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NEWS » PAGE 10

CITIZENSHIP (AMENDMENT) ACT

The conundrum of citizenship

The confusion among the Matuas of West Bengal

GROUND ZERO » PAGE 7



POWERING HOME

Narine and Venkatesh ace the chase for KKR

SPORT » PAGE 15

## Grand alliance announces seat-sharing deal in Bihar

According to the agreement, RJD will contest 26 seats, and the Congress nine in the State that has 40 Lok Sabha constituencies; five seats have been allocated among the CPI(ML), CPI and CPI(M)

**Amarnath Tewary**  
PATNA

**A** day after the last date for filing nomination papers for the first phase of Lok Sabha election scheduled on April 19, the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and Congress-led *mahagathbandhan* (grand alliance) in Bihar announced their seat-sharing agreement on Friday.

According to the agreement, the RJD will contest 26 seats and the Congress nine, while five seats have been allocated among the three Left parties – the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

The announcement was jointly made by the parties at the State headquarters



**Battle-ready:** The leaders of the grand alliance join hands after releasing the candidates list in Patna on Friday. ANI

of the RJD here.

While the RJD will contest Purnia, Aurangabad, Gaya, Jamui, Nawada, Saran, Patliputra, Buxar, Ujiyarpur, Jehanabad, Darbhanga, Banka, Araria, Munger, Sitamarhi, Jhanjharpur, Madhubani, Siwan, Seohar, Vaishali, Hajipur, Supaul, Valmikinagar, East Champaran, Madhep-

ura, and Gopalganj, the Congress will fight in Kishanganj, Katihar, Samastipur, Patna Sahib, Sasaram, West Champaran, Muzaffarpur, Bhagalpur, and Maharajganj.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha election too, the Congress had contested nine seats, winning the lone Kishanganj seat.

The BJP-led NDA had won the remaining 39 seats in the State.

Among the Left parties, the CPI (ML) is to contest three seats – Bhojpur (Ara), Nalanda and Karakat. While the CPI will contest the Begusarai seat, for which it has already announced Awadhesh Rai as the candidate, the CPI(M) will contest the Khagaria seat.

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, who is also the Leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly, was conspicuous by his absence during the announcement. State Congress chief Akhilesh Prasad Singh, though, was present.

**CONTINUED ON**  
» PAGE 8  
**CONGRESS UNHAPPY**  
» PAGE 9

## ‘ED arrested Kejriwal to access his phone, AAP’s LS poll plans’

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Senior Aam Aadmi Party leader Atishi on Friday alleged that the real agenda behind Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal’s arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) was to get access to his phone, and it is not the ED but the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) that wants the password of Mr. Kejriwal’s phone.

“In the Rouse Avenue court yesterday [Thursday], ED’s lawyer ASG S.V. Raju inadvertently revealed the real motive of the ED in front of the court and the whole world. Mr. Raju said that they [ED] need to keep Mr. Kejriwal in custody for a few more days because he has not disclosed the password of his phone. Why do they need the password to his phone, which is only a couple of months old?” Ms. Atishi said.

**Atishi said the phone which he is using now was not in use when the Delhi excise policy was formulated**

She added that the phone, which he is using now was not in use when the Delhi excise policy was formulated and implemented, as per the ED’s own admission. Ms. Atishi said that the only things that the ED will find on his phone are surveys of the 23 Lok Sabha seats AAP is contesting and the party’s campaign plans. The communication, media, and social media plans of AAP for the Lok Sabha poll will also be found on this phone. “So, it is not the ED but the BJP that wants the password...,” she said.

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» PAGES 4, 9

**IN BRIEF**

**Karnataka blast: NIA offers ₹20 lakh for leads**

**BENGALURU**  
The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has released the photographs and details of the two absconding prime accused in Rameshwaram Cafe blast case and announced a reward of ₹10 lakh on each of them. » Page 5

**Validity of FCRA registration of NGOs extended**

**NEW DELHI**  
The Union Home Ministry on Thursday extended the validity of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) registration of non-government organisations (NGOs) and associations till June 30. » Page 10

**A ride in the rain**



**Sticking together:** People huddle under umbrellas amid downpour while crossing the Dal Lake in Srinagar on Friday. AP

## Congress accuses BJP of unleashing ‘tax terrorism’

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Accusing the Union government of resorting to “tax terrorism” against the principal Opposition party to deny a level playing field in the Lok Sabha election, the Congress on Friday said the Income Tax (I-T) department has made a fresh demand of ₹1,823.08 crore from the party.

Addressing a press conference along with general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh, Congress treasurer Ajay Maken said an analysis of the donations received by the BJP – posted on the Election Commission (EC) website – reveals “serious violations” that should attract a penalty of ₹4,600 crore.



Congress leaders Jairam Ramesh, Ajay Maken and Pawan Khera at a press conference in New Delhi on Friday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

The party said it arrived at this figure of ₹4,600 crore by using the same rate of penalty and interest that the I-T department used to penalise it for a cash deposit of ₹14 lakh by its MPs and MLAs in 2019.

Mr. Maken said political parties have to fill up a proforma of Form 24A, in which two basic and important pieces of information

have to be furnished – the names and addresses of their donors. However, there were over 1,400 entries of donors that didn’t have an address, and these totalled a donation of over ₹42 crore.

**CONTINUED ON**  
» PAGE 8  
**‘FULFIL TAX OBLIGATIONS’**  
» PAGE 8

## Discussed ‘peace formula’ with India, says Ukraine Foreign Minister

**Kallol Bhattacharjee**  
NEW DELHI

India and Ukraine on Friday discussed a ‘peace formula’ for the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, visiting Foreign Minister of Ukraine Dmytro Kuleba said at the conclusion of official exchanges.

Mr. Kuleba, who was on a two-day visit to India, met with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and described the Russian campaign against Ukraine as a “full-scale war”, while arguing for energising India-Ukraine relations with new projects.



**Common goal:** External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar meets with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba on Friday. ANI

talks with Mr. Jaishankar about Ukraine-India bilateral relations, the situation in our regions, and global security. We paid specific attention to the peace formula and next steps on the path of its implementa-

tion,” Mr. Kuleba said, after the official interaction that was also attended by Secretary (West) Pavan Kapoor and J.P. Singh, Joint Secretary of the External Affairs Minister’s Office, and others.

In comments to *The Hindu* on Thursday, Mr. Kuleba had urged India to play a “more proactive role” in the upcoming peace process in Switzerland.

“We have been looking forward to this visit. In recent months, we have had interactions at various levels. This has created a certain momentum in our bilateral relations. Your visit gives us an opportunity to understand the situation in your region,” said Mr. Jaishankar in his opening remarks at the delegation-level meeting.

**CONTINUED ON**  
» PAGE 8

## Oppn. parties in U.P. raise questions over Ansari’s death; magisterial probe ordered

**Mayank Kumar**  
LUCKNOW

Opposition leaders in Uttar Pradesh on Friday demanded a high-level inquiry into the death of jailed gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari, with Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav calling for a probe under the supervision of a Supreme Court judge.

Ansari died of cardiac arrest on Thursday night within hours of being rushed to the Rani Durgawati Medical College in Banda district, according to the hospital’s medical bulletin. His son, Umar Ansari, alleged that the five-time former MLA was be-



An ambulance carrying the mortal remains of Mukhtar Ansari leaves for Ghazipur, from a hospital in Banda on Friday. PTI

ing “slow-poisoned” by a substance mixed in food given to him in Banda jail.

Ansari faced more than five dozen cases and was in jail since 2005. In the last 18 months, he had been convicted in seven cases. “My father wrote to courts that he was being subjected to ‘slow poisoning’, the entire country now knows about

it,” said the deceased’s son.

The Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) of Banda district, meanwhile, ordered a judicial inquiry into the matter. The court directed the Banda MP/MLA Court Judge, Garima Singh, to submit the report within a month.

“It is the primary responsibility and duty of the government to protect so-

meone’s life in every situation and at every place. The death of a prisoner will erode public confidence in the judicial process. The way the government bypasses the judicial process and adopts other methods is completely illegal. U.P. is going through the worst phase of government anarchy,” Mr. Yadav said in a post on X.

Four-time former Chief Minister and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) president Mayawati demanded a high-level probe into the death in view of the serious allegations by the family of the deceased.

**CONTINUED ON**  
» PAGE 8





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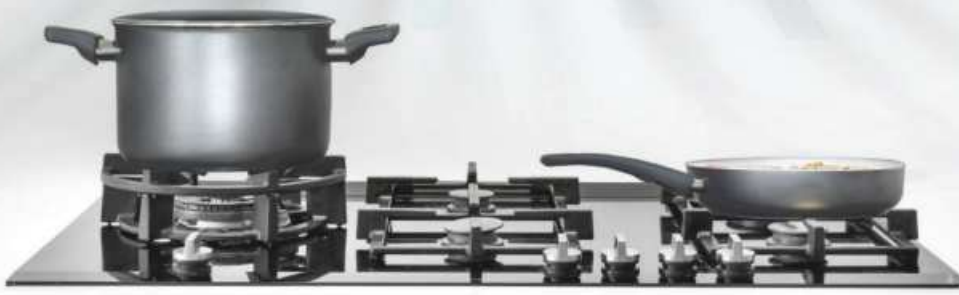
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<b>ME</b> 8 in Top 10	1 AIR Suraj Kumar Samal Postal Course & Test Series	2 AIR Saksham Jain Classroom Course, Online Course, Test Series	4 AIR Srivardhan Test Series	5 AIR Arnab Rudra Online Course, Test Series	6 AIR Ghanshyam Girish Dhamat Test Series	7 AIR Utkarsh Singh Test Series	8 AIR Harshil Batra Test Series	9 AIR Sneha Dhanotiya Online Course, Test Series	<b>PI</b> 8 in Top 10	1 AIR Kumar Vishesh Online Course, Test Series	2 AIR Sh Gowtham Gudimella Online Course, Test Series	3 AIR Krishna Kumar Dwivedi Classroom Course, Test Series	4 AIR Kadam Pratik Ramkrushna Test Series	5 AIR Prakash Chandra Test Series	6 AIR Vettrivel P. Test Series	7 AIR Kumar Dayanand Classroom Course, Online Course, Test Series	10 AIR Md Ibrahim Classroom Course, Test Series
<b>EE</b> 9 in Top 10	1 AIR Shivam Test Series	1 AIR Manoj K Sinha Test Series	4 AIR Rishabh Gupta Test Series	5 AIR Naman Agarwal Online Course, Test Series	6 AIR Kaustav Guha Roy Test Series	7 AIR Akash Ranjan Sahu Test Series	8 AIR Kambala Praveen Test Series	9 AIR Mohd Saif Test Series	9 AIR Yash Test Series	<b>EC</b> 6 in Top 10	1 AIR Raja Majhi Online Course, Test Series	2 AIR Gantasala Ravi Teja Online Course, Test Series	4 AIR Amireddy Bharath Simha Reddy Test Series	8 AIR Apurba Debnath Test Series	9 AIR Nishant Kumar Robin Test Series	10 AIR Lakshmi Sai Krishna Yarru Online Course, Test Series	
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<b>XE</b> 6 in Top 10	1 AIR Ghanshyam Girish Dhamat Test Series	2 AIR Paraj Rajendra Chhatwani Online Course, Test Series	4 AIR Ayush Kumar Pushp Classroom Course, Online Course, Test Series	7 AIR Krishan Kumar Online Course, Test Series	9 AIR Yogesh Ravindra Nehete Online Course, Test Series	10 AIR Omkar Ravindra Mulik Online Course, Test Series	<b>10</b> All India Rank 1 Including all streams	<b>62</b> in Top 10 Including all streams	<b>405</b> in Top 100 Including all streams	Course-wise details of all the selected candidates are uploaded on our website.							

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## IN BRIEF



## Kangana Ranaut launches campaign with roadshow

Actor Kangana Ranaut began her Lok Sabha campaign in Mandi constituency on Friday with a roadshow, hailing Prime Minister Narendra Modi, shouting "Jai Shri Ram" slogans and asserting that the BJP's main agenda is development. A large number of people turned up to see the Bollywood actor. "... we will spare no effort to win the elections under the guidance of Prime Minister Modi," she said. PTI

## Another plea filed in HC to remove Kejriwal as Delhi CM

Another petition has been filed in the Delhi High Court on Friday seeking the removal of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal from the post following his arrest by the ED for money laundering linked to the excise policy case. On Thursday, the court had, while rejecting an earlier plea, said that it "is of the view that there is no scope for judicial interference. It is for the other wing of the government to examine the issue". In a fresh plea, the petitioner Vishnu Gupta, referring to a Supreme Court ruling, asked, "If the CM commits a breach of constitutional trust himself, whether the Governor can dismiss the CM."

## Nagaland group rejects appeal to not boycott LS election

The Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO), demanding a separate administration for six districts of Nagaland, has rejected an appeal by a legislators' union to not boycott the Lok Sabha election on April 19. At a coordination meeting in Tuensang on Thursday, the ENPO upheld its February 23 decision to boycott the poll in protest against the Centre's failure to create the Frontier Nagaland Territory.

## Another senior Telangana police officer arrested in phone tapping case

Naveen Kumar Lavpreet Kaur  
HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad city police officials probing the phone tapping case are focused on recovering destroyed evidence.

While remnants of hard drive have been traced in the Musi River, other pieces of data have also been discovered elsewhere, officials informed.

About 42 hard drives containing illegally curated profiles of several individuals were destroyed and replaced with new ones on the night of December 4, 2023, the day Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) lost the Telangana State Assembly elections, a complaint filed

R. Radhakrishna Rao, former DCP of Commissioner's Task Force, Hyderabad, has been arrested

by D. Ramesh, Additional SP with the SIB, stated.

On Friday, R. Radhakrishna Rao, former DCP of Commissioner's Task Force, Hyderabad, was arrested. According to the officials, Mr. Pal played a key role in supplying technical support to the team that carried out the snooping activity.

Meanwhile, three politicians have come forward with allegations that their phones and privacy was compromised by the SIB officials.

## Sunita Kejriwal starts drive for husband; Hardeep Puri likens her to Rabri Devi

Delhi CM's wife urges people to send messages to AAP chief, who is in ED custody; Union Minister and BJP leader Puri says Sunita Kejriwal is 'preparing to hold CM's post like Rabri Devi did in Bihar'

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's wife, Sunita Kejriwal, on Friday launched 'Kejriwal ko Aashirwad', a campaign under which citizens can send WhatsApp messages through a dedicated phone number to her husband, who is in Enforcement Directorate (ED) custody.

Ms. Kejriwal sought people's support for the AAP national convener, who, she said, is fighting "the most corrupt and dictatorial forces" in the country.

In response, Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri compared Ms. Kejriwal with former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi, saying, "The madam you are naming is perhaps preparing to hold the Chief Minister's post like Rabri Devi did in Bihar."

He added that Mr. Kejriwal's "time is going to be up soon" as his government "has not done any work for the people of Delhi". The senior BJP leader made the remarks at the inauguration of an office of the party's Delhi unit.

On Thursday, a city court had extended the Delhi Chief Minister's ED custody till April 1. The Central probe agency had



AAP workers conducting a door-to-door campaign in Delhi, asking people to attend Opposition's rally on Sunday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHKAR

arrested Mr. Kejriwal on March 21 in a money laundering case linked to the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy for 2021-22.

## 'True patriot'

In a digital message, the third since her husband's arrest, Ms. Kejriwal sought to rally support for him. "Arvind will be very happy to read your messages. I will pass on each of your messages to him. I have been with him for the last 30 years; patriotism is in his every pore."

Ms. Kejriwal urged people to listen closely to the Delhi Chief Minister's arguments in court a day earlier. "Arvind presented his

side in the court yesterday, and the entire country heard it. It requires a lot of courage," she said.

"I have full confidence that we will all fight this battle together," she said, thanking the "mothers and sisters" who had prayed for her husband.

Speaking at the BJP event in Delhi, Mr. Puri said his party will focus on the work and development done for the Capital's residents.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said that the festival of good over evil has begun in the national capital and that a BJP worker will soon become the Delhi Chief Minister.

## AAP pulls out all stops for mega Oppn. rally in Delhi

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is pulling out all the stops to ensure a large turnout at the Opposition's 'maha rally' at Delhi's Ramla Maidaan on Sunday. Several senior leaders of the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc are likely to attend the event to express solidarity with Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal, who is in ED custody on corruption charges.

AAP workers have been conducting a door-to-door drive in the national capital, distributing pamphlets and urging people to attend the event on Sunday.

On Friday, AAP's Delhi in-charge Gopal Rai joined party workers in the outreach drive. When asked whether Mr. Kejriwal's wife would attend the event, the senior AAP leader said the decision would be made later.

The police have allowed up to 20,000 people to assemble at the event.

## Special CBI court convicts 7 people in BSP MLA Raju Pal murder case

Press Trust of India  
NEW DELHI

A special CBI court in Lucknow on Friday convicted seven people in the killing of former Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) MLA Raju Pal in 2005, a case in which murdered gangster-turned-politician Atiq Ahmad was also an accused, officials said.

The proceedings against Atiq Ahmad, his brother and prime accused Khalid Azim alias Ashraf, and Gulbul alias Rafiq were stopped after their death, they said.

Raju Pal, a BSP leader from Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh, was gunned down on January 25, 2005, as a result of political rivalry with Ashraf, whom he had defeated in the 2004 bypoll to the Prayagraj West seat.

The BSP leader had lost the seat to Atiq Ahmad in 2002 but when the latter vacated it after being elected to the Lok Sabha, Pal defeated Ashraf in the bypoll.

The Central Bureau of Investigation had taken over the probe into the case in 2016.

The Special Judge CBI, Lucknow, held Ranjeet Pal, Abid, Farhan Ahmad, Israr Ahmad, Javed, Gulhasan, and Abdul Kavi guilty in the case for criminal conspiracy and murder among other serious charges. Accused Farhan Ahmad was additionally held guilty un-

der the Indian Arms Act. Raju Pal's wife Pooja Pal welcomed the judgment but said they should have been sentenced to death. "I am satisfied with the court's decision. But the accused should have been given death sentence because an MLA was murdered in broad daylight," she said over phone from Lucknow.

She said along with her husband, two others were also murdered. "This crime is so heinous that the culprits should have been given the death sentence," she said.

On April 15 last year, Atiq Ahmad and his brother Ashraf were killed in a sensational on-camera shooting when the assailants opened fire on them near a medical college in Prayagraj while in police custody. The shooting was caught on camera as mediapersons were following the duo being escorted to the hospital by the police for a medical check-up.

At least two people were seen firing from close range at the brothers who fell to the ground, while police personnel overpowered the attackers.

## BJP fields Subhash Tamboliya for Bagidora Assembly byelection

The Hindu Bureau  
JAIPUR

The Bharatiya Janata Party on Friday announced Subhash Tamboliya, who recently switched from the Congress, as its candidate for the Assembly byelection at Bagidora in Rajasthan's Banswara district.

The seat fell vacant following the resignation of former Minister Mahendrajeet Singh Malviya, who left Congress and joined the BJP last month.

Polling will be held on April 26, along with the second phase of the Lok Sabha election in the State.

The BJP has fielded Mr. Malviya as its candidate from the Banswara-Dungarpur Lok Sabha seat.

Mr. Tamboliya, 54, considered a close associate of

Polling will be held on April 26, along with the second phase of Lok Sabha election in the State

Mr. Malviya, had resigned from the Congress recently.

The political scenario in Bagidora has completely changed after the 2023 Assembly election, as the BJP is trying to make inroads into the tribal area.

BJP candidate Krishna Katara had occupied third position in the 2023 election, while the Bharat Adivasi Party's Jaikrishna Patel stood second.

The BAP has once again fielded Mr. Patel as its candidate in Bagidora, while the Congress is yet to announce its nominee.

## MHA gives nod for CBI probe against Satyendar Jain on Suresh's extortion complaint

Press Trust of India  
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has given approval for a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe against Delhi's former Prisons Minister Satyendar Jain in a matter under the Prevention of Corruption Act, official sources said on Friday.

Mr. Jain, who is behind bars in connection with a money laundering case, was accused of extorting ₹10 crore from an inmate, Suresh Chandrashekar, for providing him protection in the jail, they said.

## High-profile inmates

Apart from Mr. Jain, former Director General of Tihar prisons Sandeep Goel

Chandrashekar had alleged that Jain had extorted ₹10 crore from him during 2018-21 as 'protection money'

and some other staff members were also charged with demanding and extorting "protection money" from high-profile inmates in Delhi jails.

The Ministry on March 22 approved the CBI probe against Jain after which Delhi Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Saxena forwarded the file to the Chief Secretary for further appropriate action, an official confirmed.

A complaint was filed by Chandrashekar after

which the CBI had begun inquiring into the matter and sought sanction from the competent authority to prosecute the former Minister under the Prevention of Corruption Act, he said.

Chandrashekar, who is lodged in Tihar jail in a money laundering case, alleged in his complaint that "Jain had extorted ₹10 crore from him in tranches during 2018-21, either personally or through his accomplices, as protection money so as to help him 'live peacefully and comfortably' in different jails of Delhi".

He had also alleged that some jail officials had allegedly extorted ₹12.50 crore from him in instalments during 2019-22.

## Bank accounts cannot be frozen under UAPA without satisfaction that funds are being used for banned outfits: Madras High Court

Mohamed Imranullah S.  
CHENNAI

Bank accounts cannot be frozen under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 unless the Centre conducts an inquiry and arrives at a subjective satisfaction of the funds in those accounts having been used or intended to be used for a banned organisation, the Madras High Court has ruled.

A Division Bench of Justices M.S. Ramesh and Sunder Mohan held so while quashing an executive order freezing the savings bank account of the Chen-

nai-based Tamil Nadu Development Foundation Trust that was suspected to be aiding Popular Front of India (PFI), a banned organisation under UAPA.

The judges pointed out that Section 7 of UAPA empowers the Centre to prohibit the use of funds of an unlawful association and Section 7(1) prescribes the procedures to be followed before passing such prohibitory orders. As per these provisions, it is mandatory to have a prior inquiry and a subjective satisfaction.

