

Embarrassing: SC judge on Govs facing litigation from state govts



Not a healthy trend: Justice Nagarathna

SCREENVAS JANYALA HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

OBSERVING THAT there is a recent trend of Governors getting involved in litigation for not assenting to Bills sent for approval by state governments, Supreme Court Judge B V Nagarathna Saturday said they should act in accordance with the Constitution. "This is not a healthy trend under the Constitution to bring what the Governor does before constitutional courts for consideration. Though it is called a gubernatorial post, it is a serious constitutional post, and Governors must act as per the Constitution so this kind of litigation reduces. It is quite embarrassing for Governors to be told to do or not do a thing. The time has come where they would be now told, I suppose, to do their duties as per the Constitution," she observed.

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THE WORLD



BIDEN: MOST WORLD LEADERS TOLD ME NOT TO LET TRUMP WIN 2024

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DELHI LIQUOR POLICY CASE

ED questions Delhi minister Gahlot, AAP alleges BJP plot, attempt to topple Govt

BJP counters, says AAP government and party MLAs 'inundated in corruption'



Delhi minister Kailash Gahlot outside the ED office on Saturday. Amit Mehra

JATIN ANAND NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

THE ENFORCEMENT Directorate on Saturday questioned Delhi minister Kailash Gahlot for close to five hours in connection with the Delhi excise policy case. He is the third senior AAP minister to be examined in the case after Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his former deputy Manish Sisodia, both of whom were subsequently placed under arrest.

Terming the ED's move as "open vendetta" against the AAP, senior party leader and minister Atishi alleged that the probe is a BJP conspiracy to topple the AAP government in Delhi.

Sources in the AAP alleged that the BJP-led Centre wants to "finish" the party and destabilise its government in Delhi by "creating an administrative crisis" so

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Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal's wife, Sunita Kejriwal (left), with Kalpana Soren, wife of former Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren on Saturday, a day ahead of INDIA bloc's rally at Delhi's Ramlila Maidan. Kalpana later met Congress leader Sonia Gandhi. Arvind Kejriwal is in ED custody since March 21, Hemant Soren has been in custody since January 31. PTI

EXPLAINED

Party and the polls

THE SUMMONING of Kailash Gahlot by ED has rattled AAP with its top leadership — CM Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia, Sanjay Singh and Satyendar Jain — already in custody. In the run-up to polls, with a shadow now on Gahlot, considered an AAP veteran, the party's challenges only increase.

CM 'CONFRONTED' WITH INDIVIDUALS KEY TO CASE

ED asks Apple to help access CM's phone; questioning for 5 hours daily

RITU SARIN NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

INVESTIGATORS OF the Enforcement Directorate, who have Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in their custody for over a week now, have contacted Apple to help gain access to his iPhone, *The Indian Express* has learned.

The ED does not have any recovered electronic evidence against the Chief Minister in the form of his personal computers or desktops but four mobile phones, including his, were confiscated. On the night of his arrest on March 21, around Rs 70,000 was found — and left untouched — in his residence. The Chief Minister had switched off his iPhone and hasn't shared his

password, sources said.

Senior officials linked to the case said that the Chief Minister, during his questioning, has stated that by accessing his telephone data and chats, the ED would be privy to details of AAP's "election strategy" and pre-poll alliances.

The ED is known to have officially contacted Apple, manufacturers of the phone, to obtain

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KEY STEP IN INTEGRATION

Plans under way to make Mumbai first tri-service common defence station

Logistics to repairs to supplies, Army, Navy, IAF facilities will be combined

AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

THE ARMED Forces are planning to turn Mumbai into the first "tri-service common defence station" in the country for the Army, Navy and the Indian Air Force (IAF) — a step aimed at achieving jointness among the three services ahead of the creation of integrated theatre commands, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

Discussions to this effect are under way in the top military hierarchy and a decision is likely to be taken soon, officials said.

Currently, there are no common defence stations in India. The Andaman and Nicobar command is a full-fledged command and raised as a tri-service command in 2001. Other efforts to bring in jointness among the services — such as inter-service postings — were brought in last year.

A common defence station would mean that all facilities of the Army, Navy, IAF will be combined — including logistics, infrastructure, repair and maintenance as well as stores and supplies — so that they could be optimised and brought under a common lead service. In the case of Mumbai, the Navy will be the lead service given that it has the largest presence there.

At present, wings of the three services are spread across Mumbai and its suburbs and operate separately. Under the plan, logistics, infrastructure and administration will be brought un-



INSH Asvini, a Naval hospital in Mumbai, is also being used by Army and IAF. X/@indiannavy

der a common chain.

The Navy's INS Hamla and INS Karanja, for example, are responsible for imparting logistics training to Naval personnel and housing a major armament depot respectively. The Army's ordnance depot, a separate training area, an air defence regiment and IAF units are planned to be combined for common usage by the three services.

An official said this will mean the logistics, services, and works of the individual services will be integrated so that there is a single system of delivery of supplies such as fuel and ration and common items can be repaired at one place.

"As per plans, the resources of the individual services will be shared by all and this would include infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and sports complexes; training facilities; as well as storages, repair and

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'Misbehaviour, assault': Football federation member held after two women players complain

PAVNEET SINGH CHADHA & SHASHANK NAIR PANAJI, NEW DELHI MARCH 30

THE GOA police on Saturday arrested Deepak Sharma, an executive committee member of the All India Football Federation (AIFF), for allegedly assaulting and misbehaving with two women footballers of a club during their stay in Goa for the ongoing Indian Women's League 2.

"A complaint was received on Saturday at Mapusa police station wherein players of Khad FC, a football club participating in the Indian Women's League, alleged that they were assaulted and misbehaved with by one of the accompanying members of the team during their stay in Goa. The accused, Deepak Sharma, has been arrested and necessary legal action is being taken," North Goa Superintendent of Police Akshat Kaushal said.

An FIR has been registered under sections 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 341 (wrongful re-



Deepak Sharma is executive committee member of AIFF

straint) and 354A (sexual harassment) of the Indian Penal Code and the accused will be produced in a court on Sunday, the police said.

Earlier in the day, the Union Minister for Sports Anurag Thakur posted online, "The Ministry of Sports has taken a serious note of an alleged physical assault upon women footballers by an official during the ongoing Indian Women's League 2 in Goa. AIFF has been directed to take quick action and ensure the safety and security of our footballers. The ministry has further directed AIFF to take strong legal action and inform the ministry about actions taken. The safety and security of players are our utmost priority."

