepika Kumari. GETTY IMAGES

Shrivalli Bhamidipaty. HT

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Amad Diallo (R) scores late in extra time to help Man United register a 4-3 victory over Liverpool on Sunday and enter the FA Cup semis. The match was locked 2-2 in regulation time. REUTERS

## Chelsea survive Leicester scare, enter semi-finals

Agencies  
sportsdesk@hindustantimes.com

**LONDON:** Carney Chukwuemeka rescued Chelsea with a stoppage-time strike that inspired a 4-2 win over 10-man Leicester in an FA Cup quarter-final thriller in London on Sunday.

Mauricio Pochettino's side were fortunate to survive a stirring fightback from Championship promotion chasers Leicester amid a mutinous atmosphere at Stamford Bridge.

Chukwuemeka netted in the closing minutes to save Chelsea from the embarrassment of being forced into extra-time.

Noni Madueke added Chelsea's fourth to ensure the angry fans who booed Pochettino in the second half were silenced, at least for now.

For the sixth time in the last eight years, the Blues have advanced to the last four in the FA Cup.

But this was hardly a triumphant afternoon for Blues boss Pochettino, whose inconsistent team blew the two-goal half-time lead given to them by Marc Cucurella and Cole Palmer.

In between those strikes, Raheem Sterling missed a penalty and Axel Disasi gave Leicester hope with a farcical own goal early in the second half.

When Stephy Mavididi scored an eye-catching equal-

iser, Chelsea were in turmoil once again as the hapless Sterling earned the wrath of the home support.

But Leicester's Callum Doyle was sent off for a professional foul on Nicolas Jackson, setting the stage for the Blues' late revival.

Chelsea have failed to win a single domestic trophy since their most recent FA Cup triumph six years ago.

The west Londoners are languishing in 11th place in the Premier League and former Tottenham and Southampton boss Pochettino is yet to win silverware in England.

**Silva sends Man City into last four**

Bernardo Silva scored twice as Manchester City beat Newcastle 2-0 at the Etihad Stadium to reach the semi-finals on Saturday.

Holdings City remain on course to repeat their treble triumph of Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup last season as Pep Guardiola's men stretched their unbeaten run in all competitions to 22 games. Fortune favoured the English champions, though, as twice Silva's shots took deflections to wrong-foot Newcastle goalkeeper Martin Dubravka.

City are the first side to ever reach the FA Cup semi-finals in six consecutive seasons.

## West Ham's late goal ruled out in draw against Aston Villa

Agencies  
sportsdesk@hindustantimes.com

**LONDON:** West Ham United were denied a dramatic stoppage-time winner after Aston Villa came from behind to earn a 1-1 draw in a fiery Premier League clash on Sunday.

Michail Antonio's stooping header, his first goal since August, gave the hosts the lead after 29 minutes and West Ham had goals ruled out for handball either side of half-time.

Villa equalised in the 79th minute when Nicolo Zaniolo poked home fellow substitute

Moussa Diaby's cutback after a period of sustained pressure.

West Ham thought they had won the game at the death but another goal was ruled out for handball after a lengthy VAR check to leave both sides with a point. Villa remain fourth on 56 points while West Ham are seventh in the standings on 44 points.

**Tottenham's top four bid rocked by Fulham**  
Tottenham wasted a chance to move into the top four as they slumped to a shock 3-0 defeat at Fulham.

Ange Postecoglou's side would have climbed above Aston Villa into fourth place with a win, but instead they handed the initiative back to their top-four rivals.

Fifth-placed Tottenham were punished for a sloppy performance as the in-form Rodrigo

Muniz netted twice either side of Sasa Lukic's first goal for Fulham.

A 4-0 win at Villa last weekend was expected to act as Tottenham's springboard to finish above Unai Emery's team in the battle to qualify for next season's Champions League.

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