"Admittedly, in the present case, the Central Go-

vernment has not expressed the manner in which they had arrived at a subjective satisfaction but for relying upon certain documents from the digital devices which evidence the name of PFI alone and not of the petitioner Trust," the Bench wrote.

It went on to state, "On the specific stand taken by the petitioner Trust that it has no connection whatsoever with PFI and that the funds in its savings bank account have never been used for activities of PFI, the respondents are not in a position to substantiate the nexus bet-

ween the petitioner Trust and the PFI."

Authoring the verdict, Justice Ramesh wrote: "When Section 7(1) mandates an inquiry to be conducted before passing of a prohibitory order, which admittedly has not been conducted in the present case, the consequential order would be in violation of Articles 14 (equality before law) and 21 (protection of life and personal liberty) of the Constitution apart from violating the principles of natural justice."

The Division Bench also agreed with the petitioner's counsel I. Abdul Basith

that his client could not be expected to have availed of the alternative remedy of approaching a district court under Section 7(4) of UAPA when the executive order freezing the bank account had not even been served on the Trust.

"It is needless to point out that the prohibitory order would have crippled the functioning of the Trust and disabled it from fulfilling the objects of the Trust," the judges said.

They also wrote, "Whenever any coercive action is initiated by the respondents by invocation of Section 7 of the UAPA, there is

a duty cast on them to inform the affected party about the action taken. In other words, such a prohibitory order requires to be served on the affected party which is crucial."

The Bench, however, rejected the petitioner's third ground questioning the authority of the Greater Chennai Police to issue an order to freeze the bank account.

It pointed out that the UAPA empowers the Centre to delegate its authority to the State government, which, in turn, could delegate it down the line to the police.

## Court stays ban on import, sale, breeding of 'ferocious' dogs

Mohamed Imranullah S.  
CHENNAI

The Madras High Court has stayed the operation of a letter written by a Joint Secretary in the Union Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying on March 12 asking the Chief Secretaries of all States and Union Territories to ban the sale and breeding of certain dogs classified as "ferocious and dangerous for human life", besides insisting upon sterilisation of those dogs already being used as pets.

Justice Anita Sumanth also stayed a consequential

instruction issued by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs on March 14 asking its officials to prevent the import of these breeds.

The interim orders were passed on a writ petition filed by the Kennel Club of India, represented by its secretary and treasurer, C.V. Sudarshan.

Senior counsel R. Srinivas, representing KCI, said, "A dog of any breed can be trained, socialized and made friendly. Likewise, any dog if left untrained, uncared for or abused can become ferocious."



**Pressure cookers gifted to voters, says JD(S); firm gets I-T notice**

**Sharath S. Srivatsa**  
BENGALURU

The Bengaluru Rural Lok Sabha constituency, where D.K. Suresh, sitting Congress MP, is up against BJP candidate Dr. C.N. Manjunath, seems to be under the scanner of the Income Tax Department.

Tax sleuths issued a notice to a leading home appliances manufacturer seeking details of its production and distribution of pressure cookers following allegation of distribution of pressure cookers in the constituency as poll inducement.

The latest action follows a complaint by the Janata Dal (Secular) to the Election Commission alleging distribution of four lakh pressure cookers in Bengaluru Rural. A source in the I-T Department told *The Hindu*, "We are inquiring into the complaint. We have summoned the manufacturer of home appliances."

Earlier, addressing mediapersons, former CM and Janata Dal (Secular) leader H.D. Kumaraswamy alleged that 10 lakh pressure cookers bearing the photograph of a candidate were set to be distributed, of which four lakh had already been distributed.

# National parties often ignore regional aspirations, says EPS

Regional parties are better equipped to represent people and expedite development initiatives in States, says AIADMK general secretary and Tamil Nadu Leader of the Opposition Palaniswami

**T. Ramakrishnan**  
**D. Suresh Kumar**  
CHENNAI

**C**riticising national parties for "ignoring" regional aspirations "many times", AIADMK general secretary and Tamil Nadu Leader of Opposition Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Friday said that regional parties, such as his own, were better equipped to represent the people and expedite development initiatives in the States.

In an interview to *The Hindu* at his official residence, Sevanthi, on Greenways Road in Chennai, Mr. Palaniswami, who took time off his busy Lok Sabha election campaign schedule, said, "In a country such as ours with much diversity", regional parties fulfilled the regional aspirations.

Sometimes, this made national parties less relevant in some States. "There is no necessity that a national party has to rule every State to bring about development in the country," the former Chief Minister said.

**PM candidate**

In a parliamentary democracy, there was no need to



AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami during an interview with *The Hindu* in Chennai on Friday. AKHILA EASWARAN

identify the Prime Minister before the election. Today, many parties were contesting in the election with no prime ministerial candidate.

After the election, the prime ministerial candidate may emerge, depending on the relative strength of the parties in Parliament, he said.

"We will play an appropriate role in determining the Prime Minister who is concerned about Tamil Nadu and who listens to the genuine demands of our State," he said, answering a question whether people of the State would accept a front that did not project

anyone as the prime ministerial candidate and did not have any national party.

The former Chief Minister added that principal players in West Bengal, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, too, were not promoting anyone for the post of Prime Minister.

Asked whether his party would not require the support of a national party as it promised several measures to boost the revenue of the States, Mr. Palaniswami replied, "We feel a revisit to the Central fiscal policy is the need of the hour, especially after the introduction of the GST

[Goods and Services Tax] as the States' own resources are dwindling. If the idea is acceptable [to many], we will press in Parliament for such a course of action. Further, it is not necessary that one should be part of the government to get such policies implemented. We can be a rallying point among like-minded parties to mobilise support and press for the implementation of many of our proposals."

On the circumstances that led to the AIADMK's separation from the BJP and exit from the National Democratic Alliance, Mr. Palaniswami acknowledged that on matters concerning the State, "we were not able to function independently while in the alliance".

**Primary job**

It was the people of the State who "elect us" and "it is our primary job to resolve their problems", he said.

Apart from the BJP State leadership "denigrating" AIADMK founder M.G. Ramachandran and former Chief Ministers C.N. Annadurai and Jayalalitha, the State was "being neglected at the national level", he pointed out.

**Police file FIR against Arnab for 'fake' news report about Karnataka CM**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BENGALURU

The Bengaluru police have registered a case against Arnab Goswami, editor-in-chief of Republic TV, and Niranjana, editor of the Kannada news channel of the same group (R Kannada), for allegedly airing a fake news report about Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

The duo has been booked under Section 505 (2) of Indian Penal Code for 'statements creating or promoting enmity, hatred or ill-will between classes'.

The complainant is Ravindra M.V., secretary, Legal Cell, Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee. He has alleged that on March 27 around 7.15 p.m., R Kannada channel aired a news story claiming that traffic on M.G. Road in Bengaluru was stopped to enable passage for Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and, hence, an ambulance was stuck. The news report was accompanied by a video that had been posted on social media.

**Not in Bengaluru**

However, at that time, Mr. Siddaramaiah was not in Bengaluru. He was in Mysuru, according to the complainant.

**Ambedkar blames Raut for break down of seat-sharing talks between MVA, VBA**

**Shoumojit Banerjee**  
PUNE



Raut has stabbed us in the back

**Prakash Ambedkar**  
Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi chief

After announcing that his Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) would have no truck with the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in the Lok Sabha election, VBA chief Prakash Ambedkar on Friday singled out Sanjay Raut, spokesperson of the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) faction, as being responsible for the break down in seat-sharing talks between the MVA and the VBA.

Speaking in Mumbai, Mr. Ambedkar targeted Mr. Raut for spreading "misinformation" about seat-sharing during the talks, and accusing the Sena (UBT) leader of "stabbing the VBA in the back".

"Sanjay Raut, how many lies will you tell," Mr. Ambedkar said and alleged that it was Mr. Raut who had not invited the VBA for seat-sharing meetings with the MVA.

"Is it not true that you [Mr. Raut] had raised the issue of fielding a candidate against the VBA in Akola? On the one hand, he was creating this perception of forming an alliance with us, but on the other, he was plotting to undermine the VBA," said

Mr. Ambedkar. Through all this, Mr. Raut has remained one of Mr. Ambedkar's staunch supporters. Meanwhile, Mr. Raut gave a guarded response to Mr. Ambedkar's 'allegations'. He said, "Our fight is against those [meaning BJP] who are stabbing democracy in the back. I have nothing to do with Mr. Ambedkar's remarks. We [the MVA] had given him an offer of five Lok Sabha seats. It is now up to him to decide."

He added that Mr. Ambedkar had been levelling accusations against various parties and leaders, including Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole.

He clarified that the MVA had invited Mr. Ambedkar and his party to every meeting on seat-sharing discussions. Congress leader Varsha Gaikwad said she hoped Mr. Ambedkar would still contest the election along with the MVA.

# NIA announces ₹20 lakh reward on Bengaluru cafe blast accused

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BENGALURU

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has released the photographs and details of the two absconding prime accused in The Rameshwaram Cafe blast case - Abdul Matheen Ahmed Taahaa, 30, and Mussavir Hussain Shazib, 30 - and announced a reward of ₹10 lakh on each of them.

The National Investigation Agency had on Thursday identified Mussavir Hussain as the alleged bomber at the restaurant and Abdul Matheen Taaha as the key conspirator behind the attack.

National Investigation Agency has said the informant's identities will be kept confidential.

NIA has said Abdul Matheen Taahaa is known to have assumed names Vignesh D. and Sumit, and Mussavir Hussain was using a forged driving licence in the name of Mohammed Juned Sayed. NIA said the duo preferred to stay in



The NIA has released the photographs of two absconding accused in the Rameshwaram Cafe blast case, Mussavir Hussain Shazib and Abdul Matheen Ahmed Taahaa. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

men's hostels, paying guest accommodations sharing accommodations or low budget hotels and lodges.

According to the police, the duo have been on the run from 2020, when they were listed as accused in the Al Hind Module case - an Islamic State (IS)-inspired module that, it is said, sought to establish an IS province through an insurgency in South India's forests - but managed to give a slip to the agencies.

NIA had earlier announced a reward of ₹3 Lakh for any information leading to the arrest of Abdul Matheen Taaha. After

the Al Hind module was busted the duo, on the run, put together the Thirthahalli module involved in four cases now - pro-terror graffiti in Mangaluru in 2020, trial blast and terror conspiracy case in Shivamogga in September 2022, cooker blast in Mangaluru in November, 2022, and The Rameshwaram Cafe blast earlier this month.

Meanwhile, NIA has secured seven-day custody of Muzammil Shareef, the sole person arrested in blast case. NIA said he "extended logistic support to the other two identified accused in the case."

**'Ops like Tiger Triumph will build trust between India, U.S.'**

**T. Appala Naidu**  
KAKINADA

U.S. Navy Rear Admiral Joaquin Martinez on Friday said that the defence forces of India and the U.S. would jointly be able to take on any challenge in the Indo-Pacific region as the forces of both nations are independently strong.

He is also the Vice-Commander of the U.S. Navy's Seventh Fleet, based in Japan.

Speaking to newsmen at a joint press conference here on the sidelines of the Indo-U.S. bilateral Human Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercise, Tiger Triumph, at the Kakinada Naval base, he added: The relationship between India and the U.S. defence forces has grown immensely. Operations like Tiger Triumph will build trust and confidence in our ability to work together and to respond as an integrated joint force."

# TDP, YSRCP field Kapu veterans in community's stronghold

**Harish Gilai**  
VISAKHAPATNAM

The Telugu Desam Party's Ganta Srinivasa Rao and the YSR Congress Party's Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao, popularly known as Avanthi Srinivas, will battle it out for the Bheemunipatnam Assembly seat in the upcoming Andhra Pradesh election. The clash of the two veterans will be keenly watched by cadres of both parties as they have never lost an election in their over two-decade political career.

Both leaders hail from the Kapu community, which has a sizeable presence in the constituency.

The TDP's decision to field Mr. Ganta Srinivasa Rao came after surveys pointed to his strong base in the constituency, which he represented in the Assembly during 2014-19.

It is interesting to note that Mr. Srinivasa Rao has never been in the fray twice from any Assembly constituency.

In 1999, Mr. Srinivasa Rao won the Anakapalli Lok Sabha seat on the TDP ticket. In 2004, he won the Chodavaram Assembly seat on behalf of the TDP.

**Represented twice** Similarly, Mr. Avanthi Srinivas of the YSRCP too has never lost any election. He

won as Bheemunipatnam MLA on PRP ticket in 2009.

In 2014, he won the Anakapalli Lok Sabha seat on behalf of the TDP. In 2019, he switched his loyalties to the YSRCP and won the Bheemunipatnam Assembly seat.

Having represented the constituency twice in the Assembly, Mr. Avanthi Srinivas too has a strong base in the constituency.

The Bheemunipatnam Assembly constituency has about 2.56 lakh voters.

Meanwhile, there was jubilation in the TDP camp, with the supporters of Mr. Srinivasa Rao celebrating his candidature.

**Timings**  
DELHI

SATURDAY, MAR. 30		
RISE	06:13	SET 18:38
RISE	23:29	SET 08:55
SUNDAY, MAR. 31		
RISE	06:12	SET 18:39
RISE	00:00	SET 09:41
MONDAY, APR. 01		
RISE	06:11	SET 18:39
RISE	00:29	SET 10:34

<b>Delhi Weather</b>	max	min
Delhi City	38	20
Safdarjang	38	20
Palam	37	21

**Delhi Palam Today**  
36°C Morning will be pleasant with mist and haze. Day will be very warm with gusty winds. Chances of light rain & thunder shower with strong winds.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
37°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be cool with mist and haze. Day will be very warm with uneasy afternoon. Night also will be cool.

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- NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida, UP
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## A balancing act

The year's fiscal deficit target seems achievable despite a spike in February

The Centre's fiscal deficit, or the gap between the Union Government's receipts and expenditure, has widened sharply from about ₹11 lakh crore by January to ₹15 lakh crore at the end of February. This represents the deficit moving up from 63.6% of the revised target of ₹17.3 lakh crore to 86.5% within 29 days. This is a significantly bumpier trajectory compared with last year – the deficit target was ₹17.55 lakh crore in 2022-23, it stood at 67.6% of target by January and reached 82.6% in February when the deficit rose ₹2.3 lakh crore. Eventually, last year's fiscal gap was ₹17.33 lakh crore, virtually the same as this year's goal. A couple of factors partially explain the February deficit spurt. One, the Centre transferred around ₹2.15 lakh crore to States through two instalments of their tax devolution share, as opposed to just ₹1.4 lakh crore last year. Second, capital expenditure which had slumped to ₹47,600 crore this January, was scaled up to ₹84,400 crore, over four times February 2023's capex outlay. Capex will have to further rise to ₹1.4 lakh crore in March to meet the government's ₹10 lakh crore target, but the implementation of the Model Code of Conduct for the Lok Sabha polls mid-way through the month could temper the number a bit.

As a proportion of GDP, the deficit last year stood at 6.4% and this year's original target was 5.9% that Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman revised to 5.8% in the interim Budget last month. The government has committed to narrow it to 4.5% of GDP by 2025-26, with a 5.1% target for 2024-25. This glide path may need some recalibration in the full Budget for the year after the general election, depending on the next government's priorities and the state of the economy over the current and next quarter. Having sought to prop up growth through public capex since the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centre is hoping private investment shifts to the driving seat, but high inflation, a bad monsoon and uneven consumption demand cloud those hopes. On the revenue spending front, the government still had ₹6 lakh crore of spending room available for March. Just three critical people-centric ministries – Agriculture, Rural Development and Consumer Affairs – still had over ₹1.03 lakh crore of firepower left for the last month of this fiscal despite their planned spends being revised in February. It is quite plausible that some Ministries will miss their targets and yield a positive surprise on the full-year deficit number. Tightening the belt is good for macroeconomic health, but persistently missing spending goals compromises intended outcomes and signals that there is scope to plan outlays better and borrow less in coming years.

## Flight from fatigue

The DGCA must ensure regulatory norms are enforced for safety

The move by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) in January this year to introduce changes to flight duty time limitations (FDTL) would have been a much-needed regulatory step to address the industry issue of fatigue in a professional and scientific manner, or manage what crew call the burden of the red-eye flight. By dictating more rest time for pilots, redefining night duty and even directing airlines to file regular fatigue reports, the rules were to have been implemented no later than June 1. Instead, a large section of the managements of India's airlines, most in private hands, only saw red. In a discordant development this week, the DGCA quietly inked a copy of the revised Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR) which said that scheduled air transport operators 'may continue to operate in compliance with CAR Section 7 Series J Part III dated 24th April 2019 till approval of their respective scheme in compliance with this CAR'. Read in perspective, it meant this: airline economics had blanketed out safety. As highlighted in the media, a federation of Indian airlines had sought a postponement of the rules by pushing the line that the new norms would necessitate the hiring of between 15% to 25% more pilots over a 10-month period and could even result in a nearly 20% cancellation of flights during the peak summer season. But, as a number of aviation experts point out, with the DGCA now willingly lowering a safety net, pilots will continue to face fatigue-related issues.

In the early 1950s, recognising the need to limit flight and duty hours for the purpose of safety, the International Civil Aviation Organization established guidelines, under its Standards and Recommended Practices, which required the operator to ensure that fatigue did not endanger operations. Since then, the management of fatigue in the industry, especially in international operations, has evolved to include the adoption of Fatigue Risk Management Systems – which the DGCA is also planning – by tapping into scientific principles of fatigue management and aviation scheduling principles. The Indian aviation market, in the backdrop of a pilot shortage, is in high growth mode, and with increased flying flowing from an expanding route map, domestically and internationally, there are cases of the well-being of flight crew facing much stress. Ultra-long haul flying, with its own ecosystem of issues, is on the rise too with more widebody aircraft being inducted in India. Instead of taxiing back to holding point, the DGCA needs to demonstrate an independence where it will still ensure that regulatory norms are enforced and also aligned with the highest standards of safety, for flight crew and passengers deserve safer flying.

# Bonds, big money and an imperfect democracy

The electoral bonds scheme that has been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of India, was supposed to end the financing of elections with black money. If this had happened, Indian politics would have been transformed with great benefit to the nation. After all, illegal finance results in the control of politics passing into its hands – and that subverts democracy. The electoral bonds made not an iota of difference to the way politics is conducted in India. Elections continue to be fought with an increasingly larger amount of illegal funds being spent by political parties and candidates.

### Gap between the professed and the actual

The lesson is clear. If politics is undemocratic in content, no patchwork such as electoral bonds can make it democratic. Indian politics requires large sums of money since it has been largely hollowed out of its content and become formalistic. Elected leaders, mainly serving the interests of those who finance their elections, hardly represent the interests of their constituency. Vested interests, increasingly, have got themselves elected. What they profess and what they practice are different.

This gap between the professed and the actual undermines democracy since government is no longer an entity 'of the people, by the people and for the people'. The vast majority of people see that they hardly gain benefit from government policies while vested interests corner most of the gains from development. It is in the design of the policies – the packaging is cleverly done to make policies appear to be in the national interest. In fact, vested interests are defined as national interest. They take precedence over the interests of the marginalised sections.

For instance, if poverty, unemployment, ill health and poor educational standards persist, these are said to be natural and are left to market forces. Concessions are granted to businesses to provide these services through the market which results in the inability of the poor to afford them while simultaneously leading to growing disparities. Concessions also reduce the availability of resources with the public sector so that it is unable to provide these services at the requisite level. Inadequate public services hurt the interests of the marginalised sections. For instance, the recent Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) shows that 40% of children in the age group of 14 to 18 years are unable to read, write or do the level of math of standard two. They cannot acquire higher skills which could enable them to end their poverty. So, why does education not receive high priority? That is because in the top down model of development, resources are preempted by the elite.

Businesses, not satisfied with the gains that they make legally, resort to making them illegally



Arun Kumar

is a retired professor of Economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, and the author of 'Understanding the Black Economy and Black Money in India' (2017)

using undeclared incomes which constitute the black economy. Illegality is systematic and systemic. But, that is only possible if policymaker and executive become party to the subversion of the systems. This is the triad that underlies black income generation.

It requires weak accountability by government personnel, which is at the root of the weakness of democracy in India and its hollowing out. This is reinforced by the broadly feudal mindset that is prevalent in society which leads to the individual's willingness to bow before authority rather than standing up to it. This is visible in the institutions that are supposed to uphold democracy.

### Money and the election

Voting is often not based on a candidate's performance but on attributes such as caste, community and region. To win votes, political parties slice and dice the electorate along these lines. Vote banks are cultivated and the constituents bribed just prior to an election. Campaigning is conducted by paid workers and crowds are mobilised to attend rallies and meetings using money, transportation and food. Big rallies are held to overwhelm voters, for which posters and cutouts are required, musclemen hired and the media kept happy.

All this requires a lot of money – far more than the permitted election expenditure limit of ₹95 lakh for a big parliamentary constituency. People in the know say that it is more like ₹50 crore as the amount required. Thus, ₹49 crore a candidate has to be mobilised through illegal funds. Over and above this sum, a party spends large sums to organise its politics, run offices, and in mobilisation – again, most of it from illegal funds.

It is in this milieu that the electoral bonds scheme was introduced. The argument was that this scheme would enable political parties to get legitimate funds and that their dependence on illegal funds would decline. But, right from day one, the scheme drew criticism for being opaque since the electorate would not get to know who was financing a political party and why – for legitimate or illegal reasons. It enabled a bribe to be given in white for favours done. Since big sums could only be given by businesses and the rich, their influence and manipulations were expected to increase. The bonds could only be given to a political party and not to individuals. So, the individual continued to be in need of illegal funds. The party obtaining funds could use them for all kinds of purposes and not necessarily for elections, such as setting up offices or destabilising Opposition-led governments. Thus, the name electoral bonds was inappropriate.

Further, any amount of bribe could be given since the limit of 7.5% of profits was removed. Even loss-making firms could make a donation. Shell companies could be used, opening the door

for foreign firms to make donations. Even though the bonds had to be encashed within 15 days, they could be traded for 14 days and then given to the intended party. So, the entity buying the bond may not be the entity making the donation. In this case, the trail of funds and the identity of the donor were obscured.