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Donor No.2 Megha bought poll bonds even as it got key Govt, PSU contracts

Megha bought bonds for ₹966 cr; in 9 instances, around time it won contracts

RAVIDUTTA MISHRA & SUKALP SHARMA NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

A NUMBER of large infrastructure projects of Megha Engineering & Infrastructure Ltd (MEIL) were awarded to it by government departments and public sector undertakings (PSUs) either just before or immediately after the Hyderabad-headquartered company purchased electoral bonds, a

majority of which many were redeemed by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), shows an analysis of bond issuance and redemption data made public by the Election Commission of India.

MEIL, promoted by Pamireddy Pichi Reddy and P V Krishna Reddy, purchased bonds worth Rs 966 crore, and is the second largest buyer after Future Gaming.

*The Indian Express* identified five major projects that MEIL

Party	Bonds encashed
BJP	₹584 cr
BRS	₹195 cr
DMK	₹85 cr
YSR CP	₹37 cr
TDP	₹28 cr
Congress	₹18 cr
JD(U)	₹10 cr
JD(S)	₹5 cr
Janasena Party	₹4 cr
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>₹966 cr</b>

bagged between 2019 and 2023 where the company bought bonds close to being awarded the contracts, and a sizeable chunk of those bonds were then redeemed by the BJP.

In another four instances, though the company did buy electoral bonds around the time it was awarded contracts, the bonds were redeemed by political parties that were not ruling the government at the Centre or the state whose undertaking

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CAMBODIA 'CYBER SLAVERY': MEA SAYS 250 INDIANS HAVE BEEN RESCUED

NINE PIRATES BEING BROUGHT TO INDIA TO FACE ACTION: NAVY

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Pawar vs Pawar in Baramati: Ajit's wife to take on three-time MP Supriya Sule

MANOJ MORE & VALLABH OZARKAR PUNE, MUMBAI, MARCH 30

IT IS going to be a Pawar versus Pawar battle in western Maharashtra's Baramati Lok Sabha constituency, the fortress of former chief minister and NCP (SP) president Sharad Pawar.



Supriya Sule; Sunetra Pawar ECHOES OF LARGER WAR P6

The NCP led by Deputy CM Ajit Pawar on Saturday announced the name of his wife Sunetra Pawar as its candidate from Baramati, pitting her against her sister-in-law and Sharad Pawar's daughter Supriya Sule, who has

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Congress gets tax notices for three more years, total I-T demand Rs 3,567 cr

MANOJ CG NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

THE CONGRESS Saturday said it has received fresh notices from the Income-Tax department for the assessment years 2014-15 to 2016-17 raising demands of Rs 1,745 crore. This together with the notice for assessment years 1994-95 and 2017-18 to 2020-21 takes the total demand to Rs 3,567 crores.

Sources in the main opposition party said the fresh notices were received Friday evening, hours after the party hit out at the BJP-led Central government accusing it of indulging in "tax terrorism" to "financially cripple" it ahead of Lok Sabha elections.

On Friday, Congress had in a press conference said it had received notices for five years (Assessment Year 1994-95 and AYs 2017-18 to 2020-21) from the Income-Tax department,

AY	Demand (₹cr)
1994-95	53.90
2014-15	663.05
2015-16	663.89
2016-17	417.31
2017-18	181.99
2018-19	178.73
2019-20	918.45
2020-21	490.01
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,567.33</b>

AY: Assessment Year

\*as on 30.03.2024; Source: Congress

asking it to pay Rs 1,823 crore. The string of notices follow the I-T department's raids prior to the 2019 Lok Sabha elections where it claimed to have traced "unaccounted transactions" of Rs 523.87 crore.

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The Chamkila story: From Dalit labourer Dhani Ram to a music icon

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

KAMALDEEP SINGH BRAR AMRITSAR, MARCH 30

IN THE early 1980s, Surinder Shinda, a renowned Punjabi folk singer, embarked on a solo singing tour in Canada. Back in India, his duet partner Surinder Sonia, a grade-A singer with HMV (a prominent record label), seized the opportunity to record four songs with Dhani Ram. The Dalit labourer and budding mu-

sician worked frequently with Shinda.

The album, *Takuye Te Takua Khadke*, brought Dhani Ram instant stardom and gave the world Amar Singh Chamkila. Thirty-six years after his death, Chamkila continues to fascinate fans. Punjabi singer-actor Diljit Dosanjh's fascination with the singing legend — he has done two back-to-back movies on Chamkila — underscores the enduring legacy of the iconic singer, who revolutionised Punjabi music alongside female companions like Sonia and Amarjot Kaur. The singer-actor is set to reprise

the role of Chamkila in his next film directed by Imtiaz Ali. But what makes the Chamkila story so alluring?

Born on July 1, 1960, in an impoverished household in Ludhiana district's Dugri village, Chamkila faced early hardships. Named Dhani Ram at birth, he worked as a labourer in Ludhiana's Haibowal area to support his large family. Despite the challenges, his passion for music drove him to join drama groups. It was in these groups that he honed his acting skills, and mastered the harmonium and tumbi by the age of 16.



Amar Singh Chamkila and his wife and co-singer Amarjot Kaur were shot dead near Jalandhar in 1988. File

Despite working as a labourer, Dhani Ram continued to pursue his musical aspirations, including collaborating with renowned folk singer Shinda. From setting up the stage to writing lyrics, Dhani Ram immersed himself in every aspect of the music industry, ultimately establishing himself as a prolific songwriter for Shinda.

A pivotal moment in Dhani Ram's life occurred when Shinda embarked on a solo singing tour in Canada during the early 1980s. Four songs penned by him and recorded with Shinda's duet partner Sonia made him a

star. Dhani Ram was reborn as Chamkila.

The music label released another tape, *Baapu Saada Gum Ho Gaya*, once again featuring the dynamic duo. Chamkila and Sonia's combined talent and unique style captured the hearts of audiences, leading to high demand for their performances at weddings and other events. Despite their joint success, Chamkila received only Rs 200 for each performance, while Sonia earned Rs 600. This culminated in Sonia's decision to part ways with Chamkila after he insisted on equal compensation.

Shortly after parting ways with Sonia, Chamkila found a new collaborator in Amarjot Kaur. The talented singer was already gaining recognition through her association with Kuldeep Manak. Chamkila and Amarjot's partnership marked a significant milestone in Punjabi music history. Their debut LP record, *Bhul Gayi Main Ghund Kadna*, featured an unforgettable track, *Pahile Lalkare Naal Main Darr Gayi*. Meanwhile, Chamkila's distinctive style and poignant lyrics resonated deeply with Punjabi audiences, solidifying his status as a musical icon.

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## ED questions Delhi minister Gahlot

FULL REPORTS ON  
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

that it can impose President's Rule and take over governance of the national capital through the Lieutenant Governor.

The Delhi BJP said the ED action only shows that the AAP leaders and their government in Delhi are neck-deep in corruption.

On Saturday morning, the ED issued summons – for the second time – to Gahlot, asking him to join its money laundering investigation.

Gahlot, who holds significant portfolios such as Home, Transport, Information & Technology among others, was summoned as he was a member of the Group of Ministers (GoM), which oversaw the formulation of the now-scrapped excise policy.

Also, according to the ED, AAP communications-in-charge Vijay Nair, who was earlier arrested in the case, allegedly stayed in an official bungalow allotted in Gahlot's name near Kejriwal's Civil Lines residence. The ED claims Nair was the key link with the 'South Group' – liquor business owners from south India who allegedly benefited from the new policy.

"I answered all the questions that were asked by the ED, I have cooperated... I was questioned for five hours – from 11.30 am to 4.30 pm. I was not confronted

with the Chief Minister," Gahlot told reporters after emerging from the ED headquarters in the evening.

"The house where Vijay Nair was staying is certainly allotted in my name but till this day, like before, I stay at my private residence in Vasant Kunj. I never shifted or stayed at the bungalow allotted in my name in Civil Lines," he said.

According to Gahlot, he received the first ED summons around a month ago. "This was the second summons issued to me... the first was sent during the Budget Session of the Assembly around a month ago. I had sought time (to appear) since Assembly proceedings related to the Budget Session were on," he said.

Gahlot said the central probe agency's questions largely revolved around the GoM, which formulated the excise policy. "I was, without a doubt, part of the GoM. The policy and all aspects related to it were discussed and I was asked questions related to these which I answered to the best of my knowledge and my memory," he said.

"I was asked about how the policy was drafted, why and in which way it came about... for around five hours. I was asked whether I knew Vijay Nair personally, I was told that he was

staying at my house... that house is allotted in my name, there is no denying that, but neither did I stay there nor ever shift to it. The party's stand regarding the case is my stand as well: there is no such scam and you get convinced about this fact going forward," the AAP minister said.

The ED's investigation is related to alleged money laundering from the excise policy. It has so far led to the arrest of Sisodia, AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh and Chief Minister Kejriwal.

Slamming the ED's probe, Delhi minister Atishi said, "Whether it is the arrest of Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia, Sanjay Singh – this alleged investigation is to attack the AAP and Arvind Kejriwal to topple the AAP government. Today they have called Kailash Gahlot, tomorrow it can be me, then Saurabh Bharadwaj and then each AAP MLA and leader. This is the BJP's conspiracy."

"One by one, each AAP leader will be summoned, charged and arrested; but I want to tell the BJP that we are not afraid of it. Even if it comes to being hanged, we will continue to work for the nation," she told reporters.

Sources in the AAP alleged that the BJP's plan is to "snuff out

"the AAP. This is a bid to arm-twist the AAP into submission and to try and trigger an exodus (of leaders) through intimidation. There is no fear but, yes, there are apprehensions in the party that more ministers and leaders will be dragged into the alleged excise scam in the coming days," a party source said.

"We have a Delhi referendum based on the opinions of lakhs of citizens who want the CM to continue. Let the BJP impose President's Rule in Delhi which we believe will trigger a groundswell of support for us and, simultaneously, only help wipe off any possible anti-incumbency against the AAP government," a senior leader said.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva targeted Gahlot, saying that the people were "shocked" at his "involvement in the liquor scam" as well as that of other AAP leaders.

"Kailash Gahlot has been a comparatively silent minister and exposure of his role in the liquor scam has shocked Delhiites. People believe that the entire (AAP) government and party MLAs are inundated in corruption. Earlier this week, we also saw the ED investigating MLA Gulab Singh Matiala and some leaders of AAP from Goa as well," Sachdeva said.

## • Megha bought bonds even as it got Govt, PSU contracts

awarded the contract. In all, there were at least nine instances of MEIL purchasing electoral bonds around the time – up to a couple of months before or after – of winning contracts.

MEIL purchased bonds regularly in multiple windows between April 2019 and October 2023. Of its total electoral bond purchases of Rs 966 crore, the maximum—Rs 584 crore—went to the BJP. The BRS redeemed Rs 195 crore worth of bonds bought by MEIL, followed by the DMK with Rs 85 crore worth. Other political parties that received funds from MEIL through electoral bonds included the YSR Congress, Telugu Desam Party, Congress, Janata Dal (United), Janata Dal (Secular), and Janasena Party.

Just a month before it bagged the Rs 14,400-crore Thane-Borivali twin tunnel project in May 2023 from the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA), MEIL bought electoral bonds worth Rs 140 crore. Of these, Rs 115 crore worth were redeemed by the BJP. Larsen & Toubro (L&T), which lost out on the project, had moved the Bombay High Court against the award to MEIL. L&T claimed that its technical bid for one package of the project was wrongfully rejected by the MMRDA, while in the second package, its bid was rejected despite being the successful bid. The court later quashed L&T's pleas.

Then in October 2023, the company bought Rs 160 crore worth of electoral bonds, of which, Rs 150 crore worth were redeemed by the BJP. This tranche came after MEIL announced late September that it had bagged a \$648-million Mongolia refinery project, which is being executed with the Indian government's assistance.

In October 2022, MEIL won two contracts worth a total of around Rs 3,200 crore from HPCL Rajasthan Refinery, a joint venture between Hindustan Petroleum Corporation (HPCL) and the Rajasthan Government, with an equity split of 74 per cent and 26 per cent, respectively. In the same month, MEIL purchased Rs 10 crore worth of bonds, of which, Rs 8 crore worth were redeemed by the BJP. Apart from being a Central PSU, HPCL is also a subsidiary of public sector energy major Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC).

In March 2021, MEIL bagged a civil works contract in Mangalore worth nearly Rs 300 crore from HPCL. Next month, on April 6, MEIL purchased electoral bonds worth Rs 38 crore, of which, Rs 33 crore worth were redeemed by the BJP. MEIL had also bought Rs 40 crore worth of bonds on April 5, but these were redeemed by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK).

MEIL bagged a contract worth around Rs 6,000 crore from public sector energy major Oil and Natural Gas Corporation

(ONGC) for oil rigs around June-July 2019, and had bought electoral bonds worth Rs 60 crore in May. Of these, bonds worth Rs 53 crore were redeemed by the BJP. In April 2019, MEIL had bought bonds worth Rs 65 crore, all of which were redeemed by the BJP. This period also coincided with the Lok Sabha elections of 2019.

Interestingly, MEIL bought Rs 20 crore worth of electoral bonds in October 2020 close on the heels of winning another order worth around Rs 800 crore from HPCL Rajasthan Refinery and the Rs 4,700-crore Zojila tunnel contract from the National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation (NHIDCL). However, all these bonds went to the DMK.