Many of the donors did not realise that their identity would be revealed were the judiciary to declare the electoral bonds scheme to be unconstitutional. Only the experienced ones covered their tracks by making donations through shell companies or in cash. Their names may never be known. Finally, the contributions through the black money route continue, remaining the major source of funding for political parties. In effect, the electoral bonds scheme was only an additional avenue for funds that political parties received.

### Cronyism uncovered

Even though the electoral bonds formed a fraction of the total funding requirement of political parties, data now made available unravels the character of Indian politics and elections. The data show that funds were given to political parties: for favours from policymakers; to escape prosecution for wrong doing, and as investment for the future. Under the last category, even political parties not in power receive funds. The first category enables a business to receive favours such as manipulation of policy or preferred treatment in policy implementation as in for example needing environmental clearance or getting a contract.

The second category is one where there is arm-twisting. Given how complex rules are, some violation of rules can be detected and prosecution initiated by agencies such as the Enforcement Directorate. The case can then drag on so that the process becomes the punishment. There are businesses that cut corners and it is easy to have them under pressure. There may be businesses that pay money just to escape harassment. The data provided by the State Bank of India shows the *quid pro quo* in the case of some of the donations made. More analysis could expose the money trail and the link with policy manipulation. This will also expose the criminality.

In a well-functioning democracy, where the political leadership is accountable, fighting an election would need neither big funding nor electoral bonds to be bought in secrecy. There would be no need of having to spend more than the expenditure limits set.

The electoral bonds scheme only highlights the growing weakness of Indian democracy. It could have worked in an ideal situation but then it would not have been required. It seems to have been designed to weaken the Opposition and democracy.

In a well-functioning democracy, fighting an election would need neither extravagant funding nor electoral bonds to be bought in secrecy

# The human-dog relationship, conflict and coexistence

It seems that each news cycle brings with it a steady stream of gruesome, heart-wrenching stories that relate to human-street dog conflict. These are usually stories of people, often children, being attacked by street dogs, or of the mistreatment of dogs by humans. Familiar tropes such as "the dog menace" or "man's best friend" animate these discussions and capture public and media attention.

In turn, more complicated and nuanced accounts that pay fidelity to the socio-ecological complexity of human-dog relations remain ignored. How, then, can we resist these reactionary impulses and fruitfully build on the wealth of work in the fields of ecology, public health, canine ethology, and urban dynamics to come to a more sophisticated and integrated understanding of these issues?

### Human-dog interactions

A starting point could be to appreciate that "newsworthy" incidents of dog biting, chasing, or mauling represent only a fraction of all human-dog interactions. Citizen-based research across various parts of India by ROH-Indies (University of Edinburgh), shows that a majority of people-dog interactions are mundane and unremarkable such as casual feeding, occasional petting and ignoring. While this is certainly not intended to downplay the gravity of conflict, it would pay to remind ourselves that extreme instances such as mauling cannot be taken to be representative of the overall human-dog relationship.

On the other side of the spectrum of opinions on human-dog co-existence is the equally problematic notion that dogs are inherently virtuous creatures who can do no wrong. Dogs, like all other animals, including human beings, are beings whose motivations cannot always be known to us. This means treating dogs as individuals with specific backgrounds and environments, rather than an undifferentiated



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population mass that is either good or bad.

The tragic passing of the high-profile businessman in Ahmedabad in October last year, and subsequent explosion of anti-dog sentiment in media and public discourse is an exemplary case in how this conflict can move to a different level.

It began with the supposed involvement of dogs that attacked him causing him to fall, to his affection for dogs, to the statement by the hospital that treated him, and, finally, statements by animal rights groups asking the media not to villainise dogs. Ultimately, it remains unclear how the incidents leading up to his fall panned out. Did the dogs chase him? Or were they barking at the sight of him fallen on the ground? The incident is an example of one where the same issues could come up again unless we pay due attention to the complexity of human-dog interactions in India.

### Findings from a research study

Being mindful of these considerations which introduce different shades of grey can help us educate ourselves about the folly in holding black and white positions. Take for instance the arguments in favour of mass culling or the eradication of street dogs through other means such as confinement in 'shelters'. Culling is rarely an effective or workable solution to reduce conflict, and can be counterproductive, especially in the complex social and ecological conditions found in a place such as India.

A research study, 'Reorienting rabies research and practice: Lessons from India' published in the journal, *Nature* (2019), says, eradication can exacerbate the situation by triggering unpredictable ecological changes that may be unwelcome. In the United Kingdom, for instance, where street dogs were successfully eliminated through killing and removal, foxes have come to live in the ecological niches vacated by dogs in cities and towns. These foxes, and other animals

such as gulls which occupy similar niches, are now considered by some as pests and a nuisance, even attracting controversy around suspected attacks on children – in effect, simply reproducing many of the same old problems. What this study shows is that the different issues – rabies, bites, public feeding, nuisance – associated with dogs may need different responses.

### Local context, relevant actions

In the face of such complexity, our energies must be geared toward improving our understanding of the drivers of different types of conflict to develop suitable interventions, rather than relying on silver bullet solutions that are rarely successful in building healthy societies.

In other words, what we need is a range of actions that are tailored to local contexts. Our ongoing research shows that this will have to include measures such as ensuring ready access to post-exposure treatment and anti-rabies vaccination for people; prevention of relocation or removal of local dogs, which then triggers the influx of new dogs and associated conflict; maintenance of neutered, vaccinated and socialised street dog populations in their localities so as to reduce incidents of conflict (such as those seen in South Mumbai and parts of Chennai, Bengaluru and New Delhi); better solid waste management as a way to control the 'carrying capacity' of known flash points such as garbage dumps; and, very crucially, public education programmes to teach people, both adults and children, how to safely interact with dogs.

Our cities and villages have always been sites where different species live together, without either harmony or conquest. In this context, we would do well to approach problems of human-dog conflict as one among other civic issues relating to how we live and share spaces safely with others.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Comments from overseas

Should India adopt an unflappable attitude? I do not think so (Editorial, "Easily provoked, March 29). Any sovereign nation would indeed find it intolerable for another country to comment on its internal affairs. Irrespective of whether the government's actions are right or wrong, the United States holds no

position to upbraid them.

Pratibha Sharma, Chandigarh

### The only quest

The first phase of the general election is drawing closer and it is an open secret that most politicians have only one burning desire – to be in power at any cost. How else does one explain politicians defecting

from one party to another?

Such politicians are neither truthful to the trust imposed in them by the innocent voter or to the parties under whose umbrella/banner they get elected. How will the nation grow if politicians are blinded only by power?

Balasubramaniam Pavani, Secunderabad

### Wasted meals

As the world's population grows, our challenge should not be on how to grow more food but to reduce food loss in a sustainable way ("Households across the world waste 1 billion meals a day, says UN report", March 29). It is an immediate need if we are to maximise the food we produce and to feed more.

There used to be a time when everything people could grow, such as banana or coconut, would be reused in some way. India needs a national mission to cut food wastage.

H.N. Ramakrishna, Bengaluru

This is another global tragedy especially when a third of humanity faces food

insecurity. As it is not a rich country problem alone, countries like India should avoid wastage by improving public-private partnerships and encouraging NGO participation.

Dr. Thomas Palocaren, Vellore, Tamil Nadu

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address.



# GROUND ZERO



The Matuas at Bongaon in North 24 Parganas district celebrate the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules. DEBASISH BHADURI



Wherever our MP (Shantanu Thakur) used to go, he would face the same question (When will the Rules be framed). Now, we will win.

**DEBABAS MONDAL**  
BJP president of the Bongaon organisation district

Kapil Krishna Thakur, an author and social worker who has worked with the Matuas for decades, says the sect, which was mostly a reform movement, has now been appropriated by the larger Hindutva fold. "Upper caste Bengalis came from Bangladesh before 1947-48. The Matuas, who were dependent on land and agriculture, came to India at a much later date," he points out.

For more than five years, the Matuas have been at the centre of the BJP's politics around the CAA. Prime Minister Narendra Modi began his campaign for the 2019 Lok Sabha polls in West Bengal by addressing a gathering at Thakurnagar. On March 27, 2021, the first day of polling for the State Assembly polls, he was at Orakandi in Bangladesh, the birthplace of Harichand Thakur.

The Trinamool Congress has not lagged behind. It recently nominated Mamatabala Thakur, the aunt of BJP MP Shantanu Thakur, to the Rajya Sabha. The party has also fielded Biswajit Das, a BJP legislator who defected to the Trinamool and has significant influence over Matua votes, to contest against Shantanu Thakur from the Bongaon Lok Sabha seat.

Debabas Mondal, the BJP president of the Bongaon organisation district, admits that the delay in framing the Rules had put the party in a difficult position. "Wherever our MP (Shantanu Thakur) used to go, he would face the same question (When will the Rules be framed?) Now, we will definitely win," he says.

As far as the issue of applying for citizenship on the portal is concerned, the BJP leader says the people are not "getting a proper way to apply". He explains that people will not require all the documents. "Any one of the documents will be enough," he says. On being asked why people who are already citizens and are availing themselves of all the privileges as citizens need to apply for citizenship, Debdas says, "It will wipe out the stigma that they are refugees."

Recently, *The Hindu* reported that a local priest may issue an "eligibility certificate" under the CAA to validate the religion of an applicant. Many in the Matua community feel that the membership cards issued by the All-India Matua Mahasangha may be used as a document to apply through the MHA portal. However, there are no reports of people applying for citizenship under the CAA through the portal. While there is a rush for membership cards, Krishna Thakur says leaders of the sect have discouraged their supporters from filling any form through the portal.

### Fear and apprehension

Krishna Thakur believes that more than the issue of citizenship, the attempt to divide people on religious grounds is becoming more pronounced through the CAA and the Rules. He also questions the claims that everyone who crossed the border was persecuted along religious lines. "When the country (Pakistan) was partitioned, it was a matter of right (of rehabilitation) for those who had come (to India) from East Pakistan. Now, the CAA narrative has shifted from the rights-approach to giving something to a guest or outsider," he says.

While fear and apprehension have prevailed among different sections of people who have come from Bangladesh to India, there were no incidents of violence. However, when the CAA was passed in Parliament in 2019, the State witnessed arson and violence across several districts.

Mir Abdul Hashem, a trader from Bongaon, who exports and imports goods between Bangladesh and India, believes that the exercise is to target Muslims. "No one is a fool. The exercise is to create fear and panic among Muslims. We need to understand why the Rules were announced before the elections," he says. Muslims form 27.01% of the population of West Bengal.

The confusion surrounding the CAA is not limited to Bongaon. On March 21, a 31-year-old man in Kolkata died by suicide in south Kolkata's Netaji Nagar. His family members alleged that he was panic-stricken about the CAA and the new Rules. Netaji Nagar is among the many colonies in Kolkata where people from Bangladesh have settled over the last few decades. In a complaint letter to the Netaji Nagar police station, Tapan Sengupta, the man's father, wrote, "Since the announcement of the CAA, my son has been suffering from tremendous mental trauma and agony." The Trinamool leadership sent a five-member delegation to the house of the deceased and said that the Rules were creating panic.

Bibhas Chandra Saha, 77, a retired government employee, has been restless since the Rules were notified. He fears that he does not have the relevant documents to apply for citizenship. "Unlike many who stayed in refugee colonies, I stayed at the house of a relative in Jalpaiguri when I entered the country in 1964. I have a letter from the District Magistrate, but I don't think that will work," he says. Saha is not sure whether he should apply for citizenship or just wait and watch. "After so many years of staying in the country, applying for citizenship afresh is nothing but harassment," he contends.

Even if the lakhs of people like Saha who came from Bangladesh and settled in West Bengal decide whether they want to apply for citizenship or not, they have little clarity on the process, and whether the State government can stop it or slow it down. The Trinamool government has ruled out any need to apply for new citizenship under the CAA. As a result, there is no infrastructure in the State to help the people. As the political temperatures rise with the Lok Sabha polls drawing near, the CAA and the Rules pose more questions than answers for the people.

shivshahy.s@thehindu.co.in

\*Those who require assistance for overcoming suicidal thoughts may contact ElioMind +91-1800-599-0019

# The conundrum of citizenship

The Matuas, who have migrated from Bangladesh to India over the years, possess Aadhaar cards and voter identity cards, yet believe that the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules are necessary. For years, the BJP and the Trinamool have been competing to win the support of the sect. **Shiv Sahay Singh and Varghese K. George** report on the confusion regarding identity and statehood in West Bengal

**S**adananda Biswas, 68, from West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district, breaks down while recalling his childhood at Faridpur district in Bangladesh. "Our house was set on fire before my own eyes. We had to run away from Bangladesh with nothing but what we were wearing," he says. Now, 10 days after the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) notified the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024, Sadananda, who belongs to the Matua sect, is relieved that his long wait for 'authentic nationality' has finally come to an end.

The Matua sect comprising Namashudras or Dalits was set up by Harichand Thakur at Orakandi in Bangladesh in the mid-19th century, in order to question the practices of Brahminical Hinduism. Millions of Matuas have migrated to India both before and after the war in 1971 that liberated what was then East Pakistan from West Pakistan, laying the foundation of Bangladesh.

Wearing garlands of wooden beads, considered holy, around his neck, Sadananda stands outside the office of the All-India Matua Mahasangha, the headquarters of the Matua order, in Thakurnagar town in Bongaon. He has travelled about 35 kilometres from his village, Baghjhola, in Baduria, in preparation for the annual Matua mela, which was attended by about 20 lakh people last year. During the mela in April, the Matuas will offer prayers at the temple of Harichand Thakur and his wife Shantidevi, bathe in the nearby pond, and participate in *kirtan* (religious chanting and singing) for days.

Like the majority of the people from the Matua sect, Sadananda, a local trader of Ayurvedic medicines, has all the documents of Indian citizenship, including a voter identity card and Aadhaar. His older son is working in West Asia on an Indian passport. Yet, he believes that the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules are necessary. "It is not about what we get under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA). It is about not allowing Muslims to keep coming to India," he says. "We fled Bangladesh because of persecution. Now, you want us to allow them to follow us here?"

### Hindu or Matua?

Sustained politics over many decades by the Sangh Parivar and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and now the CAA, 2019, and the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, are nudging more people like Sadananda to think of their identity.

"India should be a Hindu Rashtra," contends Nipa Biswas, a woman in her 40s, who also hails from Baghjhola and has come with him to the headquarters of the Matua Mahasangha.

The same sentiment is echoed by Manoj Gosai, an office-bearer of the Mahasangha, who is busy issuing pink slips to people gathered for member-



We fled Bangladesh because of persecution. Now, you want us to allow them (Muslims) to follow us here?

**SADANANDA BISWAS**  
Member,  
Matua sect

ship inside the office. "You know everything but you want me to say it. Muslims have not faced any religious persecution in the countries mentioned in the CAA. That is why the law does not allow them citizenship," says Manoj, who sports a white beard, a saffron towel, and a garland of wooden beads.

The CAA, which was passed by Parliament on December 11, 2019, facilitates citizenship to undocumented migrants belonging to six non-Muslim communities – Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian – from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, who entered India on or before December 31, 2014. The Citizenship (Amendment) Rules were notified on March 11, 2024, coinciding with the birth anniversary of the founder of the Matua sect.

For Sadananda and Manoj, the CAA and the subsequent Rules are about establishing their identity and keeping Muslims at bay. However, they have no clear answers as to whether they consider themselves Hindu or Matua.

"I am a Matua first. But my religion is Sanatana Dharma. It is not a question of religion but identity. There are more than 3 crore Matuas across India," says Manoj. Others around him are not sure where they stand.

Sadananda says he lives his life according to the teachings of Harichand Thakur. "I am a Matua first and a Hindu later. We may be Hindus by religion, but Matua is our sect. For us, Harichand Thakur and Guruchand Thakur (son of Harichand Thakur) are our gods. Our prayers are an-

swered here. Why should we not believe in them," he says.

### Applying for citizenship

The Matuas are euphoric over the CAA Rules being notified, but they are also confused about how to apply for citizenship. Drigen Biswas, a BJP booth president from Gopalganj in Bongaon, has been going around the office of the All-India Matua Mahasangha asking whether camps will be set up to help people fill in the CAA forms.

"Since the government wants us to apply, we will do so. But we will need a little help. We do not have the documents that the portal is asking for," he says. However, Drigen emphasises that the CAA will help the BJP in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Rules specify several documents that are to be uploaded on an online portal ([indiancitizenshiponline.nic.in/](http://indiancitizenshiponline.nic.in/)) in order to process the application. A sworn affidavit declaring the country of origin and date of entry into India along with an eligibility certificate to be issued by a locally reputed community institution certifying that a person follows one of the six faiths are mandatory.

Manoj says the process of filling in the forms should be simplified. "The Rules are welcome, but it is not possible for people who have been persecuted on religious lines to provide documents relating to their residence in another country," he says.

Sadananda says there are about 25-30 families from Bangladesh residing for decades at Baghjhola. All of them, too, are not sure how to apply for fresh citizenship through the MHA portal. "If the government wants us to apply through the portal, we will. But at this moment, how to apply is not our concern," he says.

### Reaching out to the Matuas

The Rules have been the subject of debate, discussion, and also confusion in the political circles of West Bengal. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who reacted soon after the Rules were notified, said that Matuas will become refugees the moment they apply on the portal. "Those who are being asked to apply... the moment they apply, from becoming citizens they will become illegal refugees. What will happen to your properties, your jobs, and the studies of your children? Everything will be declared illegal," she said, while addressing a gathering on March 12 at Habra, located 15 km from Thakurnagar.

Bongaon BJP MP and Union Minister of State for Shipping and Waterways Shantanu Thakur, who hails from the family of the founders of the Matua sect, emphasised that the CAA is necessary. Hindu refugees from Bangladesh will have to suffer a fate like the Rohingya if they do not apply through the MHA portal, he said. "In future, if there is a government that says as per the law, those who have entered the country after 1971 are not citizens and they and their children will be identified and driven out, can Mamata Banerjee save them? The Rohingya have been driven out. Has she been able to do anything," he asked.

The Minister added he would apply for citizenship under the CAA to counter the "false propaganda" of the Trinamool. While BJP leaders have maintained that the CAA and the Rules are not meant to take away anyone's citizenship, Banerjee said that the CAA will lead to a National Register of Citizens (NRC), like in Assam, and the establishment of "concentration camps".

The Matua community has a considerable influence not only in the Bongaon Lok Sabha constituency, but also in nearly half a dozen Lok Sabha seats in areas bordering West Bengal and Bangladesh. Both the BJP and the Trinamool are trying to win the support of the community.



Sadananda Biswas, a resident of Baduria in North 24 Parganas, believes that the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules are necessary. DEBASISH BHADURI



North 24 Parganas



## From Page One

## Seat-sharing deal announced in Bihar

The Begusarai seat has gone to the Communist Party of India (CPI) amid speculations that Congress leader and former Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) president Kanhaiya Kumar would be fielded there.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha poll, Mr. Kumar, a CPI candidate then, was defeated in Begusarai by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate Giriraj Singh by over two lakh votes. Mr. Kumar later joined the Congress party.

Meanwhile, All India Majlis-E-Ttehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) has announced that they will contest 16 seats in Bihar and give support to Hina Sahab from Siwan. She is the wife of the late strongman of Siwan Mohd. Shahabuddin, who had represented Siwan in the Lok Sabha four times.

RJD sources told *The Hindu* that under *maha-gathbandhan* alliance, the party would get one more seat in the neighbouring State of Jharkhand. The RJD, which had already been allocated the Chattr constituency in the State, is now likely to get the Palamu seat as well, he added.

## Congress accuses BJP of turning to 'tax terrorism'

"I will soon file a public interest litigation (PIL) petition to recover ₹4,600 crore from the BJP for its violations in the past seven years," he said, adding, "We have analysed all the submissions of the BJP to the Election Commission (EC). The party has faltered every year."

Party general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal asked the State and District units of the Congress to organise massive protests across the country on Saturday against "the blatant murder of democracy".

## Rahul's warning

Taking to social media platform X, senior party leader Rahul Gandhi warned that when the government changes, there would be strict action against all those who assaulted democracy.

"Such action will be taken that none will dare to do all this again. This is my guarantee," Mr. Gandhi said in a post.

Mr. Ramesh said that the BJP had collected ₹8,200 crore through the "electoral bonds scam". "The BJP believes in one nation and no election," he said, adding, "We will not be scared of these notices. We will be more aggressive and fight these polls." He added that the ruling party wanted to deny a level playing field to others.

## Oppn. raises questions over Ansari's death

"The persistent apprehensions and serious allegations made by Mukhtar Ansari's family regarding his death in jail require a high-level probe so that the facts behind his death could be revealed," said Ms. Mayawati.

Ansari's body was handed over to his family members following a post-mortem examination by a panel of five doctors in Banda medical college. Shops and markets remained closed in many towns amid the news of his funeral likely to be performed at the Kalibag graveyard in Ghazipur district's Yusufpur Mohammadabad. Prohibitory orders have been imposed across the State.

## 'Discussed peace formula with India'

Since the beginning of the crisis, India has maintained contact with both Ukraine and Russia as well as other stakeholders. On March 16, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval spoke with Andriy Yermak, head of the office of the Ukrainian President, which was followed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's telephonic conversation with President Vladimir Putin in Moscow and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv.

The mention of the peace formula by Mr. Kuleba has attracted attention as a 'Global Peace Summit' aiming to end the stalemated conflict is expected to meet soon in Switzerland. Mr. Kuleba had earlier called upon India to participate in the summit along with other major countries in the world. Prospects of the summit, however, received a jolt with Russian Foreign Ministry's spokesperson Maria Zakharova dismissing the possibility of Moscow's participation in the Switzerland-led peace talks.

The Ukraine's President had presented a 10-point peace plan in 2022 during the G-20 summit in Bali. That plan which called for "complete withdrawal of Russian forces from the 1991 borders", was rejected immediately by Moscow. Russia feels that Mr. Zelenskyy's peace formula does not take the Russian concerns into consideration.