Similarly, MEIL won more contracts (estimated at over Rs 5,000 crore) from HPCL Rajasthan Refinery in August-September 2021. Soon after, in October 2021, MEIL bought electoral bonds worth Rs 100 crore but all of those were redeemed by the Bharat Rashtira Samithi.

Emails sent by The Indian Express to MEIL, MMRDA, HPCL, and NHIDCL seeking their comments on the matter did not elicit a response. An ONGC spokesperson said MEIL was awarded the contract for 47 rigs in 2019 through international competitive bidding in a transparent tendering process, adhering to all the requisite norms.

## • Cong gets fresh tax notice

On March 22, the party had lost in the Delhi High Court a challenge to the search operations conducted by the I-T department. The party had argued that these were "time-barred" and a "delayed action".

Also in March this year, the Congress party lost its appeal before the Income-Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) where it had sought a stay on withdrawal of Rs 135 crore from its bank accounts.

Rajya Sabha member Vivek Tankha, who handles the party tax litigation, pointed out that in the Sahara case, the Supreme Court had rejected the admissibility of third party excel sheets or entries recovered in the course of search qua high BJP functionaries, including a former Chief Minister of Gujarat and a former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, amongst many others as "invalid evidence".

"But in the present case, all such suspicious and strange entries have been accepted as gospel truth while reopening or re-assessing Congress I-T returns. In fact, it is a travesty of justice. Also a misuse of authority and power by the revenue (department) contrary to the Supreme Court judgment. It is a case of targeting Congress party on the eve of elections. Where is the level playing field for opposition parties? It raises questions of fairness in the present election process," Tankha said.

In a post on social media platform X, he had earlier said the astronomical tax demand of Rs 3,567.3 crore in the last three days was in addition to Rs 135 crore already recovered from the Congress bank accounts recently. "BJP must thank and felicitate select officers of the Revenue department for their studious and loyal adherence to the BJP mission of 'Congress Mukta Bharat'. But they have misjudged the intelligence and gravitas of people of India. The Indian electorate has never supported autocratic conduct. No Democracy possible sans opposition parties," he wrote on X.

## • First tri-service defence station

maintenance facilities and works," the official said.

For example, the services of INHS Asvini – a Naval hospital in Mumbai – are also being used by the other two services.

A second official said this will lead to better optimisation and management of resources and avoid duplication of efforts since the idea is to have a single channel for funds and delivery and avoid redundancy.

Officials said that with Mumbai being the first common defence station being planned, Sular (near Coimbatore) and Guwahati are likely to be chosen as locations for the second and third common defence stations. While the lead service for Sular is likely to be IAF, the Army will likely be the lead service for the Guwahati station.

## • ED asks Apple for help

access to the CM's iPhone but have been told that a password was necessary for retrieving any data.

The Chief Minister has told the ED that this phone has been with him for about a year and that the device he was using when the liquor policy was being drafted in 2020-2021 was no longer with him.

The CM is being questioned for about five hours each day, senior officials said.

The ED proposes to ask for a four-day extension of the Chief Minister's remand failing which it would ask for his judicial custody.

"The Central Bureau of Investigation, which has registered the predicate offence in the case, may also ask for his custodial remand now or can be granted this even if the Chief Minister is in JC in Tihar Jail," a top official said.

Kejriwal is also learnt to have told ED sleuths questioning him that it was on the basis of "legal advice" that he did not respond to the spate of summons prior to his arrest.

According to the ED remand, Kejriwal has been accused of laundering money via the new liquor policy and illegally obtaining funds to the tune of Rs 100 crore of which Rs 45 crore was allegedly used for AAP's 2021-22 election campaign in Goa.

During his custody, Kejriwal

has also been "confronted" with C Arvind, the former PS to jailed Deputy CM Manish Sisodia. Arvind, the remand application alleged, had been handed over the draft Group of Ministers report on the liquor policy at the residence of Kejriwal.

The CM, officials said, has been "confronted" with "one or two more" key individuals linked to the case but their names were not being divulged.

C Arvind reiterated his statement in the presence of the CM who is learnt to have said that he couldn't recall the instructions he is supposed to have given him. Asked about his instructions to officials and politicians, Kejriwal said to have replied that there was a crush of MLAs and political workers meeting him every day and he could not recollect specific conversations.

During his questioning, officials said, Kejriwal is also said to have denied the claim by N D Gupta, Rajya Sabha MP and National Treasurer of AAP. In a statement to the ED, Gupta had said that it was the Chief Minister who was "overall in charge" of the party and its election expenses.

Shown this, the CM is learnt to have said that this was inaccurate and that he had little knowledge about the financial affairs or the pattern of AAP's election funding.

## • From Dalit labourer Dhani Ram to a music icon

Unlike some of his contemporaries, Chamkila refrained from borrowing from other singers or lyricists. Instead, he crafted original lines that captured the essence of Punjabi folk culture. His compositions not only entertained, but also immortalised the region's rich heritage.

Chamkila's collaborations with Sonia and Amarjot resulted in the recording of a remarkable 99 songs, including hymns, leaving a lasting legacy in the world of Punjabi music.

Already married to Gurdial Kaur, with whom he had two daughters, Chamkila fell in love with Amarjot, an upper caste woman. There was much outrage over their relationship, but the couple got married and went on to have two sons.

Chamkila was a multifaceted talent. Renowned as a top lyricist, singer, trainer, flautist and harmonium player, his versatility set him apart as an institution in his own right. "His mastery of the Punjabi language was unparalleled, allowing him to weave magic with words and deliver them in a booming voice. Whether he was playing the flute or the harmonium, his fingertips conjured melodies that captivated audiences, showcasing his remarkable musical prowess," said Harpreet Singh Kahlon, a prominent Punjabi movie and music critic.

Davinder Singh Rauke, a lyricist and singer, acknowledged that while Chamkila's repertoire included double entendre songs, his talent transcended mere con-

troversy. "His deep understanding of Punjab and its culture is evident in his songs, which not only encompassed double entendre, but also addressed broader cultural and moral issues. For instance, *Sajna De Nal Dhokha Nai Kamal Da* outlines a code of conduct for Punjabi gentlemen," Rauke said.

In an interview before his death last year, Sawarn Sivia, Chamkila's close friend and lyricist, said, "He preferred recording his songs during the monsoon. The rest of the year was filled with two or three marriage performances per day. At the peak of his career, he attended an astonishing 411 programmes in just 11 months. His sudden emergence had a profound impact on other popular singers of his time. His immense popularity overshadowed theirs, so much so that people would solely demand performances by Chamkila."