It is expected that the Swiss-backed peace process may help finding a solution between the two positions. Diplomatic sources however could not confirm when precisely the Swiss would host the event, indicating that hectic talks are on at various levels. The Indian side did not elaborate on what the Ukrainian peace formula was, but mentioned that Friday's exchange included "a comprehensive discussion on the ongoing conflict and efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement."

## Fulfil tax obligations, BJP tells Congress

Congress's charge of 'tax terrorism' shows its frustration... all tax authorities as well as Delhi HC have rejected party's arguments, says BJP, adding that the I-T dept. had found unaccounted for cash transactions and unfiled returns by the Congress, during a probe based on seized documents

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday said the Congress's accusations that the Modi government was indulging in "tax terrorism" — after that party received multiple notices from the Income Tax Department — "reveals its frustration".

Addressing a press conference at the BJP's national headquarters, party spokesperson Syed Zafar Islam said the Congress had "failed to follow the correct procedures for filing taxes or making appeals".

Mr. Islam said authorities, ranging from the Commissioner of Income Tax to

the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal and even the Delhi High Court, "have upheld the actions of the Income Tax Department while dismissing the Congress's arguments".

"Instead of engaging in media rhetoric, the Congress should adhere to legal processes and fulfil its tax obligations," Mr. Islam said.

The Congress often invoked "threats to democracy" when faced with allegations of fraud, the BJP said.

## Fresh demands

Senior Congress leaders Jairam Ramesh and Ajay Maken had held a press conference earlier accus-



The High Court in its decision admitted that the department had sufficient and solid evidence for further probe under the I-T Act

SYED ZAFAR ISLAM  
BJP spokesperson

ing the BJP-led government of "unleashing tax terrorism" after the I-T department made fresh demands amounting to ₹1,823 crore from the party.

Mr. Islam added that it was mandatory for any registered political party to file returns every year under the Income Tax Act section 13(A).

"However, the Congress has violated that condition and also misrepresented the income," he said.

He also pointed out that the I-T department had found unaccounted for cash transactions and unfiled tax returns by the Congress as well as unreported income, during its investigation based on

seized documents. Consequently, the department issued recovery notices to the Congress, he said.

## 'Party ignored notices'

The Congress had at first "ignored" notices from the I-T department, Mr. Islam said, and later appealed to the Commissioner of Income Tax, but its arguments had been rejected. Subsequently, the party had approached the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT), where the Congress did not get relief. It then took the matter to the Delhi High Court on March 13, 2024, where too the Congress's petition against recovery proceedings was dismissed.

Mr. Islam mentioned that during the investigation, the department found that the Congress had violated the law in many financial years.

"The Congress again approached the Delhi High Court to quash the reassessment proceedings under Section 153C for all seven years from 2014 to 2021, which was rejected by the High Court. The High Court in its decision admitted that the department had sufficient and solid evidence for further investigation under the Income Tax Act. The High Court found that income worth hundreds of crores of rupees has been hidden," he said.

## On the draw



MIKA AZIZI

## Left parties too receive notices from I-T Dept. for tax violations

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Communist Party of India (CPI) reportedly has been served a notice by the Income Tax Department for violation of its procedures after two of its State units were found using old Permanent Account Number (PAN) cards for filing income-tax returns.

A PTI report quoting sources said that the department has asked the party to pay "dues" of ₹11 crore, though a top CPI leader stated the notice

does not mention any sum. He further said that the party is consulting lawyers to challenge the notice.

The department in July 2022 had also served a notice to Communist Party of India (Marxist) withdrawing the tax exemption of the party for the year 2016-17 and taxed the Left party ₹15.59 crore for not declaring a bank account in its tax returns for the year.

Sources said the CPI(M) had received the notice under Section 148A of the I-T Act.

The department passed

an order under Section 148A(d) of the Act, rejecting the party's submissions, and reopened the case by issuing a notice under Section 148. The sources said the department has passed a final order and levied a tax of ₹15.59 crore.

They added that the CPI (M) had filed a writ petition against the order in the Delhi High Court. The court had issued a notice to the I-T department and directed it not to take any precipitate action, the sources said.

(With inputs from PTI)

## BJP using NIA to target our leaders, says Trinamool

Shiv Sahay Singh  
KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress on Friday alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidates contesting the Lok Sabha polls were conspiring with the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to have certain leaders of the State's ruling party arrested ahead of the Lok Sabha election. Trinamool Congress spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said that two BJP candidates had held a meeting with the NIA officer in Kolkata regarding summons and arrest of Trinamool Congress leaders in Purba Medinipur district.

Referring to an NIA official, Mr. Ghosh asked on X whether two BJP leaders met the official and "handed over a list of @AITCofficial workers tomorrow according to a list given by BJP or not". The allegations come at a time when the NIA has issued notice to eight persons to appear before the agency in connection with an explosion in Purba Medinipur district.

The Trinamool Congress also asked "whether the NIA is planning for a raid and arrest some @AITCofficial workers tomorrow according to a list given by BJP or not". The allegations come at a time when the NIA has issued notice to eight persons to appear before the agency in connection with an explosion in Purba Medinipur district.

Purba Medinipur, where two seats — Kanthi and Tamluk — are up for grabs during the Lok Sabha polls, has emerged as a prestige contest between the BJP and the Trinamool.

During the day, a five-member Trinamool delegation approached the Election Commission and sought the poll body's intervention against the BJP's "continued misuse" of Central agencies.

## Moment law takes its course, they take to the streets, says Dhankhar

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

In an apparent swipe at the Opposition for rallying behind beleaguered Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party leader Arvind Kejriwal, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday pointed out how one breaking the law was playing the victim card.

Mr. Kejriwal was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate on March 21 in a money laundering case linked to Delhi's scrapped

excise policy. Addressing an event at the Indian Institute of Public Administration, the Vice-President said the law was holding them accountable.

"Some people think they are above law, immune from the law. That has been demolished... those who think are beyond law, the law is after them," Mr. Dhankhar said, though he refrained from naming any person.

But leaving no doubt that his remarks were aimed at the Opposition,

who have organised a public meeting at the Ramliha Maidan on Sunday to protest against Mr. Kejriwal's arrest, he said, "But what do we see — the moment law takes its course, they take to the streets, high decibel debates, camouflaging culpability of the worst nature by human rights. This is happening under our nose."

He asked as to what was the justification for persons or organisations to take to the streets when law was set in motion.

## People of Tamil Nadu want to sync with the Central govt. in this election, says Annamalai

There will be a disproportionate increase in the number of NDA candidates who will win. Local and State issues are becoming irrelevant. A large number of MPs from Tamil Nadu will be part of Modiji's 400 MPs: BJP State leader

## INTERVIEW

## K. Annamalai

N. Sai Charan

BJP Tamil Nadu president K. Annamalai said on Friday that the old narrative of the Dravidian parties on the north-south divide, Hindi, Sanskrit will not reflect on the ground any more. In an interview to *The Hindu* amid his election campaign in Chennai, he also dismissed the charges that the BJP had a role in smaller parties not getting their intended election symbols. Excerpts:

**What are the prospects of the BJP in Tamil Nadu in the 2024 election?**

■ The coming Lok Sabha

election is unique because, for the very first time, people of India know it is Modiji [Prime Minister Narendra Modi] who is going to come back to power. We are very clear about it and the ground is reflecting it too. In the last 10 years, even though MPs from Tamil Nadu were on the Opposition bench in Lok Sabha, there were a lot of good things that happened. This time, the mood on the ground is to sync with the Centre. There will be a disproportionate increase in the number of NDA candidates who are going to get elected. Local and State issues are becoming irrelevant because it is a national election. I am confident that a large number of MPs from Tamil Nadu will be part of Modiji's 400 MPs.

**Is the BJP's focus on**

**getting more seats or increasing vote share?**

■ The party focuses on both because to win in a three-way fight, the party has to cross the 35% vote share. The BJP has set a target to increase 370 votes at each booth, in addition to what we polled last time. We aim to cross 40% in each LS seat. Though it is a big ambition, we are very confident, going by the mood on the ground.

**The DMK and the AIADMK claim the battle is between them, and the BJP is nowhere in the contest...**

■ It is good for us because other parties are still campaigning as if it were local bodies elections or State-level elections. They don't understand it is a national

election and the issues we are bringing to the table reflect the character of the nation. They are still in the 1960s and talking about north-south divide, Hindi, Sanskrit, and all of them don't reflect on the ground when people know Modiji is pro-Tamil and pro-Tamil Nadu.

**While you have a rainbow alliance in places where the BJP is strong, such as Coimbatore or Kanniyakumari, your allies do not have a greater presence, and vice versa. What impact would this have on vote transfer?**

■ Every election has a unique phenomenon and the vote transfer differs from election to election. Workers of each party should

share the vision of the alliance and have to believe that Modiji is very important for the country. That is happening in our alliance. However, the INDIA bloc does not have a common vision. For example, the Congress and the Communists are fighting each other in Kerala, but are joining hands in Tamil Nadu.

**You hail from Karur, but why did you choose to contest from Coimbatore?**

■ Coimbatore was not chosen by me. It was the party's high command that chose Annamalai for Coimbatore. The party has given me the responsibility of Coimbatore because of various reasons. Coimbatore has suffered so much from terrorist and ISIS-module attacks.



## INDIA bloc leaders prepare for a big showdown tomorrow

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Opposition is preparing for a big showdown on Sunday at the Ramlila Maidan in Delhi, where the INDIA bloc is scheduled to hold a rally to protest against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's arrest by the Enforcement Directorate. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, former president Rahul Gandhi, and top leaders of 11 Opposition parties have confirmed their presence at the event.

This will be the first public meeting of the INDIA bloc leaders since the coalition was formed on June 23 last year in Patna. The alliance in September last year had announced a public rally in Bhopal coinciding with the Madhya Pradesh Assembly election, but that never materialised. The more recent efforts — one in Patna after the Rashtriya Janata Dal's Jan Vishwas Rally last month and the March 17 rally in Mumbai at the close of Mr. Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra, saw only scant presence from the

**This will be the first public meeting of the INDIA bloc leaders since the coalition was formed on June 23 last year in Patna**

Opposition ranks.

Trinamool Congress, which refused to cede any seat to the Congress, will also be seen at the event. Trinamool Rajya Sabha leader Derek O'Brien will be representing his party. Jharkhand Chief Minister Champai Soren, Nationalist Congress Party patriarch Sharad Pawar, former Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, and former Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav have confirmed their presence. The Left will also be present in full force.

The general secretaries of four left parties — the CPI(M), the CPI, the CPI (ML), and the Forward Bloc will take part in the event. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam will be represented by the party's Rajya Sabha leader Tiruchi Siva.

## Congress unhappy with RJD over seat division in Bihar

The party, many feel, should have negotiated for more and better seats; Pappu Yadav, who joined the Congress recently and was eyeing the Purnia seat, hints at the possibility of a 'friendly fight'

Sobhana K. Nair  
Sandeep Phukan  
NEW DELHI

With the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) keeping the Purnia Lok Sabha seat for itself following the seat-sharing arrangement in Bihar, the Congress has been left with a tricky situation in the form of former MP Rajesh Ranjan, alias Pappu Yadav.

The party also has to contend with furious State leaders who feel that it is settling for too little.

The Congress has got nine out of the 40 Lok Sabha seats in the State. In a majority of these seats, State leaders claim, it has a nominal presence, with the caste arithmetic leaning in favour of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance.

With regard to Purnia, the RJD's decision to stick with its candidate, Bima Bharti, who switched over from the Janata Dal (U), is being seen as a direct snub to the Gandhis who



Congress leader Rajesh Ranjan, alias Pappu Yadav, has not announced yet whether he will contest as an Independent. PTI

brought Mr. Pappu Yadav on board recently.

Mr. Pappu Yadav has not announced yet whether he will contest as an Independent, but citing the example of Wayanad — where senior CPI leader Annie Raja is contesting against former Congress president Rahul Gandhi — hinted at the possibility of "friendly fights". Mr. Pappu Yadav, whose last electoral success came in 2014, when he won from Madhepura on RJD ticket, had represented Purnia thrice in the 1990s, two times as an Independent.

"I am committed to making Rahul Gandhi the country's Prime Minister and helping a Congress revival in Bihar where, five years from now, it will be a force to reckon with in all 40 Lok Sabha constituencies," Mr. Pappu Yadav said. His remark struck a chord with several Congress leaders, who feel short-changed.

**'Weak State leadership'** The Congress, many feel, should have negotiated for more and better seats, since in a national election, it has better resonance

than the RJD. "In Bihar, our party has surrendered to Lalu Prasad's whims and fancies. Our State leadership couldn't keep the party's interest as supreme while negotiating seats with the RJD and now our central leadership looks helpless," senior Bihar Congress leader Kishore Kumar Jha told *The Hindu*.

He said the seats where the Congress could have been stronger were given to the RJD by a "weak State leadership". Other than Kishanganj and Katihar, the Congress has not won the remaining seven in several decades. For example, in Muzaffarpur, the Congress last won in 1984 and the RJD in 1998. In Maharajganj, the Congress last won in 1984. The Patna Sahib seat has been with the BJP since 2009 and the Congress does not fancy its chances here. "I think Mallikarjun Khargeji and Rahul Gandhiji should call off these relations and go it alone instead of being in this insulting alliance," Mr. Jha said.

## Cong. seeks funds from shortlisted candidates

Satyasundar Barik  
BHUBANESWAR

Facing fund shortage to meet election expenses, the Odisha unit of the Congress has asked candidates shortlisted for the Lok Sabha election to contribute ₹50,000 each to the party.

Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee president Sarat Pattanayak sent a letter to the probable candidates, inviting them to discuss strategies for their constituencies with the war-room members of Odisha Congress.

The Odisha Congress had invited applications from people who wanted to fight the Lok Sabha election. More than 3,000 aspirants had applied on a portal called 'Pragman'.

Senior Congress leader Panchanan Kanungo acknowledged that the party was seeking funds from shortlisted candidates. "There is nothing wrong in seeking funds from candidates especially when the Narendra Modi-led government has resorted to financial terrorism to cripple the Opposition..." said Mr. Kanungo.

"The party will decide on refunding the amount to candidates who do not make it to the final list," he added.

## Wives help bahubalis of Bihar maintain poll grip

Amarnath Tewary  
PATNA

Having weathered allegations, criminal cases and even long prison stints, Bihar's *bahubalis* (strongmen) are back in action in Bihar's politics. Like previous elections, their wives are in the fray, but voters clearly understand who's calling the shots.

Lovely Anand, wife of strongman Anand Mohan Singh; Bima Bharti, wife of Awadhesh Mandal; and Anita Mahto, wife of Ashok Mahto, are better known as *Mrs. Bahubalis*. Their husbands hold sway in their respective constituencies and beyond but cannot contest the poll directly owing to their criminal background and rules that prohibit convicts jailed for over two years from contesting elections "until six years after release". This is not too different from *mukhiapatis* (village head's husband) in Bihar reigning supreme at village panchayats with their elected wives (*mukhias*) watching from the sidelines.

Recently, convict and dreaded strongman of Nawada, Lakhisarai and Sheikhpura areas during 1990s and early 2000s, Ashok Mahto, 55, married Ms. Anita Mahto, 46, in the inauspicious period of



**Election allies:** Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar with ex-MP Anand Mohan and former RJD leader Lovely Anand. PTI

*Kharwas*, just a day before she was given the ticket to contest the Lok Sabha election by Lalu Prasad-led Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD). Ms. Anita Mahto will contest from the Munger seat against Janata Dal (United) national president and close associate of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Rajiv Ranjan alias Lalan Singh.

Ashok Mahto was released from jail in November last year after 17 years of imprisonment, and his hurried marriage just before the election reminded voters of a similar marriage in 2011, again in an inauspicious month. *Bahubali* Ajay Singh tied the knot with Kavita Singh ahead of the by-election to the Daranda Assembly constituency necessitated by the demise of Ajay Singh's mother Jagmato Devi.

Similarly, RJD has fielded Ms. Bharti from the Purnia seat. Wife of Awadhesh Mandal, a feared don in Purnia and Kosi areas of north Bihar, Ms. Bharti will battle JD(U) candidate and sitting MP Santosh Kushwaha. Ms. Bharti has been a five-time MLA from Rupa under Purnia Lok Sabha seat and also Minister in the State Cabinet.

On the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) front, JD(U) is fielding Ms. Lovely Anand, wife of strongman Anand Mohan Singh, from Sheohar Lok Sabha seat. Ms. Lovely Anand had been an MP (1994) and MLA twice. Her husband, convicted for the murder of former Gopalganj District Magistrate G. Krishnaiah in December 1994, had been MP twice from Sheohar in 1996 and 1998.

## Assam district goes pink to encourage women voters

The Hindu Bureau  
GUWAHATI

A district in western Assam has gone pink to make its women vote as much as or more than men.

Nalbari is among very few districts where almost all officers are women. Apart from District Commissioner and District Election Officer Varnali Deka and Superintendent of Police Supriya Das, they include the Deputy DEO, Finance and Accounts Officer, Treasury Officer, District Information and Public Relations Officer, and District Social Welfare Officer. The majority of the Additional Deputy Commissioners, Circle Officers, and Block Development Officers are women too. So are some 300 polling personnel covering three Assembly segments of the Barpeta Lok Sabha constituency.

Women in the district, however, have lagged in exercising their franchise.

"In the 2019 Lok Sabha election, our district recorded a turnout of 83.5%, higher than the State average of 81.5% and the national average of 67.18%. But the gap between men and women voters in Nalbari was wider than that at the national and State le-



Women in Nalbari are being encouraged to vote in large numbers.

vels," Ms. Deka said. In Nalbari, 84.4% of men voted compared with 82.4% of women, a gap of 2%.

The district officers and polling personnel have been taking up various Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) activities to encourage all sections to come and cast their votes. The campaign entailed more than 300 women polling personnel and women officers turning up in *mekhela chador*, the traditional Assamese attire, in various hues of pink.

They held pink placards with various SVEEP messages urging unregistered people to apply for a voter card and others to assert their rights by casting their votes. This campaign will culminate with the "maning" of 50% of the district's urban polling stations by women.

## BJP's Rajkot candidate faces wrath of Kshatriyas over remarks

Mahesh Langa  
AHMEDABAD

The Kshatriya community continued its protests against the BJP candidate from Rajkot, Parshottam Rupala, for his controversial remarks against its members.

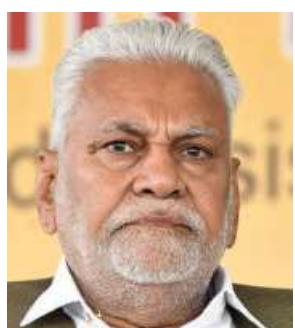
On Friday, protests were held at around a dozen places in Saurashtra and north Gujarat, with members of different Kshatriya castes demanding that his candidature be withdrawn.

The Union Minister, during an election campaign speech on March 22, said that erstwhile '*maharajas*' (Kshatriya kings) had

succumbed to foreign rulers like the British and forged family bonds with them. Princely families broke bread with the British rulers and also married their daughters to them, he said. Mr. Rupala then praised a Dalit community saying it had not bowed down before the British regime.

In Gujarat, there were hundreds of small princely families before Independence.

His speech, which went viral on social media, offended the Kshatriya or Rajputs in Saurashtra and parts of north Gujarat with significant hold of different castes of the erstwhile rul-



Parshottam Rupala

ing class. In Saurashtra alone, the BJP has half a dozen MLAs and MPs from the Kshatriya community.

**Minister apologises**

After the initial protests, the Union Minister apologised, but various caste

groups and outfits like the Karni Sena have intensified their protests by holding group meetings and burning his effigy and posters.

"We will not call off the protests till he is removed from the candidate list," the Karni Sena said.

P.T. Jadeja, the international president of the Rajput Yuva Sangh, told presspersons in Rajkot on Thursday that the BJP should withdraw Mr. Rupala as its candidate as a precondition for any talks for a compromise.

After the remarks triggered widespread outrage, the State BJP roped in former Gondal MLA Jayraj-sinh Jadeja to talk to the

community leaders and resolve the situation even as Mr. Rupala has remained silent over the issue after his apology.

**Cheap statements: AAP** leader Yuvrajsinh Jadeja urged the community not to compromise with Mr. Rupala who had lowered the image of the community by making "cheap remarks".

State Congress president Shaktisinh Gohil also lambasted the Union Minister and said he "lacked any understanding or knowledge to speak about" the community. At a rally on Thursday, a

member of the Kshatriya community said: "Our forefathers had fought Mughals and other invaders and made sacrifices. Can he [Rupala] name one person from his family who died fighting invaders? Rupala should read history before displaying his utter ignorance."

A senior BJP leader from Saurashtra said Mr. Rupala's remarks had unnecessarily created a political issue in the run-up to the election.

The Chief Electoral Officer of Gujarat, P. Bharathi, sought a report from the Rajkot District Collector on the Minister's speech.

## INBRIEF



### Congress to unveil manifesto for Lok Sabha polls on April 5

The Congress is likely to release its manifesto for the Lok Sabha election on April 5. The party plans to follow it up with rallies and public meetings across the country, sources said on Friday. The first such public rally, in which former party chief Sonia Gandhi may participate, will be held in Rajasthan on April 6. Before the formal release of the manifesto, the Congress will launch the Ghar Ghar guarantee campaign on April 3. Through this campaign, the party plans to reach eight crore households with their 25 guarantees before the election.

### Pathan removes photographs of World Cup-winning squad

Former cricketer and Trinamool Congress candidate from Baharampur, Yusuf Pathan, on Friday, began removing photographs of the Cricket World Cup-winning moment used by his supporters as campaign material in the Lok Sabha seat. The development comes after the West Bengal Congress lodged a complaint with the Election Commission (EC) accusing the former cricketer of violating the model code of conduct (MCC). In a letter to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of the State, the West Bengal Congress unit demanded stern action against Mr. Pathan. Mr. Pathan is pitted against five-time Congress MP and State Congress president Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury.