His eight-year career as a singer coincided with one of the most tumultuous periods in Punjab's history – the armed conflict between Sikh militants and Punjab Police. Chamkila began receiving threats from Sikh militants due to his controversial songs, adding to the challenges he faced during those turbulent times.

In an article, Swarn Sivia recounted, "Chamkila was targeted by three different Khalistani militant organisations for his controversial songs. I acted as a mediator and facilitated a meeting between Chamkila and a five-member committee of Khalistani leaders at Darbar Sahib Amritsar.

Chamkila apologised for his songs and the matter was resolved. Following that, he performed some timeless songs on Sikh history, including 'Sathon Baba Kho Laya Tera Nankana', which I had penned. This is why I remain sceptical that Khalistanis were responsible for his murder. Throughout my life, I have continued to investigate who was behind his killing."

Movie critic Kahlon says Chamkila's religious compositions were as beloved as his other songs and deeply moving. His compositions about the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh could evoke tears, while his depiction of the pain of the Partition in his song about Nankana Sahib was unparalleled.

On March 8, 1988, Chamkila and Amarjot were shot dead near Mahismampur village in Jalandhar district's Phillaur tehsil. They were on their way to perform at a function. Although militants were blamed for their murder, the identity of the assailants and the motive behind the killings have remained shrouded in mystery.

Explaining Chamkila's enduring legacy, Rauke says Punjabis tend to romanticise death by bullet, citing the recent case of Sidhu Moosewala, who was shot dead nearly two years ago.

"The manner in which Chamkila's life ended elevated him beyond the criticisms he faced during his lifetime for his double meaning songs. The suspicious circumstances surrounding his death only add to his intrigue."

## • Pawar vs Pawar in Baramati

won the seat thrice since 2009. Maharashtra NCP president Sunil Tatkare made the announcement at a press conference in Mumbai.

Supriya's name was also announced by the NCP (SP) on Saturday – a confirmation of Sharad Pawar's announcement at a rally in Baramati last week that she would be the party candidate from the Lok Sabha seat. Speaking to reporters in the evening, Sunetra said, "This is a golden moment for me... This is my biggest honour... Wherever I am going, I am getting overwhelming response. It looks like the voters will stand behind Ajitdada. It is the people who decided that I should be their candidate. They have taken the election into their own hands."

This is the first time Sunetra is contesting an election. Sharad Pawar first won from Baramati in 1984. In 1991, Ajit Pawar, his nephew and protégé, won back the constituency and later vacated it to accommodate his uncle. Since 1996, Baramati has been represented first by Sharad Pawar and then Supriya.

Although Sharad Pawar had already announced Supriya's name for the seat this time as well, Ajit Pawar remained evasive in recent weeks when asked whether Sunetra would contest from Baramati. "You will soon come to know," he would say.

However, in rallies in Baramati, without taking the name of Sunetra, he would urge people to vote for the "candidate of his choice". He also warned

voters that if they didn't, the development of Baramati would suffer.

Speaking to Marathi television channel *ABP Majha* after her name was announced, Sunetra thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis and other alliance leaders for nominating her.

Supriya's name figured in the NCP (SP)'s first list of five candidates. Apart from renominating her and Marathi actor-politician Amol Kolhe from Shirur – also a sitting MP – the party named Nilesh Lanke from Ahmednagar, Amar Kar from Wardha and Bhaskarrao Bhagre from Dindori.

"This is our first list of candidates. We will soon declare the second list of candidates," state NCP (SP) president Jayant Patil said.

Kolhe will contest against rival NCP candidate Shivajirao Adhalrao-Patil in Shirur – an NCP versus NCP battle like in Baramati. Lanke is pitted against BJP's Sujay Vikhe-Patil in Ahmednagar. Kale is pitted against BJP's Ramdas Tadas in Wardha. Bhaskarrao Bhagre is likely to contest against sitting MP Dr Bharati Pawar.

Adhalrao-Patil's name was announced earlier this week at a rally in Manchar by Ajit Pawar. He was in the Shiv Sena led by Shinde. During seat-sharing discussions in the ruling Mahayuti alliance, the seat went

to Ajit Pawar's NCP, which, however, struggled to find a strong candidate to take on Kolhe, a popular Marathi actor. Later, Adhalrao-Patil joined Ajit Pawar's party.

In Maval, it will be a battle between Shinde's Sena and Sena (UBT) led by Uddhav Thackeray. While Shinde's party has fielded two-time MP Shrirang Barne, Sena (UBT) has fielded Sanjog Wahgere.

The Pune Lok Sabha seat is the only one where the BJP and Congress will battle it out for supremacy. The Pune seat traditionally has been a Congress stronghold. However, in the last two elections, the BJP has won the seat.

This time, the BJP has fielded Murlidhar Mohol, a former Pune city mayor, while the Congress has fielded Kasba Peth MLA Ravindra Dhangerkar.

Apart from Sunetra's candidature from Baramati, the Ajit Pawar-led NCP also announced to give the Parbhani Lok Sabha seat from its quota to Rashtriya Samaj Party (RSP)'s Mahadev Jankar as the Mahayuti candidate.

Tatkare said he is a prominent leader of the Dhargar Samaj movement and fought for reservation in Maharashtra. Jankar would be contesting against Sena (UBT)'s Sanjay Jadhav, who is the sitting MP from Parbhani.

Incidentally, Jankar is considered as a political opponent of the Sharad Pawar family and had earlier contested against Supriya in Baramati.

## • Football Federation member arrested

Before Sharma's arrest, the AIFF had released a statement on Saturday where they said that a three-member committee was being formed by president Kalyan Chaubey. The two women footballers had earlier lodged a complaint with the AIFF's Competitions department, as well as organisers of the tournament, the Goa Football Association, on Saturday after the alleged assault on March 29.

In the complaint letter to the AIFF accessed by *The Indian Express*, the two women alleged that after a match in the Indian Women's League second division, they returned to their accommodation and were boiling eggs as dinner was over. Sharma, who the girls alleged was in an inebriated state, barged into their rooms and assaulted them. The letter stated that Sharma was drinking alcohol in front of the girls during their journey from Himachal to Delhi, and continued to do so in Goa.

"As the dinner was over, we were boiling eggs. Due to this reason, Deepak Sharma got offended and stormed into our room and slapped me and (the other woman) and assaulted us physically," the letter signed by the two women and three witnesses states.

"From the first day, he would be in an inebriated state. As we were travelling from Himachal to Delhi before the league, he carried alcohol and was drinking in front of us. Also the manager of the team, Nandita Sharma, was defending him"

Sharma is also the Himachal

Pradesh Football Association general secretary, and his wife Nandita the official team manager. The two could not be reached for a comment.

Goa Football Association President Gaitano Fernandes told *The Indian Express* that as soon as the association was notified, he and vice-president of the GFA, Jonathan D'Souza, wrote to Mapusa police station.

In a police complaint filed on Saturday at Mapusa police station, one of the women footballers, aged 21, said while she was travelling from Himachal to Delhi on March 18-19, Sharma was the only man travelling with them in the bus. "... during the journey to Delhi, he was creating nuisance, annoyance under the influence of alcohol and he was asking one of the players... to sit next to him, but she refused... Sharma scolded her and as she did not obey him, he made her sit with the driver," the player alleged in the complaint.

She stated that on the afternoon of March 20, the players along with the support staff and coach reached Goa and were accommodated at a villa in Mapusa. She alleged that Sharma stayed with them and sent them a message that they "must not lock the gate of their respective rooms".

The player further alleged that around 1 pm on March 24, when she was in the room along with some other players, Sharma, who appeared to be under the influence of alcohol, entered their room and slapped a player on the neck. The player alleged that Sharma told that player that this

is her last tournament, adding that they did not report the matter to anyone.

The complainant said that at 10.30 pm on March 28, when she and four other players were in their room, Sharma barged in without knocking the door. "Sharma, who was smelling of alcohol, started scolding me by yelling at me... I got scared and started crying as I was not able to understand what he is saying in a loud voice and then he held my hand and assaulted me with slaps on my face," she wrote in the police complaint, adding that he left when another woman player intervened and told him that he cannot misbehave like this.

"Thereafter, his wife... came to our room and scolded me and the other girls," the player alleged. One of the women footballers, who was allegedly assaulted, told *The Indian Express* this is not the first time Sharma had assaulted someone. "We have seen him hit players from Khad FC earlier. When we were in the camp prior to this tournament, we saw him hit a girl. We were very scared that day but the players who were already part of the team said that he gets angry sometimes and these things happen," she claimed.

"When it happened to me, I didn't initially want to file a complaint. But if nobody complains, his confidence to get away with this would grow. I took a stand because I didn't want someone else to be beaten up by him because I didn't say anything," she said, adding that the AIFF assured them that action would be taken.

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# This March, Delhi saw mostly cool days — before mercury began rising this week

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

FOR MOST of March, Delhi saw cooler-than-normal weather, fewer 'poor' air quality days than usual, and a large deficit in rainfall. The month, meanwhile, has ended with above-normal temperatures for the city.

Till March 30, the average minimum temperature for the month was 14 degrees Celsius — this is lower than the average recorded in the month for the past four years. Similarly, the average maximum temperature of 30.3 degrees Celsius this month is lower than the average for March for the past three years.

Temperatures, however, began to soar this week, hitting a high of 37.8 degrees Celsius, five degrees above normal, on Friday.

With a western disturbance lying over Afghanistan and the neighbourhood bringing cloudy skies, very light rainfall, and strong winds to some parts of the city on Friday and Saturday, the maximum temperature dropped marginally to around 35.2 degrees on Saturday — still three degrees above normal. The minimum temperature also remained above normal early on Saturday, settling at 21.8 degrees, four degrees above normal.

Cold northwesterly winds during the daytime and light rainfall kept the maximum temperature below normal for some parts



A pleasant Friday evening at India Gate. Amit Mehra

of the month, according to an IMD official.

The western disturbances, however, did not bring much rainfall to the city. March ends with a 75% deficit in rainfall — Delhi recorded only 4.3 mm till March 30, against a normal of 17.1 mm till this time for the month.

Strong winds, which may have helped disperse pollutants, also meant the city recorded fewer 'poor' AQJ days in March this year compared to the past three years, bulletins of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) show. While there were four 'poor' air days this March, there were seven such days in March last year.

The IMD forecast indicates that no rainfall is expected over the week ahead, but strong winds could persist on Sunday and Monday. From April 4-10, maximum temperatures are expected to rise by two to three degrees.

# CAR DRIVER ALSO KILLED; DRIVERS OF TWO TRUCKS FLEE Ghaziabad: Headed for exam, 2 boys killed in accident with two trucks

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
GHAZIABAD, MARCH 30

ON THEIR way from Amroha to appear for an entrance examination in Delhi, two minor boys were killed when their car rammed into a stationary truck before being hit by a container truck from behind on the Delhi-Meerut Expressway in Ghaziabad early on Saturday.

The 24-year-old driver of the car, an Ertiga, was also killed in the accident. The deceased have been identified as driver Anas, Bijnor resident Unesh (12), and Azam (13), who hailed from Sambhal.

Officials said that the incident took place at 6.20 am in the



The Ertiga car, coming from Amroha, hit a stationary truck before being hit by a container truck from behind. Videograb

Crossing Republik police station area.

"The driver was going from Amroha with 11 children to Jamia Millia Islamia (school), New Delhi, for an entrance test for Class 6... his

car collided with a dumper truck, which was parked on the overtake lane. The car then went spinning out of control after which a container truck hit it from behind. The driver was taken to the district hospital

MMG, where doctors declared him dead," said Veerendra Kumar, additional DCP (Traffic). "Three children who were severely injured were referred to Manipal Hospital... Two children died during treatment," added the official.

Officials said the surviving nine children are aged between 10 and 13 years, and are residents of different Western UP districts such as Amroha, Moradabad, Sambhal and Budaun.

Kumar said the drivers of the dumper truck and container truck left their vehicles and fled from the spot. They are yet to be traced. An FIR has been registered under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

# UAPA case: Delhi Police files chargesheet against NewsClick founder-editor

NIRBHAY THAKUR  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

THE DELHI Police Special Cell on Saturday filed a chargesheet in the UAPA case against NewsClick founder-editor Prabir Purkayastha who was arrested on October 3 along with HR head Amit Chakraborty for allegedly receiving illegal funding from China, routed through the United States. NewsClick, the news portal, was also named as an accused in the chargesheet.

In December, the Special Cell had asked the Court of Additional Sessions Judge Hardeep Kaur for an extension till February to file the chargesheet. In February, they had asked for an extension till March. The Delhi Police were recently also granted 10 days extension

to file the chargesheet. The Special Cell had registered an FIR in this regard in August under sections of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and the IPC. In November, the two were sent to a month's judicial custody. The FIR also mentioned Purkayastha's "friendship since 1991" with rights activist Gautam Navlakha who is under house arrest in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist link case.