### Congress releases ninth list of five candidates for LS polls

The Congress on Friday released a list of five candidates for the Lok Sabha election. The party's ninth list included a change of nominees in two seats in Rajasthan. Former Union Minister C.P. Joshi, who was the Speaker of the previous Rajasthan Assembly before losing last year's Assembly election, has been fielded from Bhillwara in place of Damodar Gurjar. Mr. Gurjar has now been fielded from the Rajsamand Lok Sabha seat while the earlier announced candidate, Sudarshan Rawat, has been dropped. In Karnataka, Sunil Bose has been fielded from Chamarajanagar, while E. Thukaram will be the candidate from Bellary. Both seats are reserved seats, with the former reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the latter for the Scheduled Tribes.

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**FOR EMPANELMENT OF DIFFERENT CATEGORY OF HOSPITALS / PATHOLOGICAL LABS / CLINICS / PHYSIOTHERAPY CENTERS**

NIT Ref. No.: TNC-021/2024 Date: 15/03/2024  
NALCO invites RFQ from different medical centers for empanelment of different category of Hospitals / Pathological Labs / Clinics / Physiotherapy Centers etc. at Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Visakhapatnam, Kolkata, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai, Bengaluru, New Delhi and NCR for provision of medical services to NALCO's employees and their dependents. RFQ document is available at the website: [www.nalcoindia.com](http://www.nalcoindia.com) under Menu / Active Tender.  
Last date for physical / postal submission of offer is: 22/04/2024 (by 03:00 PM).  
Dy. General Manager (T&C), P&T

## APPOINTMENT

सीडीएफडी  
डी एन ए डीएनए सिस्टिम एंड डायग्नोस्टिक्स  
(एन डीओएनडीएफ, विकास एवं प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान, भारत सरकार का स्वतंत्र संस्थान)  
**CENTRE FOR DNA FINGERPRINTING AND DIAGNOSTICS**  
(an autonomous institute of the Dept. of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science & Technology, Govt. of India) Inner Ring Road, Uppal, Hyderabad - 500 039, Telangana, India  
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फैक्स : +91-40-2721 6006 वेबसाइट : <http://www.cdfd.org.in>

**PH.D.- 2024-II ADMISSIONS**

The Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics, Hyderabad, invites applications from highly motivated candidates for admission to its Ph.D. - 2024-II. Keeping in view the interdisciplinary nature of modern biology, we especially encourage persons from diverse backgrounds to apply. Those admitted as Research Scholars would be encouraged to register under the Ph.D. program of Manipal Academy of Higher Education or Regional Centre for Biotechnology.

**Eligibility Criteria:**  
To be eligible, a candidate must have:  
1. A Master's degree in any branch of Science, Technology, or Agriculture from a recognized University / Institute OR MBBS.  
**Candidates who have appeared for their final semester examination, but are awaiting results, are also eligible to apply.**  
2. Qualified for a Junior Research Fellowship from CSIR / UGC / DBT / ICMR / INSPIRE / JEST / UGC - RGNF or any other similar examination with fellowship.  
*Candidates having qualified for Project - JRF under the ICMR funded project Scheme [which is only for a period of two years] OR DBT JRF NET with a B.Tech. [Biotechnology] degree OR DBT JRF NET under DBT - category - II list OR LS-NET qualification only in CSIR-UGC (NET) examination are NOT eligible.*  
**(Please see CDFD website (<https://www.cdfd.org.in>) for details).**

**Selection Procedure**  
Admission to the CDFD - Ph.D.-2024-II will be based on an **interview via video conference** scheduled to be held in end of May / beginning of June, 2024. The candidates should be available for more than one round of interviews, spread over a week, if needed.  
**(Please see CDFD website (<http://www.cdfd.org.in>) for details).**  
Interested candidates who fulfill the above conditions may register their names for **Ph.D.-2024-II** by applying in the prescribed application form online. The link for the application form is available at <http://www.cdfd.org.in>  
The Online facility of application will be closed on **April 24, 2024**.  
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**IN BRIEF**



**10 killed in road accident in J&K; PM announces ex gratia**

Ten passengers were killed when a vehicle plunged into a deep gorge on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway on Friday. Officials said the passenger taxi rolled down a deep gorge near the Battery Chashma area in the Ramban district in a pre-dawn accident. The area was witnessing a major rainfall when the taxi rolled down around 300 meters, officials said. Officials could not immediately confirm the exact cause of the accident. Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief over the accident. He announced ex-gratia of two lakh rupees from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund to the next of kin of each deceased.

**Tripura Bar Council to launch drive to identify fake lawyers**

The Bar Council of Tripura has announced plans to conduct a survey in order to identify and remove fake lawyers from the State. A senior council member on Friday said that they have reached out to all bar associations in the State requesting a list of advocates, who claimed to have obtained their law degree after 1990. The decision was announced amid concerns that some individuals may have obtained their degree through corrupt means and falsely enrolled in the Bar Associations. The deadline for submitting the list is April 15.

**Notify norms to make movies accessible to disabled persons: HC**

Court directs I&B Ministry to notify the guidelines by July 15; the order came on a petition by four persons with visual and hearing disabilities

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has given the Centre time till July 15 to notify the guidelines for making films accessible to persons with hearing and visual disabilities. The court said accessibility was enforceable as a legal right and that even private parties have to take reasonable measures to enable greater accessibility for persons with hearing and visual disabilities.

The court observed that the Information and Broadcasting Ministry has framed draft guidelines for accessibility standards in cinema halls for persons with hearing and visual disabilities and is in the process of finalising the same.

"The guidelines shall now be finalised by the Ministry and shall be notified on or before July 15, 2024. It is made clear that the said guidelines shall make



**Mandatory provision:** The Delhi High Court said accessibility was enforceable as a legal right. FILE PHOTO

the provision of accessibility features mandatory and provide a reasonable period for compliance by all stakeholders, in an expeditious manner," the court ordered.

The court's order came on a petition by four persons with visual and hearing disabilities who sought directions on making films accessible to them. They argued that though various rights have been recognised for "persons with disabilities" under

the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, most films which are released in India do not cater to disabled persons despite the statute having been enacted more than five years ago.

The Ministry had issued various directions to the film producers' association and to the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) in October 2019, to use audio description and subtitles and closed captions in all films.

**Celebratory firing at weddings is a recipe for disaster, says SC**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court, in a judgment, has highlighted the often disastrous consequences of "uncontrolled and unwarranted" celebratory firing at weddings, including the maiming or loss of innocent lives.

This is the second time in as many years the court has raised its voice against the culture of gun-toting bravado.

In February 2023, the court had condemned the easy availability and possession of guns, mostly country-made or unlicensed, in States like Uttar Pradesh as a feudal practice that cocks a snook at a very basic fundamental right — the right to life — guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Recently, the court again came across the case concerning the death of man who was fatally shot in the neck by a fellow guest at a wedding in 2016.

"The act of celebratory firing during marriage ceremonies is an unfortunate yet prevalent practice in our nation. The present case is a direct example of the disastrous consequences of such uncontrolled

**A man was fatally shot in the neck by a fellow guest at a wedding in U.P.**

and unwarranted celebratory firing," a Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Satish Chandra Sharma observed.

The shooter, Shahid Ali, was sentenced to life imprisonment for murder. The Allahabad High Court had dismissed his appeal, and he had approached the Supreme Court for reprieve.

Justice Sharma, who authored the judgment, found him guilty of culpable homicide, but not murder.

The top court concluded there had been no previous enmity between Ali and the man who died. Only a single bullet had been fired. The man had died instantly.

The court ordered Ali to be released forthwith. He had already served eight years of his sentence.

Last year, the court had similarly expressed its distress at the large number of cases concerning the possession and use of illegal guns in Uttar Pradesh.

**Manipur govt. assures HC of aid to UPSC aspirants**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has accepted the Manipur government's assurance to extend financial assistance to candidates from the hill districts who have opted for centres outside the strife-torn State for the Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination, 2024.

The government's assurance came in response to a plea by the Zomi Student Federation seeking to set up examination centres in the hill districts of Manipur.

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), which organises the exam, handed over an affidavit filed by the Manipur government, expressing its inability to open examination centres in Chura-chandpur and Kangpokpi districts.

The UPSC said candidates from the hill districts who have at present opted for Imphal as their examination centre can choose any of the following centres — Aizawl (Mizoram), Kohima (Nagaland), Shillong (Meghalaya), Dispur (Assam), Jorhat (Assam), Kolkata (West Bengal), and Delhi.

**IMA releases charter of demands from doctors**

**Bindu Shajan Perappadan**  
NEW DELHI

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) will engage with political leaders to put across its communities' demands for the upcoming election, with the doctors demanding that the Centre help them maintain the "purity of modern medicine, to bring in strict measures to protect medical staff while on duty, reduce GST burden on healthcare products, and insurance, and exempt small and medium hospitals up to 50 beds and clinics from the Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Act, 2010."

The association has released its charter of demands and has asked local branches to engage with political leaders to "educate them about the needs of the community," said its national president R.V. Asokan.

**Delaying new duty norms hampers air safety: pilots' body**

**Jagriti Chandra**  
NEW DELHI

The aviation safety regulator's decision to defer the implementation of new pilot rest and duty norms indefinitely "endangers pilot safety and safety of passengers", a nationwide body of pilots has said in its letter to the government.

The new rules were framed following concerns over mounting fatigue among pilots. They provided enhanced rest by raising the weekly rest from 36 hours to 48 hours and curtailing night-time flying, which is known to impact alertness levels and crew performance, among other measures.

**Safety of passengers**  
"The action of the DGCA not only endangers pilot safety but also undermines the safety of passengers which the implementation

of revised CAR (Civil Aviation Requirement or rules) could prevent," the Federation of Indian Pilots (FIP) has said in its letter to the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Thursday.

The FIP underlines that the commercial interests of airlines should not surpass the health and safety of pilots.

The pilots' body was referring to the amendment of March 26 to the new pilot duty and rest norms notified in January, following which the regulator removed the June 1 deadline for implementing the rules. The modification allows airlines to follow the old 2019 duty and rest norms for pilots "till approval of their respective scheme" in conformity with the new rules, and does not provide a specific time frame for implementation.

**Indian Navy seizes hijacked Iranian vessel, rescues crew**

**Dinakar Peri**  
NEW DELHI

Indian Navy ships *Sumedha* and *Trishul* intercepted and freed a hijacked Iranian fishing vessel (FV), *Al-Kambar*, after forcing the pirates to surrender, the Navy said late on Friday.

"After more than 12 hours of intense coercive tactical measures as per the Standard Operating Procedures, the pirates on board [the] hijacked FV were forced to surrender. The crew, comprising 23 Pakistani nationals, have been safely rescued," a Navy spokesperson said. "Indian Naval specialist teams are presently undertaking thorough sanitisation and seaworthiness checks of the FV in order to escort her to a safe area for resuming normal fishing activities."

*Al-Kambar* was approximately 90 nautical miles southwest of Socotra when it was reportedly boarded by nine armed pirates. The



**Rescue mission:** Iranian fishing vessel *Al-Kambar*, which was reportedly boarded by nine armed pirates. @indiannavy/x

Navy spokesperson said that based on inputs of a potential piracy incident on Thursday, two Indian Navy ships, deployed in Arabian Sea for maritime security operations were diverted. *INS Sumedha* intercepted *Al-Kambar* during early hours of Friday and was joined subsequently by guided missile frigate *INS Trishul*.

This is the latest in a series of incidents of piracy in the Arabian Sea and off Somalia in the past few

months. As reported by *The Hindu* earlier this week, the pirate mother vessel that was used to hijack Malta-flagged merchant vessel *MV Ruen* on December 14 was itself an Iranian fishing vessel. *Al Ashkaan* with 24 Pakistani crew members was hijacked earlier by seven Somali pirates on November 29 near Socotra Island off the coast of Yemen.

It was taken to Somalia and later used to hijack *Ruen*.

**Govt. extends validity of FCRA registration of NGOs till June 30**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry on Thursday extended the validity of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) registration of non-government organisations (NGOs) and associations till June 30.

Registrations of many NGOs are up for renewal since September 29, 2020. The registration, mandatory to receive foreign funds, is renewed every five years.

The Ministry has extended the validity of NGOs at least nine times since 2020 as the applications could not be processed within the stipulated time frame.

On Thursday, the Ministry, in an order, said the registration certificates of entities whose validity was extended till March 31 and "whose renewal application is pending will stand

extended till June 30, 2024, or till the date of disposal of renewal application, whichever is earlier".

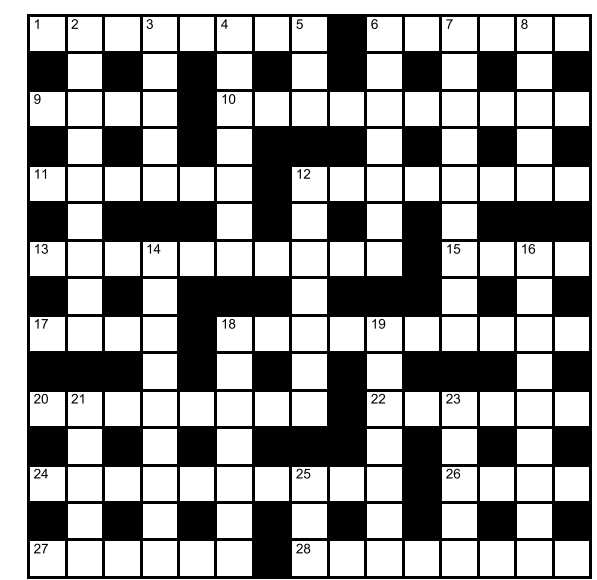
The Ministry said all FCRA-registered associations should note that in case of refusal of the application for renewal of registration, the validity of the certificate shall be deemed to have expired on the date of refusal of the application and the association or the NGO shall not be eligible either to receive the foreign contribution or utilise the foreign contribution received.

The order said that the registration of FCRA entities whose five-year validity period is expiring between April 1 and June 30 this year and the NGOs that have applied for renewal before the expiry of the registration will also stand extended till June 30 "or till the date of disposal of renewal application, whichever is earlier."

**THE CROSSWORD+ 14136**  
(set by Gussalufz)

To solve this puzzle online, get access to our crossword site. @ <https://qrqo.page.link/jjpTn>

SCAN TO PLAY



- Across**
- Video conference or phone displaying a cat or dog's rendering? (8)
  - Angel, he's back penning hip-hop! (6)
  - To an extent, get along with others (2,2)
  - Beverage in bar with name and class (10)
  - Baby, it's irrational with ultimately increasing rent (6)

- Opportunities for extra tips at bar, after evicting a rowdy (3,5)
  - Husband in spicy frolicking with partner, involving body (10)
  - Supported by voucher company's left (4)
  - Bag "Best Music," ignoring the odds (4)
  - Perhaps bike to where we played around back in school? (3-7)
  - Flutter while flying north, for a change in direction (4,4)
  - Groups of molluscs preferring America to India (6)
  - Setter and date in close scare (10)
  - Fly's bite repelled (4)
  - Extremely sweet insect chutney (6)
  - Head of state quietly eliminated citizen (8)
- Down**
- Show me everything post-intro, you idiot box (3,4,2)
  - Zero Lactobacillus acidophilus initially found in milk oddly containing 58.44 grams salt per kilogram, say (5)
  - Stiff resistance to biosynthesised cocaine (7)
  - Alluring party-thrower kills guests at the end (3)
  - Small-time criminal finally caught by exhausted security using charm (7)
  - Gauge again malfunctioning? A mere surge?? No good! (9)
  - TV show episode storyline captivates one (5)
  - Bear eating a bit of lunch with honey, essentially to become bigger (7)
  - Isn't Kali bubbling with energy and angelic! (9)
  - Indian spies probing vendor unfortunately in trouble with the bank (9)
  - "Also, hand joint," said tripping person (7)
  - Winslet so humbly rejected guards, accommodations (7)
  - Low interest EMI's terms ensnare poor nun (5)
  - After taking top off, cleaned and pressed (5)
  - State-owned radio broadcast (3)

**SUDOKU**

		6		9	2	1	5
9				4			3
		2		8			
		9					2
		2	8	6	4		
8					6		
			7	2			
3		6					4
2	5	7	9			3	

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

**Solution to previous puzzle**

**Solution to yesterday's Sudoku**

4	6	3	8	1	9	7	5	2
9	7	5	6	2	3	1	4	8
8	1	2	5	4	7	3	9	6
7	2	8	1	9	6	4	3	5
6	5	4	7	3	2	9	8	1
1	3	9	4	8	5	2	6	7
5	9	6	3	7	1	8	2	4
3	4	7	2	6	8	5	1	9
2	8	1	9	5	4	6	7	3

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**FAITH**  
**God, the ultimate refuge**

One of the 12 Azhwars, Sri Kulasekara, is suffixed with the title Perumal and called Kulasekara Perumal. His work Thirumozhi is called Perumal Thirumozhi. Sri Bharathan Swamy said in discourse that the Azhwar emphasised that God alone is the ultimate refuge.

In all verses in the Vth decad, he expressed his helplessness and said he had no other recourse for succour than Lord Narayana.

The Azhwar says:  
"I have no other go if you fail to wipe out my sorrows. Even if a mother pushes her child for disobedience, he will hold her feet crying. So do I."  
"I cling to you like a wife who holds on to her husband irrespective of his attitude. Like citizens expect their king to save them as their only protector, I look upon you."  
"I am like a patient who still loves his surgeon for curing illness despite her piercing with sharp instruments and causing pain."  
"Like all rivers confluence in the ocean, you are my final destination. Even if it does not rain, the standing crops will look upon the sky to pour and give relief. I yearn for your divine grace."  
Those who recite this Vth decad will not go to hell, will not have rebirth and will derive His blessings.



**IN BRIEF**



**AstraZeneca drug gets CDSCO nod to treat two more cancers**

AstraZeneca Pharma India has received nod from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) to import for sale and distribution Trastuzumab deruxtecan lyophilized powder for concentrate for solution for infusion 100 mg (Enhertu) for treating two more cancers. The additional indications for which CDSCO has given approval are HER2-low metastatic breast cancer and HER2 positive gastric/gastro-oesophageal cancer, the company said.

**RoC lets L&T Finance Holdings to be called L&T Finance Ltd.**

L&T Finance Holdings Ltd. (LTFH) said it had received approval from the Registrar of Companies to change its name to L&T Finance Ltd. (LTF). The change is effective March 28. "Subsequent to the merger effective December 4, 2023, this rebranding initiative reflects our commitment towards the creation of a simplified 'single lending entity,' housing all lending businesses under one operating NBFC," Sudipta Roy, MD & CEO, LTF, said in a statement.

**Afcons Infrastructure files papers for ₹7,000-cr. IPO**

Afcons Infrastructure Ltd. of the Shapoorji Pallonji Group has filed a draft red herring prospectus with the market regulator, Securities and Exchange Board of India, to raise funds through an initial public offering (IPO). The offering, with a face value of ₹10 an equity share, is a mixture of fresh issue of ₹1,250 crore shares and an offer for sale of up to ₹5,750 crore by Goswami Infotech Private Ltd. according to a filing by the company.

**ZF Rane India acquires 100% stake in TRW Sun Steering**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

ZF Rane Automotive India Pvt. Ltd., a joint venture between the ZF Group in India and the Rane Group, has acquired a 100% stake in TRW Sun Steering Wheels Pvt. Ltd. (TSSW) for an undisclosed sum.

With the acquisition of the Gurugam-based domestic steering wheels and occupant safety equipment manufacturer, this joint venture is now more strongly committed to growth in the western and northern region, said the hydraulic steering gear system, seat belts and airbags manufacturer for the automobile sector in a statement.

**Traders, retailers must report weekly wheat stocks: Centre**

**Reuters**  
MUMBAI

Traders, retailers and food processors must declare wheat stocks every Friday from April to prevent hoarding and price spikes, the govt said on Friday.

The second biggest global wheat consumer after China has been trying to contain wheat prices after heat waves hit production for two straight years, forcing the government to sell record volumes to boost domestic supplies.

India imposed a limit on wheat stock traders could hold to moderate prices. However, the limit is set to expire on March 31.

The measure is aimed to

**BBL to manufacture battery pack systems**

**N. Anand**  
CHENNAI

Bimetal Bearings Ltd. (BBL), in association with a Scotland based firm, has decided to manufacture and sell battery pack systems and associated technologies for the e-mobility and energy sector.

Battery maker MEP Technologies Ltd., which entered into a pact with BBL in 2021, has agreed to provide the required technology for energy storage and management solutions, manufacturing and assembling of the battery packs and other allied technologies, said the company in a regulatory filing.

The new business is ex-



pected to commence production in the last quarter of FY25 or the first quarter of FY26.

BBL is into the manufacturing of engine bearings, bushings, thrust washers, alloy powder and bimetallic strip. It reported a net revenue of ₹229 crore for FY23 against ₹197 crore in the earlier period.

**'GeM may offer works contracts'**

The procurement portal wants works contracts for construction projects to also be bid out through the platform with a transparent monitoring mechanism; procurements through the GeM platform this year rises past the ₹4 lakh crore mark

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Government e-Marketplace (GeM), an online platform for public procurement of goods and services, plans to seek the Centre's approval to enable work contracts for construction and building projects to also be bid out through the platform with a transparent monitoring mechanism to assess the progress in such contracts.

This is part of a broader reboot of the GeM platform, which is now used for everything from critical

**Better practices**

GeM says it wants to expedite the tendering process for public works contracts and attract contractors across India



consuming and attracts only local contractors

■ Total GMV of procurement via the GeM platform doubled from ₹2.01 lakh crore in 2022-23

■ Platform now used even for defence procurement'

defence procurements to services like aircraft chartering and printing of election-related material, its chief executive officer P. K. Singh said on Friday.

The planned upgrade includes a revamp of its online interface to switch to an open Application Programming Interface (API) architecture, that will al-

low individual departments, States, and local bodies to create customised micro-procurement portals with multi-lingual interfaces and flexibilities for local rules.

On Thursday evening, a service procurement order from the State Bank of India worth about ₹400 crore pushed the total gross merchandise value of procurements done through the GeM platform this year beyond the ₹4 lakh crore mark—double the ₹2.01 lakh crore recorded in 2022-23.