Among allegations detailed by the Special Cell in its FIR against Purkayastha were attempts to show Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh as "not parts of India", discrediting the Indian government's fight against Covid, funding the farmers' agitation, and "putting up a spirited defence of legal cases" against Chinese telecom companies such as Xiaomi and Vivo.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Property Tax Department, MCD

**Attention Delhi Property Owners**  
Ensure Timely Payment of Property Tax for FY 2023-24!

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If Not, Please Pay Your Property Tax Today to avoid further accumulation of interest and penalty on due tax. Get 2% Discount on online payment on Tax Up to Rs 10,000/-. The Last Date for payment of Property Tax for the financial year 2023-24 is March 31, 2024.

**Have you completed the Geo-Tagging process for your property?**  
If not, Please Hurry up! Last date for Geo-tagging of properties is 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. Properties not geo-tagged cannot avail rebate on timely payment by 30<sup>th</sup> June in next financial year.

If you have not registered your property yet, please register it immediately by visiting MCD website [www.mcdonline.nic.in](http://www.mcdonline.nic.in) and create Unique Property Identification Code (UPIC) latest by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. Pay your outstanding dues to avoid legal action including prosecution and imprisonment.

For more information: Call helpline number 155305 or Login to [www.mcdonline.nic.in](http://www.mcdonline.nic.in)

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Last Date for Registration/Application: 5th April 2024

**ENTRANCE EXAM ON SUNDAY, 12th MAY 2024**  
REGISTRATIONS ARE ONLINE ONLY AT [www.comedk.org](http://www.comedk.org)

Note: 1) Application forms will neither be sold nor received at COMEDK office or at any of our member institutions  
2) [www.comedk.org](http://www.comedk.org) is the only official website for COMEDK applications  
3) Payment should be made online only

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This is an advertisement issued pursuant to Regulation 30(1) of the SEBI (Issue and Listing of Non-Convertible Securities) Regulations, 2021 as amended, for information purpose only.

## ICL ICL Fincorp Limited

ICL Fincorp Limited ("our Company" or "the Company" or "the Issuer") was originally incorporated as Jawahar Finance Limited at Chennai, a public limited company under the provisions of the Companies Act, 1956, pursuant to a certificate of incorporation dated December 9, 1991, issued by RoC. The name of our Company was changed to "Irinjalakuda Credits & Leasing Company Limited" pursuant to a fresh certificate of incorporation dated April 26, 2004 issued by the RoC. Later, the name of our Company was changed to "ICL Fincorp Limited" pursuant to a fresh certificate of incorporation dated May 8, 2016 issued by the RoC. Our Company holds a certificate of registration dated June 09, 2016 bearing registration number B-07.00437 issued by the Reserve Bank of India ("RBI") to carry on the activities of a non-banking financial company without accepting public deposits under Section 45 IA of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934. For further details about our Company, see "History and Certain Other Corporate Matters" on page 92 of the Prospectus.

Registered Office: No.61/1, VGP Complex, First Avenue, Ashok Nagar, Chennai-600 083, Tamil Nadu, India. Corporate Office: ICL Fincorp Limited, Main Road, Irinjilakuda, Thrissur-680 121, Kerala, India. Telephone: +91 480 2670400, 2828071, 2831305. Corporate Identification Number: U65191TN1991PLC021815. PAN: AAACJ1806C. E-mail: [info@iclfincorp.com](mailto:info@iclfincorp.com). Website: [www.iclfincorp.com](http://www.iclfincorp.com) Company Secretary and Compliance Officer: Visakh T.V. Email: [cs@iclfincorp.com](mailto:cs@iclfincorp.com); Telephone: +91 480 2670400, 2828071, 2831305. Chief Financial Officer: Madhavankutty Thekkedath. Email: [cfo@iclfincorp.com](mailto:cfo@iclfincorp.com); Telephone: +91 480 2670400, 2828071, 2831305.

### THE ISSUE

PUBLIC ISSUE BY OUR COMPANY OF 7,50,000 SECURED, REDEEMABLE, NON-CONVERTIBLE DEBENTURES OF FACE VALUE OF ₹ 1,000 EACH, ("NCDs") AT PAR, FOR AN AMOUNT AGGREGATING UP TO ₹ 7,50,000 THOUSAND, HEREINAFTER REFERRED TO AS THE "ISSUE SIZE". THE ISSUE IS BEING MADE PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE BOARD OF INDIA (ISSUE AND LISTING OF NON-CONVERTIBLE SECURITIES) REGULATIONS, 2021, AS AMENDED, THE COMPANIES ACT, 2013 AND RULES MADE THEREUNDER TO THE EXTENT NOTIFIED AND THE SEBI MASTER CIRCULAR AS AMENDED FROM TIME TO TIME. THE ISSUE IS NOT PROPOSED TO BE UNDERWRITTEN.

### OUR PROMOTERS

(i) Kuzhupilly Govinda Menon Anilkumar; Email: [ank@iclfincorp.com](mailto:ank@iclfincorp.com); Telephone: +91 8589020137; and (ii) Umadevi Anilkumar; Email: [uma@iclfincorp.com](mailto:uma@iclfincorp.com); Telephone: +91 8589020186. For further details see "Our Promoter" on page 109 of the Prospectus.

### CREDIT RATING: "ACUTE BBB-" WITH STABLE OUTLOOK BY ACUTE RATINGS & RESEARCH LIMITED

Our Company has received rating of "ACUTE BBB-" with stable outlook for an amount of ₹5,00,000 thousand by Acute Ratings and Research Limited vide rating letter dated February 29, 2024. Further, Acute has provided the rating of "ACUTE BBB-" with a stable outlook vide rating letter dated October 17, 2023 for an amount of ₹15,00,000 thousand which was reaffirmed by Acute vide rating letter dated February 29, 2024 for the NCDs proposed to be issued pursuant to this Issue. The rating given by Acute Ratings and Research Limited is valid as on the date of this Prospectus and shall remain valid on the date of the issue and allotment of NCDs and the listing of the NCDs on BSE. The ratings provided by Acute Ratings and Research Limited may be suspended, withdrawn or revised at any time by the assigning rating agency and should be evaluated independently of any other rating. These ratings are not a recommendation to buy, sell or hold securities and investors should take their own decisions. Please refer to Annexure 1 "on page 371 of the prospectus" for the rating rationale and press release.