On works contracts, Mr. Singh said the tendering

process is often time-consuming, starting with the need to draft Requests for Proposals that can take six months to a year, and the tendering process often attracts only local contractors and also faces delays.

If the GeM is allowed for such projects, a contractor in Kerala can bid for work in Rajasthan and the project's progress can be monitored online. Milestone-linked payments released electronically which save contractors from having to pursue officers, and post-contract management features can also be included, the GeM CEO said.

**ZEE to cut Tech & Innovation Centre headcount by 50%**

**Hindu Bureau**  
MUMBAI

ZEE Entertainment Enterprises Ltd. (ZEE) has decided to prune headcount at its Bengaluru-based Technology & Innovation Centre (TIC) by about 50% and streamline its work as part of a strategic board-driven push to cut costs.

"Going forward, the TIC will maintain a sharper focus on enhancing the overall content creation, distribution and monetisation process for the company by utilising technology led tools to gain deeper insights into consumer preferences," the company said in a statement on Friday.



media company's Indian unit pulled out of a proposed merger.

**'Streamline costs'**

Separately, competition has also intensified in the Indian television and digital media space following Reliance Industries' acquisition of Disney's Indian media assets, forcing Zee to streamline its operations and costs.

"The core and streamlined team at TIC will now only focus on enabling and empowering us in this process of content creation, distribution and monetisation," Zee's MD & CEO Punnit Goenka was quoted as saying in the statement.

**India must pay DT \$132 mn in Devas case award: U.S. court**

**Ayushi Kar**  
MUMBAI

The U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia has confirmed a \$132-million award to Deutsche Telekom against India. The German firm had petitioned the court to confirm this award even as India had countered the petition to get the award dismissed.

The award by the UN Commission on International Trade Law Arbitration had found India in violation of the bilateral investment treaty (BIT) between Germany and India. The reason cited was

that it had held that the government of India had terminated a spectrum deal between state-owned Antrix and Devas in 2011. Deutsche Telekom was a shareholder in Devas.

DT had sought enforcement of the award in the U.S. India had tried to get this petition dismissed on two counts. First, that the U.S. was not the appropriate jurisdiction, that is forum non conveniens. Second, that DT did not have sufficient evidence to claim the award. The court said DT met its burden of proof.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

**Banks' GNPA's set to improve to 2.1% by FY25, says Care Ratings**

**Press Trust of India**  
MUMBAI

The gross non-performing assets (GNPA) of the Indian banking system are set to improve further to up to 2.1% by the end of FY25, according to a report.

GNPA's are likely to come at 2.5-2.7% in FY24 and will improve further to 2.1-2.4% by the end of FY25, Care Ratings said in the report.

**For true picture**

It can be noted the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) began the comprehensive exercise in the middle of the last decade by instructing banks to classify certain stressed assets as NPAs as that the balance sheets represent a true picture.

The rating agency also flagged a list of downside risks, which may result in its estimate not coming true, including a material weakening of asset quality due to elevated interest rates, the impact of regulatory changes, tighter liquidity environment and global issues.

Care said GNPA's surged to 11.2% in FY18 from 3.8% in FY14 due to the AQR process of 2015-16, which pushed banks to recognise NPAs and cut unnecessary restructuring and added the stress was emanating from exposure to big-ticket wholesale advances.

The asset quality has improved due to recoveries, higher write-offs by banks and much lower slippages, Care said in the report.

**Force Motors to shut down agri-tractors business**

**Reuters**  
BENGALURU

Force Motors said on Friday it will close its agricultural tractors business and related activities from March 31.

The closure of business is part of the company's product rationalisation programme under which it will focus on its core segments such as shared mobility transportation, last mile mobility and the creation of special vehicles for civil and defence applications, the company added.

During financial year 2023, the sale of agricultural tractors accounted for 3.66% of the company's total revenue, Force Motors said in a regulatory filing.

**'It is aimed at managing food security and prevent hoarding and price speculation'**

"manage overall food security and prevent hoarding and unscrupulous speculation," the Centre added in a statement.

The government is keen to replenish stocks by increasing procurement this year and to do this effectively, they must monitor private buying, said a trader, seeking anonymity.

Stock in govt warehouses dropped to 9.7 million metric tons by February end, the lowest since 2017.

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<b>TENDER NOTICE NO. 25 DATED 28.03.2024</b>				
Invitation of tenders through e-Procurement system				
Principal Chief Material Manager, North Eastern Railway, Gorakhpur-273012 and on behalf of The President of India, invites tenders through e-procurement system for the supply of the following items. Complete description of the item and other condition are available on <a href="http://www.treps.gov.in">www.treps.gov.in</a> .				
Item No.	Tender Number	Due On	Brief Description of Stores	Reserved to be procured from
1	23231024A	27.05.24	Aluminium chequered sheet size 2774x82 etc.	--
2	22241253	20.05.24	Brake Beam Complete for CASNUB 22.NL etc.	RDSO
3	22231192A	20.05.24	Ball Joint Traction Lever for FIAT bogie, etc.	--
4	22230371	13.05.24	Under Slung Water Tank Module (L. H. & R) etc.	--
5	22221851B	13.05.24	Overhauling Kit for Escorts make EP etc.	--
6	22242104	06.05.24	Earthing resistor for wheel set earthing etc.	MCF, ICF, RCF
7	33230088B	02.05.24	Porcelain 9 tonne Insulator (RI 6020-1) etc.	CORE
8	24240169	01.05.24	Equaliser [Modified] with Non Metallic etc.	CLW
9	24240598	01.05.24	Oil Cooler Radiator etc.	CLW
10	26235203	30.04.24	Manufacture and supply of ERC MKV etc.	RDSO
11	22241852	30.04.24	Set of valves for Escorts make EP etc.	--
12	22230786	29.04.24	Main Door Lock complete assly, etc.	--
13	24241024	29.04.24	Set of copper gasket for tap changer etc.	--
14	22231179A	29.04.24	Guide with closing plate for axle box etc.	MCF, ICF, RCF
15	28240932A	29.04.24	Flux cored MIG/MAG welding etc.	ICF
16	33231088C	25.04.24	Jointless Grooved copper contact etc.	CORE
17	30231142	25.04.24	Four V deep groove axle pulley etc.	--
18	22241093	24.04.24	Link pin to RCF Drg. No. L W05125 etc.	--
19	24241149	23.04.24	Vacuum circuit breaker etc.	CLW
20	24241313	22.04.24	Stator with Top and Bottom etc.	CLW
21	28241060A	22.04.24	Thinner Compatible with PU putty etc.	--
22	22241148	22.04.24	Face Plate for Buffer Plunger etc.	MCF, ICF, RCF
23	22241978	22.04.24	POH Kit for Escorts make Levelling etc.	--
24	28245566	22.04.24	Under coat/Finish coat paint for Helical etc.	--
25	28241363	22.04.24	Alkid Paint kit for ICF Coach etc.	--
26	30240431	22.04.24	Disconnecting and Earthing Device etc.	--
27	35240989	22.04.24	Set of thermoplastic polyurethane etc.	BLW
28	24240843	19.04.24	Set of Interlock Assembly etc.	CLW
29	24241460	19.04.24	Set of MN wear etc.	CLW
30	30241222	17.04.24	Rectifier cum regulator etc.	--
31	35240988	16.04.24	Improved rubber side beare etc.	BLW
32	28230446B	15.04.24	Paint Aluminium brushing for General etc.	--
33	24241662	15.04.24	Set of Hex Head bolt & Hex etc.	CLW
34	22231824A	15.04.24	Kit, Wiper motor assembly for 1400 HP etc.	--
35	21235002C	15.04.24	Design, Manufacturing, Supply etc.	--
36	29245003A	15.04.24	Supply of Multi Section Digital etc.	RDSO
37	24245010	15.04.24	Main Transformer of 7775 KVA etc.	CLW
38	30241219	15.04.24	Led Base Emergency Light etc.	--

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**GAZA STRIP**

**Israel's Netanyahu approves talks on Gaza ceasefire, hostage release**



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu approved on Friday new talks on a Gaza ceasefire, a day after the world's top court ordered Israel to ensure urgent humanitarian aid reaches people in the Palestinian territory. The new talks on Gaza ceasefire and hostage release will take place in Doha and Cairo. AFP

**ISLAMABAD**

**Biden assures Pak. Prime Minister Shehbaz of continuous support**



Marking the first official communication with a Pakistani Premier during his tenure, U.S. President Joe Biden has dashed off a letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressing continuous support and highlighted that the ties between the two nations are critical for bilateral and regional peace and security. PTI

**SAN FRANCISCO**

**Musk's Grok-1.5 AI chatbot to be available on X starting next week**



Elon Musk said his artificial intelligence startup xAI's latest Grok-1.5 chatbot will be available on his platform X next week. Earlier this month, Mr. Musk said xAI would open-source Grok, days after the billionaire sued Microsoft-backed OpenAI for allegedly abandoning its original mission in favour of a for-profit model. REUTERS

**BEIJING**

**Chinese tech giant Huawei says profits more than doubled in 2023**



Chinese tech giant Huawei said on Friday its profits more than doubled in 2023, as it ramps up efforts to bounce back in a year that saw the company apparently defy U.S. sanctions with the release of a high-end smartphone. Huawei said it generated a profit of 87 billion yuan (\$12 billion) last year. AFP

# Israeli airstrikes near Syria's Aleppo kill 42: war monitor

Casualties include 36 Syrian troops and six Hezbollah fighters; dozens injured in what is the deadliest such attack in years, says Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights

**Associated Press**  
BEIRUT

The Syrian Army says Israeli airstrikes early on Friday near the northern city of Aleppo killed or wounded "a number of" people and caused damage. An opposition war monitor said the strikes killed 42, most of them Syrian troops.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, said Israeli strikes hit missile depots for Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group in Aleppo's southern suburb of Jibreen, near the Aleppo International Airport, and the nearby town of Safira,



**Same story:** Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes on targets in government-controlled parts of Syria in recent years. REUTERS

home to a sprawling military facility.

The Observatory said 36 Syrian troops and six Hezbollah fighters died, and dozens of people were wounded, calling it the

deadliest such attack in years.

There was no immediate statement from Israeli officials on the strikes.

Israel, which has vowed to stop Iranian entrench-

ment in its northern neighbor, has carried out hundreds of strikes on targets in government-controlled parts of Syria in recent years, but it rarely acknowledges them.

On Thursday, Syrian state media reported airstrikes near the capital, Damascus, saying they wounded two civilians.

Hezbollah has had an armed presence in Syria since it joined the country's conflict fighting alongside government forces.

The strikes have escalated over the past five months against the backdrop of the war in Gaza and ongoing clashes between Hezbollah and Israeli forces on the Lebanon-Israel border.

# Russia strikes Kyiv's energy infra with drones, missiles

**Associated Press**  
KYIV

Moscow launched a large-scale attack on Ukraine's energy infrastructure on Friday, with a mass barrage of 99 drones and missiles hitting regions across the country, Ukraine's armed forces said.

Air raid warnings rang out across the country, with 10 Ukrainian regions coming under fire, the country's Interior Minister, Ihor Klymenko, said.

Ukraine's state-owned grid operator, Ukrenergo, said that Friday's attack deliberately targeted thermal and hydroelectric power plants across central and western regions. DTEK, Ukraine's largest private electricity operator, also said that three of its thermal power plants had been damaged in the attack. It



**Counter strike:** Ukrainian troops from anti-drone mobile air defence unit at their position in Chernihiv on Thursday. REUTERS

announced emergency power shutdowns in the city of Odesa.

**Escalating strikes**

Russia has escalated its attacks on Ukraine in recent days, launching several missile barrages on the capital, Kyiv, and hitting energy infrastructure across the country. Large-scale blackouts have already

affected Ukraine's Kharkiv, where 7,00,000 people lost power in an attack on March 22.

Five people, including a 5-year-old girl, were wounded during the attack in Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk region. He later said that another man had been killed and one more injured in a separate drone attack on Friday.

# Moscow to begin spring draft of conscripts

**Agence France-Presse**  
MOSCOW

Russia will begin calling up tens of thousands of soldiers next week in a conscription drive to replenish its armed forces and build up its military reserves.

Moscow says conscripts are not sent to fight in Ukraine but the draft – which happens twice a year – comes amid persistent rumours of a new wave of mobilisation for the Ukraine offensive.

"The spring draft will be held from April 1," a senior Russian official said.

Some 1,47,000 conscripts were drafted during last year's spring call-ups. Russian men aged between 18 and 30 are eligible to be called up after lawmakers increased the upper age limit from 27 last year.

# Nine held in Tajikistan for Russia concert hall attack

**Associated Press**  
MOSCOW

Nine persons have been detained by Tajikistan over suspected contact with the perpetrators of last week's attack by gunmen on a suburban Moscow concert hall that killed 144 people, Russian state news agency RIA Novosti said on Friday.

Those detained are also suspected of having connections with the Islamic State group.

Russia's Investigative Committee said on Thursday it had detained another suspect in relation to the raid on Crocus City Hall, on suspicion of being involved in financing the attack. It did not give further details of the suspect.

# Following UN veto, Russia says big powers need to stop 'strangling' North Korea

**Reuters**  
MOSCOW

Russia said on Friday that major powers needed a new approach to North Korea, accusing the U.S. and its allies of ratcheting up military tensions in Asia and seeking to "strangle" the reclusive state.

Russia vetoed the annual renewal of a panel of experts monitoring enforcement of longstanding United Nations sanctions against North Korea over its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes.

Moscow's move, which strikes a blow at the enforcement of a myriad of UN sanctions imposed after

**Russia had vetoed the annual renewal of sanctions against North Korea over its nuclear programmes**

Pyongyang carried out its first nuclear test in 2006, underscores the dividend that Kim Jong-un has earned by moving closer to President Vladimir Putin amid the war in Ukraine.

**'Old templates'**

"It is obvious to us that the UN Security Council can no longer use old templates in relation to the problems of the Korean Peninsula," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman

Maria Zakharova said.

Ms. Zakharova said the U.S. was stoking military tensions, that international restrictions had not improved the security situation and that there were severe humanitarian consequences for the population of North Korea, formally known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

The U.S. State Department said on Thursday that Russia's veto had "cynically undermined international peace and security" and accused Moscow of seeking to bury reporting by the panel of experts on its own "collusion" with North Korea to get weapons.

# 5 dead, over 100 hospitalised after taking health supplement in Japan

**Associated Press**  
TOKYO

Five persons who took a Japanese health supplement have died and more than 100 have been hospitalised as of Friday, a week after a pharmaceutical company issued a recall of the products, officials said.

Osaka-based Kobayashi Pharmaceutical Co. came under fire for not going public quickly with problems known internally as early as January. The first public announcement came only on March 22.

People are undergoing treatment in hospitals after taking products – includ-



**Tough spot:** Akihiro Kobayashi of Kobayashi Pharmaceutical Co. arrives at a news conference in Osaka in Japan on Friday. AP

ing Benikoji Choleste Help meant to lower cholesterol – that contain an ingredient called benikoji, a red species of mold.

Some people developed kidney problems after taking the supplements, but the exact cause was still under investigation.

"We apologise deeply," President Akihiro Kobayashi told reporters on Friday, bowing for a long time to emphasise the apology alongside three other top company officials.

The company's products have been recalled – as have dozens of other products that contain benikoji, including miso paste, crackers and a vinegar dressing. Japan's Health Ministry put up a list on its official site of all the recalled products, including some that use benikoji for food colouring. The Ministry warned the deaths could keep growing.

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GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY



# Weekend Sport



GETTY IMAGES

## Carlos Sainz – the smooth operator with a hard edge

The 29-year-old returned from emergency appendix surgery to win the Australian GP, remaining the only driver outside Red Bull to triumph since 2022. Out of contract at the end of the season, the Spaniard's analytical approach and aggressive driving style are set to attract top suitors

Reuters  
Associated Press

**W**hen Carlos Sainz was in hospital after having his appendix removed, the most natural thing for him – if he were the average human being – would have been to wallow in self-pity.

The emergency surgery meant he would miss the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix – in the cut-throat world of Formula One, you never give another driver an even break, and Sainz was being forced to do just that.

### Significant displacement

This turn of events, moreover, had followed a more significant displacement: the Spaniard had learnt before the season that seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton would replace him at Ferrari in 2025.

Out of work at the end of the year and out of commission for at least one Grand Prix, Sainz watched British teenager Oliver Bearman step into his car in Jeddah and drive it to seventh place on an extraordinary F1 debut. Most people, confronted by an equivalent set of circumstances, would have sunk back into their beds in a gloom-

my, woe-is-me mood.

**The reason why athletes recover faster is because you can dedicate 24 hours per day for seven days to recovery. And that's exactly what I did**

Sainz, however, got to work. "As soon as I got my appendix removed, I went on the internet and started talking with professionals and said, 'OK, what helps to speed up recovery?'" he told reporters.

"I started doing all the sort of things that you can do to speed up recovery, the wounds, the scar tissue, what you can help to be faster on that, talking to other athletes, talking to other doctors in Spain, internationally. And then I put together a plan with my team.

"The reason why athletes recover faster is because you can dedicate 24 hours per day for seven days to recovery. And that's exactly what I did."

Sainz had twice daily hour-long sessions in a hyperbaric chamber, breathing pure oxygen at higher pressure, and used an electromagnetic INDIBA machine for tissue repair. He programmed his time spent in bed, walking and eating "the kind of food that you have to recover."

### Stunning recovery

Two weeks after surgery, Sainz was back in his Ferrari, ready for the Australian Grand Prix.

"Nine days ago, when I was about to catch the flight to come to Australia, I was still in bed. I

could barely use my abdominal [muscles] to move. And I was like, this is not going to happen," he said. "But I took the flight, and suddenly when I landed in Australia, the feeling was a lot better.

"And every 24 hours, I was making a lot more progress than the first seven days, which is actually what all the doctors and professional people told me. Don't worry, because the second week, every day is going to improve a lot more than the first week."

Although he was improving, Sainz knew that driving a Formula 1 car – a physically punishing experience at the best of times – would be even more challenging after an appendectomy. So he consulted Williams driver Alex Albon, who had had his appendix removed in 2022.

"I feel like it's exactly what Alex told me," Sainz said. "With the g-force and everything, on the inside, it just feels like everything is moving more than normal and you need some confidence to brace the core and the body as you're used to doing, but you get used to it.

"There is no pain, nothing to worry about. It's just a weird feeling that you have to get used to. Especially on this circuit, we're pulling five to six Gs in some of the braking zones and corners."

If he felt stiff and tired by the end of the race at Albert Park, the result exceeded all expectations. Sainz handled the "weird feeling" to capitalise on a mechanical failure for three-time world champion Max Verstappen – the back of his Red Bull began spewing smoke, with fire following, forcing Verstappen's retirement – and win the Australian Grand Prix.

### Resilience that runs deep

The Spaniard was the first driver since Austrian Gerhard

Berger in 1997 to win his first race back from a medical absence – perhaps not surprising when you consider that resilience runs in the Sainz family. After all, his father, Carlos Sainz Sr., won the gruelling Dakar Rally for a fourth time earlier this year, becoming the oldest winner of the race at 61.

The younger Sainz, with his victory in Melbourne, remains the only driver outside Red Bull to triumph since 2022 – some feat for a man still without a seat for 2025. His last win came in Singapore last year, when he showcased his racecraft and lateral thinking. Leading the race on a track with few overtaking opportunities, he deliberately lapped slower than he might have done, keeping the pack within range and too close to make a strategic pit-stop work.

After a safety car came out, Sainz saw another way of getting the win without going faster. He slowed down and cleverly kept second-placed Lando Norris within DRS range, helping the Englishman prevent the hard-chasing George Russell and Hamilton from challenging for No. 1.

These two wins – Singapore 2023 and Melbourne 2024, in the midst of Red Bull dominance – prove that Sainz can make the most of the smallest opportunity. His ability to stay calm in the heat of battle, analytically plot a route to victory when a sliver of a chance opens up, and then execute the race without making an error has earned him the nickname 'Smooth Operator'.



I am still without a job for next year. I don't race to prove to team principals my value. I race for myself. That's the mentality and approach I have and will continue to [have]

The calm, clinical approach is married to a scrappy, aggressive driving style. Unlike Verstappen and Charles Leclerc, he enjoys a less skittish car. "I prefer a car that understeers than a car that oversteers," he once said. "Why? because my driving is really aggressive. When I am out on track, I know everyone calls me 'Smooth Operator' but I can make a car rotate... I turn the car myself with the steering wheel and the pedals."

### Underrated and respected

With just three career race wins, Sainz may not have the numbers some others on the grid have – but that is also a function of him rarely having cars that could contend for victory. Sainz does, however, have the respect of his peers and predecessors. Regarded as the most underrated driver in the sport, he is a man team principals will be keeping a close eye on. With vacancies, or potential vacancies, in top teams such as Mercedes and Red Bull for next season, Sainz should have attractive options to choose from. He is giving himself "enough time and enough information" to make a decision on "probably the most important three or four years of my career", but his focus for the moment is more immediate.

"I am still without a job for next year," Sainz said after his victory in Melbourne. "Everyone more or less knows what I'm capable of doing. I don't race to prove to team principals my value. I race for myself. That's the mentality and approach I have and will continue to."

If Ferrari's early promise holds, Sainz, who has already ended two Red Bull streaks, will back himself to pull off something truly breathtaking in his final season in red.



## STACKING UP

**ATP Men's Top 15**

#	Player	Age	Points	Events
1	Novak Djokovic	36	9,725	18
2	Carlos Alcaraz	20	8,805	18
3	Jannik Sinner	22	8,310	20
4	Daniil Medvedev	28	7,765	19
5	Alexander Zverev	26	5,060	26
6	Andrey Rublev	26	4,970	24
7	Holger Rune	20	3,875	23
8	Casper Ruud	25	3,560	24
9	Hubert Hurkacz	27	3,370	24
10	Alex de Minaur	25	3,300	25
11	Stefanos Tsitsipas	25	3,255	25
12	Grigor Dimitrov	32	2,935	24
13	Taylor Fritz	26	2,935	25
14	Tommy Paul	26	2,430	27
15	Ugo Humbert	25	2,420	29

**English Premier League Standings**

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Arsenal	28	20	4	4	70	24	46	64
2	Liverpool	28	19	7	2	65	26	39	64
3	Man. City	28	19	6	3	63	28	35	63
4	Aston Villa	29	17	5	7	60	42	18	56
5	Tottenham	28	16	5	7	59	42	17	53
6	Man. United	28	15	2	11	39	39	0	47
7	West Ham	29	12	8	9	46	50	-4	44
8	Brighton	28	11	9	8	50	44	6	42
9	Wolves	28	12	5	11	42	44	-2	41
10	Newcastle	28	12	4	12	59	48	11	40
11	Chelsea	27	11	6	10	47	45	2	39
12	Fulham	29	11	5	13	43	44	-1	38
13	Bournemouth	28	9	8	11	41	52	-11	35
14	Crystal Palace	28	7	8	13	33	48	-15	29
15	Brentford	29	7	5	17	41	54	-13	26
16	Everton*	28	8	7	13	29	39	-10	25
17	Luton Town	29	5	7	17	42	60	-18	22
18	N. Forest*	29	6	7	16	35	51	-16	21
19	Burnley	29	4	5	20	29	63	-34	17
20	Sheffield	28	3	5	20	24	74	-50	14

\* Everton deducted six points and Forest deducted four points following breaches of the PL's Profitability and Sustainability Rules

**Top Indians**

Sumit Nagal Rank 97 ▲ 4 spots	Ramkumar Ramanathan Rank 410 ▼ 1 spot

**WTA Women's Top 15**

#	Player	Age	Points	Events
1	Iga Swiatek	22	10,715	19
2	Aryna Sabalenka	25	8,195	17
3	Coco Gauff	20	7,150	19
4	Elena Rybakina	24	5,848	19
5	Jessica Pegula	30	5,035	22
6	Ons Jabeur	29	4,118	23
7	Qinwen Zheng	21	4,050	21
8	Marketa Vondrousova	24	4,015	16
9	Maria Sakkari	28	3,825	24
10	Jelena Ostapenko	26	3,493	23
11	Daria Kasatkina	26	3,118	25
12	Karolina Muchova	27	3,060	12
13	Beatriz Haddad Maia	27	2,870	24
14	Jasmine Paolini	28	2,810	29
15	Liudmila Samsonova	25	2,605	24

**Top Indians**

Ankita Raina Rank 242 ▼ 17 spots	Sahaja Yamalappali Rank 309 ▲ 17 spots

**Spanish LaLiga Standings**

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Real Madrid	29	22	6	1	64	20	44	72
2	Barcelona	29	19	7	3	60	34	26	64
3	Girona	29	19	5	5	59	34	25	62
4	Athletic Bilbao	29	16	8	5	50	26	24	56
5	Athletic Madrid	29	17	4	8	54	34	20	55
6	Real Sociedad	29	12	10	7	42	31	11	46
7	Real Betis	29	10	12	7	34	33	1	42
8	Valencia	28	11	7	10	32	32	0	40
9	Villarreal	29	10	8	11	47	51	-4	38
10	Getafe	29	9	11	9	37	42	-5	38
11	Las Palmas	29	10	7	12	29	32	-3	37
12	Osasuna	29	10	6	13	33	43	-10	36
13	Alaves	29	8	8	13	26	35	-9	32
14	Real Mallorca	29	6	12	11	25	35	-10	30
15	Rayo Vallecano	29	6	11	12	25	38	-13	29
16	Sevilla	29	6	10	13	36	44	-8	28
17	Celta Vigo	29	6	9	14	32	44	-12	27
18	Cadiz	29	3	13	13	20	40	-20	22
19	Granada	28	2	8	18	30	58	-28	14
20	Almeria	29	1	10	18	28	57	-29	13

**German Bundesliga Standings**

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Leverkusen	26	22	4	0	66	18	48	70
2	Bayern	26	19	3	4	78	31	47	60
3	Stuttgart	26	18	2	6	60	31	29	56
4	Dortmund	26	14	8	4	53	32	21	50
5	RB Leipzig	26	15	4	7	60	32	28	49
6	E. Frankfurt	26	10	10	6	42	35	7	40
7	FC Augsburg	26	9	8	9	43	42	1	35
8	Hoffenheim	26	9	6	11	44	50	-6	33
9	SC Freiburg	26	9	6	11	36	48	-12	33
10	Werder Bremen	26	8	6	12	35	41	-6	30
11	Heidenheim	26	7	8	11	35	44	-9	29
12	M'gladbach	26	6	10	10	46	50	-4	28
13	Union Berlin	26	8	4	14	25	42	-17	28
14	Wolfsburg	26	6	7	13	31	44	-13	25
15	Bochum	26	5	10	11	30	54	-24	25
16	Mainz	26	3	10	13	22	46	-24	19
17	Cologne	26	3	9	14	20	47	-27	18
18	Darmstadt	26	2	7	17	26	65	-39	13

**Test Batting**

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Kane Williamson	859	919
2	Joe Root	824	923
3	Babar Azam	768	882
4	Daryl Mitchell	768	804
5	Steve Smith	757	947
6	Rohit Sharma	751	813
7	Dimuth Karunaratne	740	783
8	Yashasvi Jaiswal	740	740
9	Virat Kohli	737	937
10	Harry Brook	735	773

**Test Bowling**

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	R. Ashwin	870	904
2	Josh Hazlewood	847	864
3	Jasprit Bumrah	847	881
4	Kagiso Rabada	834	902
5	Pat Cummins	820	914
6	Nathan Lyon	801	801
7	Ravindra Jadeja	788	899
8	Prabath Jayasuriya	747	783
9	James Anderson	739	903
10	Shaheen Afridi	733	836

**ODI Batting**

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Babar Azam	824	898
2	Shubman Gill	801	847
3	Virat Kohli	768	909
4	Harry Tector	746	767
5	Rohit Sharma	746	882
6	Daryl Mitchell	728	750
7	David Warner	723	869
8	Pathum Nissanka	711	728
9	Dawid Malan	707	730
10	Rassie van der Dussen	701	796

**ODI Bowling**

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Keshav Maharaj	716	741
2	Josh Hazlewood	688	727
3	Adam Zampa	686	695
4	Mohammed Siraj	678	736
5	Jasprit Bumrah	665	838
6	Mohammad Nabi	656	657
7	Shaheen Afridi	650	688
8	Kuldeep Yadav	645	760
9	Trent Boult	643	775
10	Bernard Scholtz	642	642

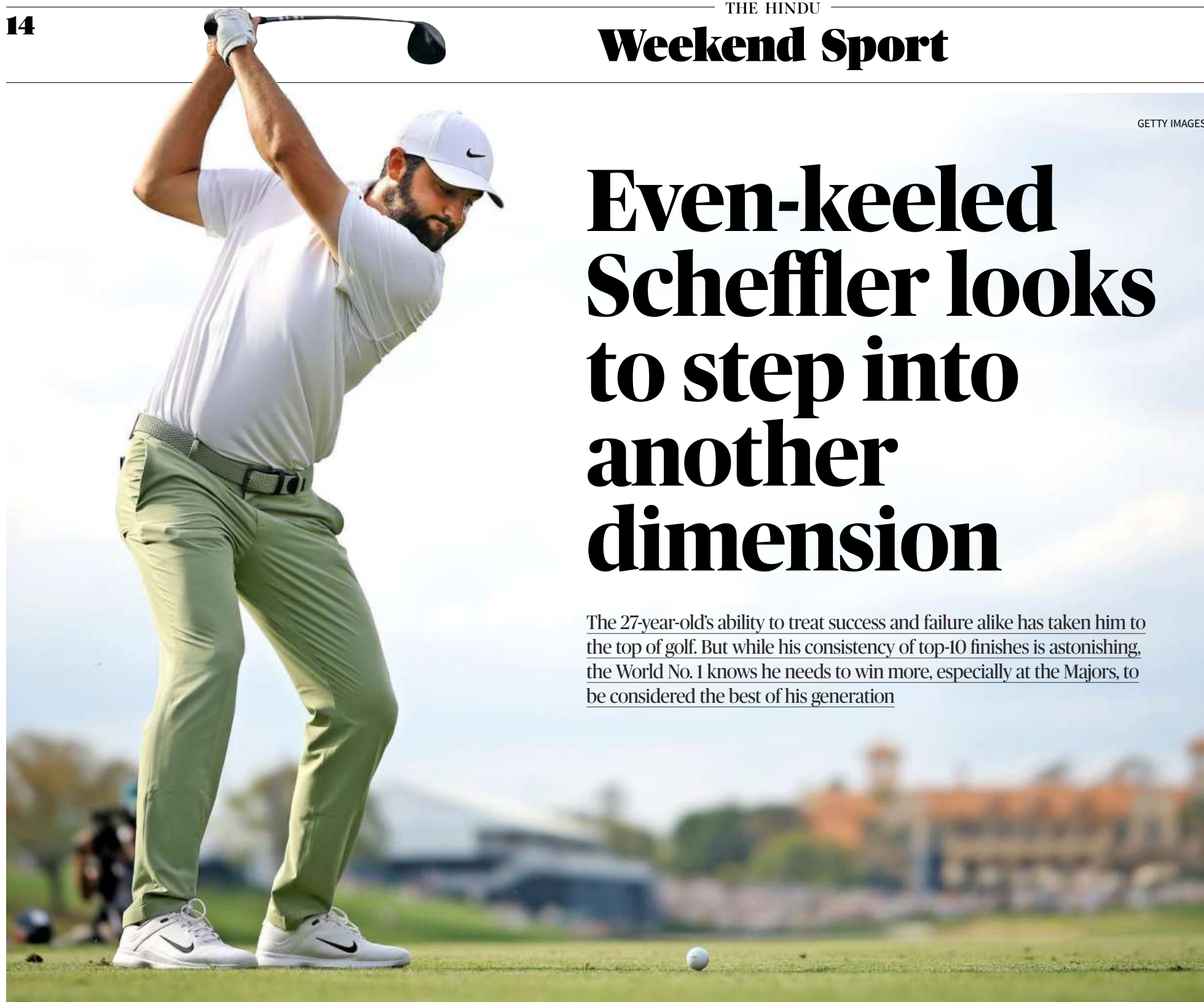
**T20I Batting**

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Suryakumar Yadav	861	910
2	Phillip Salt	802	802
3	Mohammad Rizwan	800	875
4	Babar Azam	764	896
5	Aiden Markram	755	796
6	Yashasvi Jaiswal	714	739
7	Rilee Rossouw	689	724
8	Finn Allen	686	723
9	Jos Buttler	680	687
10	Reeza Hendricks	660	674

**T20I Bowling**

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Adil Rashid	726	746
2			





GETTY IMAGES

# Even-keeled Scheffler looks to step into another dimension

The 27-year-old's ability to treat success and failure alike has taken him to the top of golf. But while his consistency of top-10 finishes is astonishing, the World No. 1 knows he needs to win more, especially at the Majors, to be considered the best of his generation



It's not like I've been a bad putter my whole career. Golf is a hard game. ... The more free and loose I can play, especially on the greens, the better off I am

since Woods, leading the tour in all the important categories from the tee to the green, along with scoring. He had the seventh-lowest adjusted scoring average (68.63) in PGA Tour history – the top six belong to Woods – and finished outside the top 10 only six times in 23 tournaments.

To stay emotionally stable, Scheffler doesn't spend much time on social media. He also takes precautions not to listen or read about himself.

"Let's say I remember all the good things. Then I walk around with a big head thinking, 'This is how great I am.' That's not good, either," Scheffler said before his most recent run. "If I read the bad stuff, that's all I'm going to remember. 'Scottie can't putt. He hadn't won in a year. Is he the best player in the world?' It's a losing game."

Mostly what keeps him grounded are the people around him. His mother has been a chief operating officer for law firms in New York and Dallas, and his father stayed at home with Scheffler and his three sisters.

His wife, Meredith, is pregnant with their first child, due around the end of April. She's the one who told Scheffler on Sunday morning of the 2022 Masters, when he woke up with tears and self-doubt, "Who are you to say that you are not ready?" He wound up winning his first Major.

### The Woods comparisons

Golf is always looking for the heir to the throne, and so it's no surprise that Scheffler has drawn comparisons with Woods. But the 27-year-old has not let it get to his head, aware that Woods spent more than 13 years as No. 1, including a record 281 consecutive weeks.

"Anytime you can be compared to Tiger is really special," Scheffler said. "But I mean, the guy stands alone. I've got 14 more Majors and 70-some PGA Tour events to catch up. So I'm going to continue to plod along, try and stay as even-keeled as I can."

Scheffler also knows that while his consistency continues to draw admiration, he needs to win more, especially at the Majors. With the sport divided after the advent of LIV Golf, financed by the sovereign wealth fund of Saudi Arabia, only the four Majors see the full roster of great players, and it's at these iconic tournaments that Scheffler must prove his superiority. To do that, he must ensure that his putting stays solid. Long known to struggle on the greens, Scheffler switched from a blade to a mallet putter recently. "I like not having to line the ball up," he said. "I line this putter up well in the middle of the face. It's very good visually."

But as important to Scheffler as the switch to a mallet style was a redressing of his mental game. "It's not like I've been a bad putter my whole career," he said. "I've just gone through a tough stretch. I'm still working on the same fundamentals. Golf is a hard game. ... The more free and loose I can play, especially on the greens, usually the better off I am."

Scheffler's newfound strength with the mallet putter may have his competitors nervous, but he will know that Augusta's unforgiving, undulating greens will be a fierce test. What he will also know, however, is that he has battled doubts and mastered them previously.

A second green jacket, which will double his Majors tally to two, will confirm his status as the current undisputed top dog in golf. But he will not be getting ahead of himself.

When he stands on the tee on April 11, the only thing he will be thinking about will be his first shot.

### Associated Press Agence France-Presse

The historic Masters Tournament, held every year in the first full week of April, effectively sets the schedule for the PGA Tour. The dates fall to April 11-14 this year – the first time since 2019 – meaning an extra tournament on the road to Augusta National.

As a result, the top players are having to make some adjustments – World No. 1 and 2022 Masters champion Scottie Scheffler is at the Houston Open, trying his hardest to win but also fine-tuning his game with an eye on slipping into the coveted green jacket again.

### Steady Scottie

His title defence came apart last year, with the American conceding that he "just didn't have it". But it's a measure of Scheffler's consistency – an increasingly recurrent theme in his career – that he still finished in a tie for 10th, eight strokes behind winner Jon Rahm.

Indeed, it's Scheffler's quality of invariably being in contention that makes him so remarkable. Elite sport is played between the ears – and golf, because of the extreme levels of precision it demands in a changeable environment, is a severe mental test. Scheffler's ability to treat success and failure alike has allowed him to consistently deal with these emotional challenges.

Just weeks ago – right before he earned \$8.5 million for winning two big trophies in a span



I had this idea that I had to play perfect on Sundays, and that's not necessarily how golf is played. The most valuable thing is knowing what you feel like and being able to prepare for it

of 10 days and erased any questions on whether he deserved to be ranked No. 1 – he spoke about how quickly he can forget the past, win or lose.

"I don't celebrate accomplishments that well. I don't feel like I dwell on failures that much either," Scheffler said. "If you ask my wife, she would say I need to celebrate more."

The celebration after he won the Arnold Palmer Invitational involved cheeseburgers in the clubhouse with his family, followed by a two-hour drive to the TPC Sawgrass. The day after Scheffler became the only player in 50 editions of The Players Championship to win back to back, he was texting his swing coach about their practice schedule.

The 6'3" American has a big game, but it's guided by a process-oriented approach.

"I try not to place too much emphasis on results, good or bad," he said. "I show up to try and perform my best and hopefully win. But when I stand on the tee on Thursday, I'm not thinking about the trophy ceremony

at the end of the week. I'm just trying to be committed to the shot."

### Leading the world

Scheffler's latest victory at the Players pushed him over \$50 million for his PGA Tour earnings in just five years. He has been at No. 1 since last May, and his gap over everyone else is the largest since Dustin Johnson seven years ago.

Barring injury, he has a chance to become the first player since Tiger Woods in 2009 to hold the No. 1 ranking for an entire calendar year.

Scheffler is playing great golf, measured as much by his elite ball-striking and alarming consistency as the results. He now has nine victories against the strongest fields – one of them a small field in the Bahamas – in the 25 months since he won his first PGA Tour title. Equally impressive is his 65% rate of finishing in the top 10. Last year, he had the best statistical season



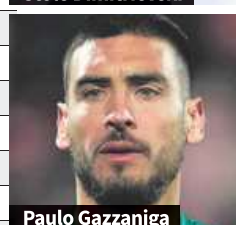
## GAME THEORY

### Top shot-stoppers in LaLiga

We take a look at how often goalkeepers in Spain's top flight have made saves and kept clean sheets so far this season.

Goalkeeper	Club	Games	Saves	Saves per game	Clean sheets	Clean sheet %
Unai Simon	Athletic Club	29	75	2.59	15	51.72
Alex Remiro	Real Sociedad	28	73	2.61	11	39.29
Stole Dimitrievski	Rayo Vallecano	29	90	3.10	10	34.48
Paulo Gazzaniga	Girona	29	90	3.10	10	34.48
Marc-Andre ter Stegen	Barcelona	19	49	2.58	10	52.63
Giorgi Mamardashvili	Valencia	28	81	2.89	9	32.14
Jan Oblak	Atletico Madrid	29	82	2.83	9	31.03
David Soria	Getafe	29	95	3.28	9	31.03
Sergio Herrera	Osasuna	25	65	2.60	8	32.00
Andriy Lunin	Real Madrid	17	36	2.12	8	47.06
Predrag Rajkovic	Mallorca	29	76	2.62	8	27.59
Rui Silva	Betis	20	61	3.05	8	40.00
Antonio Sivera	Alaves	29	79	2.72	7	24.14
Alvaro Valles	Las Palmas	29	86	2.97	7	24.14
Kepa Arrizabalaga	Real Madrid	12	26	2.17	6	50.00
Vicente Guaita	Celta Vigo	20	62	3.10	5	25.00
Jeremias Ledesma	Cadiz	26	86	3.31	5	19.23
Luis Maximiano	Almeria	26	86	3.31	5	19.23
Filip Jorgensen	Villarreal	28	112	4.00	4	14.29
Orjan Nyland	Sevilla	15	43	2.87	3	20.00
Marko Dmitrovic	Sevilla	13	44	3.38	2	15.38
Inaki Pena	Barcelona	10	22	2.20	2	20.00
Augusto Batalla	Granada	10	39	3.90	1	10.00
Andre Ferreira	Granada	15	49	3.27	0	0.00
Ivan Villar	Celta Vigo	10	25	2.50	0	0.00

SOURCE: FBref.com | Minimum 10 games



## PICTURE THIS



### Yee-haw!

Tilden Hooper, riding Choke Cherry, competes in the bareback riding event during The American Rodeo in Arlington, Texas, recently.

The sport of rodeo has its roots in the working practices of cattle-herding in Spain and Mex-

ico. It is now a competition with several events that test the speed and skill of cowboys and cowgirls.

The American Rodeo, accessible to both amateurs and professionals, has a prize pool exceeding \$1 million and draws sizeable crowds.

Bareback riding is one of the

events featured in rodeos; the others include breakaway roping, bull riding, steer wrestling and barrel racing.

In bareback riding, which has a sporting history dating back a century, competitors attempt to stay on a bucking horse for eight seconds without touching the horse with their free hand.

To hold on, bareback riders use a rigging, like a suitcase handle, attached to a strap that fastens around the horse's girth.

Modern rodeos, responding to accusations of cruelty from animal welfare advocates, have instituted rules governing how rodeo livestock are to be managed.



**SOARING HIGHER**

**Kohli climbs to fourth spot in the six-hitters' list in IPL**



K. BHAGYA PRAKASH

Virat Kohli's four sixes in the game against Kolkata Knight Riders in Bengaluru on Friday took him past M.S. Dhoni's tally of 239. With 241 maximums to his credit, the Royal Challengers batter is fourth in the all-time list behind Chris Gayle (357), Rohit Sharma (261) and A.B. de Villiers (251).

**AFTER EFFECT**

**Nortje will take time to get better after injury layoff, says Hopes**



ANI

Delhi Capitals bowling coach James Hopes feels that pace spearhead Anrich Nortje will get better with time, having recently made a comeback to competitive cricket after six months. Nortje was taken to the cleaners by Rajasthan Royals' Riyan Parag at the death as he went for 48 in his four overs on Thursday night.

**PINPOINT ACCURACY**

**All the balls landed in the same area, wide yorkers: Avesh**



SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

After giving just four in the final over and helping Rajasthan Royals pip Delhi Capitals and post its second straight win, Avesh Khan said it was his best in such a situation, execution-wise. "All the balls landed in the same area, wide yorkers," said the seamer, who had started the last over with Capitals needing 17.

**FOCUS**

**Block it out, it's all irrelevant: Smith on Hardik facing boos**



K.R. DEEPAK

Steve Smith advised Hardik Pandya to simply "block out" the jeers and boos the new Mumbai Indians skipper is receiving from spectators at the IPL so far, as they are "all irrelevant". "I'd try and just say, to block it out," Smith, who has faced abuse from fans across the world. "No one outside knows what you are going through."

# Blazing Narine leads the chase as KKR makes short work of RCB

Venkatesh follows suit with top score of 50 and with Salt and Shreyas chipping in. Knight Riders records a seven-wicket win with 19 balls to spare; Kohli carries his bat for a 59-ball 83 to take Royal Challengers to 182 for six which proves inadequate



On the rampage: Narine wielded the willow with abandon while Venkatesh sustained the momentum. K. BHAGYA PRAKASH



**SCOREBOARD**

**ROYAL CHALLENGERS**  
Virat Kohli (not out) 83 (59b, 4x4, 4x6), Faf du Plessis c Starc b Rana 8 (6b, 1x6), Cameron Green b Russell 33 (21b, 4x4, 2x6), Glenn Maxwell c Rinku b Narine 28 (19b, 3x4, 1x6), Rajat Patidar c Rinku b Russell 3 (4b), Anuj Rawat c Salt b Rana 3 (3b), Dinesh Karthik run out 20 (8b, 3x6); Extras (b-1, w-3): 4; Total (for six wkts. in 20 overs): 182.

**FALL OF WICKETS**  
1-17 (du Plessis, 1.6 overs), 2-82 (Green, 8.6), 3-124 (Maxwell, 14.1), 4-144 (Patidar, 16.3), 5-151 (Rawat, 17.3), 6-182 (Karthik, 19.6).

**KNIGHT RIDERS BOWLING**  
Starc 4-0-47-0, Rana 4-0-39-2, Anukul 2-0-6-0, Narine 4-0-40-1, Russell 4-0-29-2, Varun 2-0-20-0.

**KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS**  
Phil Salt c Green b Vyshak 30 (20b, 2x4, 2x6), Sunil Narine b Dagar 47 (22b, 2x4, 5x6), Venkatesh Iyer c Kohli b Dayal 50 (30b, 3x4, 4x6), Shreyas Iyer (not out) 39 (24b, 2x4, 2x6), Rinku Singh (not out) 5 (5b); Extras (b-7, w-8): 15; Total (for three wkts. in 16.5 overs): 186.

**FALL OF WICKETS**  
1-86 (Narine, 6.3), 2-92 (Salt, 7.5), 3-167 (Venkatesh, 15.1).

**RCB BOWLING**  
Siraj 3-0-46-0, Dayal 4-0-46-1, Joseph 2-0-34-0, Dagar 2.5-0-23-1, Vyshak (Impact Player in place of Karthik) 4-0-23-1, Green 1-0-7-0.

**Toss:** KKR; **PoM:** Narine. KKR won by seven wickets with 19 balls to spare.

**Next assignment**

**RCB:** April 2 vs LSG Bengaluru, 7.30 p.m.  
**KKR:** April 3 vs DC Visakhapatnam, 7.30 p.m.

a sitter a short while later to give Maxwell another reprieve.

In the 17th over, the virus spread to Varun Chakravarthi, who failed to hold on to a low catch offered by Anuj Rawat.

The KKR opening blitz, however, made up for these failings.

# LSG looks for home charm against PBKS to chalk up its first victory of season



Ready for challenge: LSG skipper Rahul will be keen to improve his strike rate after a middling fifty in the first game while PBKS' Arshdeep will be raring to make an impression. SANDEEP SAXENA

**P.K. Ajith Kumar**  
LUCKNOW

Lucknow Super Giants is back on familiar turf. It should be hoping to get back into form as it takes on Punjab Kings in its first home match of the 17th edition of the IPL.

After the defeat to Rajasthan Royals last Sunday, LSG would want the season's overwhelming trend to continue: every team had won its first match at home till Thursday.

For Punjab Kings, this is the third game: it won the first and then lost the second.

Though it is very much the early days yet, no team would want to register two losses on the trot. So, much is at stake at the Atal

**Today's match**



**Lucknow, 7.30 P.M.**

**HEAD-TO-HEAD**

Played: 3

LSG 2 | PBKS 1

**PREVIOUS MEETING**

LSG won by 56 runs, 2023

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 (SD & HD) & JO CINEMA

contribute.

Captain K.L. Rahul and Nicholas Pooran showed form against Royals, but the likes of Quinton de Kock and Devdutt Padikkal have to remain at the wicket longer. Bowlers like Ravi Bishnoi and Mohsin Khan have to be sharper, as well. As for Kings, they need to put behind them the terrible finish to their match against Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

They would be hoping for Jonny Bairstow to regain his touch at the top of the order, where skipper Shikhar Dhawan and Prabhsimran Singh also have to deliver.

Kagiso Rabada and Harpreet Brar may not mind more support in the bowling department.

# Hope to make Lucknow a dominant place for LSG this summer: Langer

**P.K. Ajith Kumar**  
LUCKNOW

Justin Langer is enjoying his maiden stint at the IPL.

"There is nothing I haven't liked about the IPL so far," the Lucknow Super Giants coach said at a press conference here on Saturday. "India has been very hospitable. And Holi, the festival of colours the other day... I haven't had so much fun since I was about three years old."

Looking back at his team's disappointing start to the campaign (the 20-run defeat to Rajasthan Royals), the former Australian opener and coach said he was glad the first game was out of the way. "Now

we are looking forward to our first home game and hoping to make it a dominant place for LSG this summer," he said. "And I found that every game is won by the home side this IPL (till Thursday)."

Langer isn't bothered about the talk about the LSG captain K.L. Rahul's strike-rate. "I am not going to lose one second's sleep over Rahul," he said. "He is a beautiful player."

Punjab Kings' spin-bowling coach Sunil Joshi said he would advise his players about the pitch, which he is familiar with as Uttar Pradesh coach. "I will tell the bowlers where there are good pockets to bowl on," he said.



Meet and greet: LSG bowling coach Morne Morkel and PBKS skipper Dhawan on the eve of the match. SANDEEP SAXENA

# It was a match-changing innings from Riyan, says Avesh

**P.K. Ajith Kumar**  
LUCKNOW

Avesh Khan may have bowled an exceptional final over for Rajasthan Royals, but he acknowledged his teammate Riyan Parag's remarkable innings that helped him defend a competitive total against Delhi Capitals.

Royals' top-order had failed, as Jos Buttler, Yashasvi Jaiswal and skipper Sanju Samson were all back in the dugout within the eighth over. At 37 for three, the scoreboard didn't make happy reading for the local fans at the Saiwaj Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur on Thursday. But,



Stepping up: Avesh delivered a remarkable final over to deny Capitals. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Parag, who has been promoted to the crucial No. 4 slot this season, played a brilliant knock — 84 not out off 45 balls — to power RR

to 185 for five. The host won by 12 runs, with Avesh giving away only four runs in the final over. "It was a match-changing innings

from Riyan, as we had lost wickets early and the run-rate was less than six," the seamer said. "He batted fabulously and helped us post a fighting total. He is in good touch and he did well in the last game, too."

Avesh said Parag batted sensibly. "It was because of the 25 runs he took off the last over that I got the opportunity to defend the total," said Avesh.

"I have done something similar in the past too. It is not the first time I have bowled the last over and defended runs. Last year, I defended 15 against Rajasthan. When I played for Delhi too, I bowled the last over."



## INBRIEF



## Bopanna and Ebden march into Miami Masters final

Top seeds Rohan Bopanna and Matthew Ebden outplayed fourth seeds Marcel Granollers and Horacio Zeballos 6-1, 6-4 in the doubles semifinals of the \$10,404,205 ATP Masters tennis in Miami. The Indo-Aussie pair will play second seeds Ivan Dodig and Austin Krajicek in the final.

**Other results: €148,625 Challenger, Naples: Doubles: Pre-quarterfinals:** Arjun Kadhe & Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan bt Nikola Cacic & Denys Molchanov 6-4, 7-6(5).

**\$82,000 Challenger, San Luis Potosi, Mexico: Doubles: Quarterfinals:** Rithvik Bollipalli & Niki Poonacha bt Hans Hach Verdugo & Vasek Pospisil 7-6(5), 4-6, [13-11].

**\$40,000 ITF women, Kofu, Japan: Doubles: Semifinals:** Rutuja Bhosale & Ankita Raina bt Madeleine Brooks & Eudice Wong Chong 7-6(7), 6-3.

## Indian boys in WJT Asia-Oceania under-14 final

Indian boys beat Korea 2-0 in the semifinals to set up a title clash against Japan in the World Junior Tennis (WJT) Asia-Oceania under-14 tournament in Kuching, Malaysia, on Friday. The team had placed second in the group during the league phase, as it lost to Japan 0-2, after beating China and Singapore.

**The results: Semifinals: India bt Korea 2-0** (Tavish Pahwa bt Jang Junseo 6-4, 6-3; Hruthik Katakam bt Kim Dongjae 6-7(4), 5-3 (retired)).

**Quarterfinals: India bt Australia 2-0** (Tavish bt Lucas Han 6-4, 6-4; Hruthik bt Taiiki Taikizawa 6-4, 6-0).

## LIVE TELECAST

**NBA:** Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema, 7.30 a.m.

**Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka:** 2nd Test, day 1, FanCode, 9.30 a.m.

**ISL:** Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema, 5 & 7.30 p.m.

**Premier League:** SS Select 1, 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 6, 8.30, 11 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Sunday)

**LaLiga:** Jio Cinema, 6.30, 8.45 p.m.; Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema, 11 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Sunday)

**Serie A:** Jio Cinema, 7.30 & 10.30 p.m.; Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema, 1.15 a.m. (Sunday)

**IPL:** Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema, 7.30 p.m.

**Bundesliga:** Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 8 & 11 p.m.

**NBA:** Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 5.30 a.m. onwards (Sunday)

## Thrown in at the deep end, Ravindra has quickly found his feet for CSK

The opener set the innings up in the first two matches, at a brisk strike rate of more than 200 with some eye-catching strokeplay

## IPL-17

S. Dipak Ragav  
CHENNAI

When Chennai Super Kings got Rachin Ravindra for ₹1.8 crore last year, even the team management members at the auction table were surprised at how easily they got him.

The New Zealand all-rounder wasn't expected to be in the starting XI, but an injury to compatriot Devon Conway meant he was thrown into the deep end immediately, and the 24-year-old has quickly delivered for the Super Kings. The opener set the innings up in the first two matches, at a brisk strike rate of more than 200 with eye-catching strokeplay.

"I guess the whole thing

about being an opener is that you try to put a bit of pressure on the bowler in the PowerPlay when it stops swinging, and I have been able to do that for two games," said Ravindra during a media interaction.

What was more impressive about his performance was that he came into the IPL after playing Tests against Australia back home and quickly found his feet.

"It was just about trying to do what I do well in terms of training and being specific about it," said Ravindra about his preparations.

"I adjust slightly between formats in terms of my intent, whereas my positions and the balls I am trying to access are quite similar."

Though he started his

career as a lower-order bat, the left-hander's graph rose during the ODI World Cup last year, where he scored 578 runs when he was promoted up the order.

When asked if being an opener has unlocked his potential, Ravindra said, "Yes and no. I think it's just a lot more comfortable being at the top. But I guess during the World Cup, you get an opportunity where you play your shots, and you are like, this is maybe a part of my game.

"I took a lot of confidence from that and was able to execute some shots that I had been training but hadn't used in a game before. So yeah, I guess, a bit of that, but I think it's more about getting time in the middle and the confidence to do that on the big stages."



**Striking hard:** Ravindra says it is all about putting pressure on the bowler in the PowerPlay.  
S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

## Anuja's ton gives West Zone upper hand against Central

## WOMEN'S INTER-ZONAL

Press Trust of India  
PUNE

Former India all-rounder Anuja Patil hit an attacking 122 (120b, 20x4, 1x6) as West Zone took a 111-run first-innings lead against Central Zone on the second day of the Women's Inter-Zonal Multi-Day Cup here on Friday.

Anuja was well supported by Jemimah Rodriguez (69 of 97 balls) as the pair added 155 runs for the fifth

wicket to help West end its first innings at 356. At stumps, Central was 68 for no loss in its second innings.

Devika Vaidya looked good in the top order, scoring an aggressive 52 off 58 balls while skipper Smriti Mandhana, batting at number 8, contributed a stylish 50 (52b). Central's leg-spinner Poonam Raut got seven for 116 in 25 overs.

In another match, East declared its first innings on the overnight score of 385 for eight and then dismiss-

sed North East for 108 in its first essay with off-spinner Deepti Sharma returning figures of five for 9.

After being asked to follow-on, NE ended the second day at 156 for eight, still needing 121 runs to avoid an innings defeat.

**The scores:** Central 245 & 68 for no loss in 26.4 overs vs. West 356 in 76.2 overs (Anuja 122, Jemimah 69, Devika 52, Smriti 50, Poonam 7/116).

East 385/8 vs. North East 108 in 34.3 overs (Prodhan 40, Deepti 5/9) & 156/8 in 72 overs (Debasmita 30, Ayu 32 batting).

## Bangladesh banks on Shakib to lift the side against Sri Lanka

## CRICKET

Agence France-Presse  
CHITTAGONG

Bangladesh was counting on the return of veteran all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan for a much-needed energy lift ahead of the second and final Test against Sri Lanka, stand-in coach Nic Pothas said Friday.

Sri Lanka thrashed Bangladesh by 328 runs in the first match of the series, with the hosts failing to post 200 in either innings. Shakib is returning to

the Test squad for the Chittagong match starting on Saturday after more than a year's absence, and after being elected to the Bangladeshi parliament in January.

"I think any team that has Shakib in it is very fortunate. We welcome him back," Pothas told reporters.

"It is always great to have him in the change room. His energy is very infectious," he said.

Pothas also defended Bangladesh's under-fire batters, saying the team

was in the middle of a generational change.

"We have a very young and inexperienced group. There was a very elite group before this. Now we have to build," he said.

Sri Lanka captain Dhananjaya de Silva said he expected his side's top-order batters to come good after failing to shine in the first Test.

"They had been performing well in the last few matches. I have no doubt that they will definitely perform in this match," he said.

## BFC will aim for win against Odisha to boost playoff chances

## ISL

Sports Bureau  
BENGALURU

Bengaluru FC and Odisha FC will both look to get back to winning ways when they meet at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium here on Saturday.

BFC lost 2-1 away to FC Goa while Odisha was beaten by Chennaiyin FC by a similar scoreline. But as the Indian Super League returns after a fortnight's international break, it will

be the home side that will be desperate for full points.

BFC currently lies seventh in the table (21 points, 19 matches) and is currently involved in a dog fight with five other sides for the sixth and final playoff spot. Odisha, in fourth position (35 points, 18 matches), has already qualified.

"True, it is a big match, like it was against Kerala and Chennai as well," said BFC head coach Gerard Zaragoza. "We take this game as a final. Odisha is a great

team with a good coach, it won't be easy."

The hosts will be without the services of centre-backs Aleksandar Jovanovic and Slavko Damjanovic, with both serving a one-match suspension.

Midfielder Suresh Wangjam will also sit out after having picked up a red card in the previous encounter versus Goa.

BFC has a perfect home record in 2024, winning all three games. Odisha, on the other hand, beat BFC 3-2 in the reverse fixture earlier this season.

## Sindhu bows out; Sikki-Sumeeth duo enter the last four

## SPAIN MASTERS

Press Trust of India  
MADRID

P.V. Sindhu fought her heart out before going down narrowly to Thailand's Supanida Katethong in the women's singles quarterfinals of the Madrid Spain Masters Super 300 badminton tournament here on Friday.

Sindhu, who had finished runner-up in 2023, recovered from an early 4-8 deficit and saved multiple game points to grab the opening game, but couldn't go the distance as the sixth seeded Thai registered a 24-26, 21-17, 22-20 win after a see-saw battle.

However, the husband-wife combo of N. Sikki Reddy and B. Sumeeth Reddy

had a lot to cheer about as they notched up a 14-21, 21-11, 21-17 win over Indonesia's fourth seed Rehan Naufal Kusharjanto and Lisa Ayu Kusumawati to enter the mixed doubles semifinals.

The women's doubles pair of Tanisha Crasto and Ashwini Ponnappa, seeded third, lost 13-21, 19-21 to sixth-seeded Taiwanese Lee Chia Hsin and Teng Chun Hsun in the quarterfinals.

**The results (quarterfinals): Women:** Supanida Katethong (Tha) bt P.V. Sindhu 24-26, 21-17, 22-20. **Doubles:** Lee Chia Hsin & Teng Chun Hsun (Tpe) bt Tanisha Crasto & Ashwini Ponnappa 21-13, 21-19. **Mixed doubles:** N. Sikki Reddy & B. Sumeeth Reddy bt Rehan Naufal Kusharjanto & Lisa Ayu Kusumawati 14-21, 21-11, 21-17.

## Kush Maini gets sponsorship backing from TVS Racing

Sports Bureau  
CHENNAI

TVS Racing announced a sponsorship deal with Indian racer Kush Maini, who is competing in the FIA Formula 2 championship on Friday.

Kush, who is part of the Alpine F1 team's junior

driver programme, is currently fifth in the F2 standings, which is the feeder series to Formula One.

"It's an honour to be supported by TVS.

"It makes me proud to see the TVS colours on my car and suit in an elite championship like Formula 2," said Kush.

## Ahlawat stays in the hunt; Nakajima opens two-shot lead

## INDIAN OPEN

Rakesh Rao  
GURUGRAM

Veer Ahlawat, one of the longest hitters on the domestic tour and often leads the 'eagle-count' for the season, moved within five strokes of leader on the second day of the \$2.25 million Hero Indian Open at the DLF Golf and Country Club here.

The day produced a course record of 10-under 62 from Norway's Espen Kofstad - after a highly forgettable 81 on the first day - that erased the previous best of 64 by Shubhankar Sharma in 2018 edition of this premier event and by Arjun Puri in the Kapil Dev-Grand Thornton Invitational in 2022.

When play was suspended due to lightning, 46 golfers - including Shubhankar and Anirban Lahiri - were on course. The incomplete second round also meant that the projected 'cut' at 144 could not be applied.

## Extends stay

For the record, Japanese Keita Nakajima extended his stay at the top following a successive seven-under 65 for a two-round tally of 130.

He led Frenchman Romain Langasque by two shots and moved three strokes ahead of fellow overnight leader, Italian Matteo Manassero.

Ahlawat started from the 10th hole and found



**Going strong:** Ahlawat improve his card from a first-day 69 to come up with a 66. GETTY IMAGES

pars on the first seven holes. This was followed by three successive birdies before he erred in judgement and dropped a shot on the second hole of the course.

He responded with an 'eagle' on the fourth after his superb approach shot left him 10 feet from the pin. He collected two more birdies to improve his card from a first-day 69 to come up with a 66.

Nakajima's measured putting earned him five birdies in-a-row on the front nine and placed him way ahead of the pack at -12. He added back-to-back birdies after taking the turn to move to -14 with seven holes to play. After two pars, the Japanese encountered an unforeseen trouble with his putting as he bogeyed thrice in succession to slip to -11 with two

holes to go.

Again, on the testing 17th, Nakajima produced a stunning drive, a well-calculated shot from the fairway and birdied to get back the confidence. But his best came on the final hole. On the par-5, Nakajima reached the green on two and drained an 'eagle-putt' from about 20 feet to finish at -14.

**Leading scores: 130:** Keita Nakajima (Jpn) (65, 65); **132:** Romain Langasque (Fra) (66, 66); **133:** Matteo Manassero (Ita) (65, 68); **135:** Veer Ahlawat (69, 66); **137:** Joel Gurrbach (Swi) (67, 70); Fabrizio Zanotti (Par) (67, 70) and Jeff Winther (Den) (69, 68).

**Other Indians (with sub-par scores after completing their rounds): 138:** Karandeep Kochhar (68, 70); Manu Gandas (73, 65); **139:** Gaganjeet Bhullar (70, 69); **140:** Rashid Khan (71, 69); **142:** Jaiiraj Singh Sandhu (72, 70).

## SNAPSHOTS

## Lakshay Dahiya wins a double crown

Lakshay Dahiya won the boys' singles and doubles titles in the AITA Championship series under-18 tennis tournament organised by the Tarush Academy in Sonipat.

**The results (finals):** Lakshay Dahiya bt Anuj Tashildar 6-3, 6-4. **Doubles:** Lakshay & Aryan Phogat bt Rudr Gutgutia & Ryan Mehta 6-2, 6-4.

## Delhi outplays Jharkhand

Nasreen and Shivani played well to help host Delhi to an innings and 22-point victory over Jharkhand in a women's league match of the 56th National kho kho championship in New Delhi on Friday.

**The results (league): Men:**

Maharashtra Police bt Uttarakhand 30-26; Sashastra Seema Bal bt ITBP 22-20. **Women:** ITBP bt Assam 32-30; Delhi bt Jharkhand 38-16.

## Arpit's double century and Aditya's ton highlight Sonnex's big win

Arpit Garg's 213 and Aditya Aggarwal's 133 saw Sonnex Club thrash Life Insurance Corporation of India by 331 runs in the DDCA League.

In another game, half centuries by Ajay Gulia and Gianshu Malhotra helped Times of India beat Tilak Nagar Colts by six wickets.

**The scores:** Sonnex Club 477/6 in 40 overs (Arpit Garg 213, Aditya Aggarwal 133, Arjun Berry 44) bt LIC 146 in 25.2 overs (Suraj Bhatt 47, Dhairya Singh Dalal 4/41, Ayush Banerjee 3/15). Tilak Nagar Colts 225/7 in 40

overs (Raj Gupta 101 n.o., Mohd. Fahad 3/28) lost to Times of India 229/4 in 36 overs (Ajay Gulia 85, Gianshu Malhotra 58).

Maulana Azad Club 237/6 in 40 overs (Aryan 62) lost to Telefunken Club 241/6 in 35.3 overs (Yogesh Nagar 57 n.o., Abhimanyu 46, Aryan Bhatt 3/36, Akshay Kapoor 3/41).

Delhi Blues 221 in 36.4 overs (Sahaj Chadha 47, Bhavya Kakkar 40, Alizan Alam 4/35) bt MTNL 179 in 36 overs (Bhavya Kakkar 3/27).

Paragon Club 121 in 33.3 overs (Ajay Tokas 49, Alok Kumar 3/35) lost to Little Master Club 122/1 in 17.1 overs (Soham Garg 52 n.o., Yug Gupta 48).

Rohtak Road Gymkhana 250/6 in 40 overs (Lakshay Thareja 109 n.o., Naitik Mathur 65) bt Pioneer Club 109 in 22 over (Dev Dubey 43, Prateek Sehrawat 6/37).

Indo Club 232/8 in 40 overs (Punit106, Nishchay 4/32) lost to City Gymkhana 233/3 in 32.3 overs (Parikshit Sehrawat 130 n.o., Piyush Mittle 63).