### ISSUE PROGRAMME

ISSUE OPENS ON: APRIL 05, 2024 (FRIDAY)  
ISSUE CLOSES ON: APRIL 23, 2024 (TUESDAY)\*

\*The Issue shall remain open for subscription on Working Days from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Indian Standard Time), during the period indicated above, except that the Issue may close on such earlier date or extended date as may be decided by the Board of Directors of our Company or the Debenture Issue Committee, subject to relevant approvals (subject to a minimum period of three working days and a maximum period of 10 working days from the date of opening of this Issue). In the event of an early closure or extension of the Issue, our Company shall ensure that notice of such early closure or extension is given to the prospective investors through an advertisement in a national daily newspaper and a regional daily newspaper in Tamil Nadu where the registered office is located, with wide circulation on or before such earlier date or extended date of closure. Application Forms for the Issue will be accepted only from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Indian Standard Time) or such extended time as may be permitted by the Stock Exchange, on Working Days during the Issue Period. On the Issue Closing Date, Application Forms will be accepted only between 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and uploaded until 5:00 p.m. (Indian Standard Time) or such extended time as may be permitted by the Stock Exchange.

Allotment on "first come first serve basis" # As per the SEBI Master Circular, the allotment in this Issue is required to be made on the basis of date of upload of each application into the electronic book of the Stock Exchange. For further details refer section titled "Issue Related Information" on page 298 of the Prospectus.

### ISSUE STRUCTURE

Options	I*	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
Frequency of Interest Payment	Monthly*	Monthly*	Monthly*	Monthly*	Cumulative	Cumulative	Cumulative	Annually**	Annually**	Cumulative
Minimum Application	10 NCDs (₹ 10,000) (across all options of NCDs)									
In multiples of thereafter (₹)	1 NCDs (₹ 1,000) after the minimum application									
Face Value/ Issue Price of NCDs (₹/ NCD)	₹ 1,000									
Tenor	13 Months	24 Months	36 Months	60 Months	13 Months	24 Months	36 Months	24 Months	36 Months	68 Months
Coupon (% per annum) for NCD Holders in all Categories	11.00%	11.50%	12.00%	12.50%	NA	NA	NA	11.75%	12.25%	NA
Effective Yield (% per annum) for NCD Holders in all Categories	11.57%	12.13%	12.68%	13.24%	11.55%	12.36%	13.03%	11.75%	12.25%	13.73%
Mode of Interest Payment	Through various modes									
Amount (₹/ NCD) on Maturity for NCD Holders in all Categories	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,125.16	1,254.40	1,423.83	1,000	1,000	2,000
Maturity / Redemption Date (months from the Deemed Date of Allotment)	13 Months	24 Months	36 Months	60 Months	13 Months	24 Months	36 Months	24 Months	36 Months	68 Months
Put and Call Option	Not Applicable									
Nature of indebtedness	Secured									

\*Our Company shall allot and after Option 1 NCDs wherein the Applicants have not indicated the choice of the relevant NCD Options. \*\*With respect to Options where interest is to be paid on a monthly basis, relevant interest will be calculated on the face value of the NCDs from the first day of every month during the tenor of such NCDs, and paid on the first day of every subsequent month. For the first interest payment for NCDs under the monthly options, interest from the Deemed Date of Allotment till the last day of the subsequent month will be clubbed and paid on the first day of the month next to that subsequent month. The last interest payment under monthly options will be made at the time of redemption of the NCDs. \*\*\*With respect to Options where interest is to be paid on an annual basis, relevant interest will be paid on each anniversary of the Deemed Date of Allotment on the face value of the NCDs. The last interest payment under annual Options will be made at the time of redemption of the NCDs. Note: (1) Please refer to Annexure III for details pertaining to the cash flows of the Company in accordance with the SEBI Master Circular. (2) Subject to applicable tax deducted at source, if any.

CONTENTS OF THE MEMORANDUM OF ASSOCIATION OF THE COMPANY AS REGARDS ITS OBJECTS: INVESTORS ARE REQUESTED TO REFER CLAUSE 3 OF THE MEMORANDUM OF ASSOCIATION OF THE COMPANY FOR THE MAIN OBJECTS AND THE OBJECTS INCIDENTAL AND ANCILLARY TO THE ATTAINMENT OF MAIN OBJECT OF THE COMPANY. THE MEMORANDUM OF ASSOCIATION OF THE COMPANY IS A MATERIAL DOCUMENT FOR INSPECTION IN RELATION TO THE ISSUE. FOR FURTHER DETAILS, PLEASE SEE "MATERIAL CONTRACTS AND DOCUMENTS FOR INSPECTION" BEGINNING ON PAGE 368 OF THE PROSPECTUS.

LIABILITY OF THE MEMBERS OF THE COMPANY: LIMITED BY SHARES.  
AMOUNT OF CAPITAL OF THE COMPANY AND CAPITAL STRUCTURE: THE ISSUED, SUBSCRIBED AND PAID UP SHARE CAPITAL OF THE COMPANY AS ON DECEMBER 31, 2023 IS AS FOLLOWS:

Particulars	Aggregate value (in ₹)
<b>AUTHORISED SHARE CAPITAL</b>	
10,00,00,000 Equity Shares of face value ₹10 each	100,00,00,000
50,00,00,000 Preference Shares of face value ₹100 each	50,00,00,000
<b>TOTAL AUTHORISED SHARE CAPITAL</b>	<b>150,00,00,000</b>
<b>ISSUED, SUBSCRIBED AND PAID-UP SHARE CAPITAL</b>	
4,73,93,561 Equity shares of face value ₹10 each	47,39,35,610
2,84,00,000 Preference Shares of face value ₹100 each	2,84,00,000
<b>Total issued, subscribed and paid-up share capital</b>	<b>50,23,35,610</b>
<b>SECURITIES PREMIUM ACCOUNT</b>	
Securities premium account before the Issue	28,92,56,010

AVAILABILITY OF APPLICATION FORM: Application forms can be obtained from: ICL FINCORP LIMITED - Telephone No.: +91 480 2670400, 2828071, 2831305; Lead Manager : Saffron Capital Advisors Private Limited - Telephone No.: +91 22 49730394 and the office of Syndicate Member, Trading Members, Designated Intermediary(ies) and Designated Branches of the SCSBs. Electronic application forms will be available on the websites of the SCSBs that permit submission of ASBA Application electronically. Application forms may be downloaded from the websites of Stock Exchange, Lead Manager and Syndicate Member. Additionally, UPI Investor making an application in the Issue can also make bid through online (app / web) interface/ platform of the BSE i.e. "BSE Direct". Further, BSE Direct platform can be accessed at <https://www.bseindia.com> & or can be accessed through mobile app. Further, application forms will also be provided to Designated Intermediaries at their request.

AVAILABILITY OF PROSPECTUS: Investors are advised to refer to the Prospectus and the "Risk Factors" on page 16 of the Prospectus, before applying to the Issue. Physical copy of the Prospectus may be obtained from the Registered Office of the Company and the Lead Manager. Full copies of the Prospectus will also be available on the website of the Issuer at [www.iclfincorp.com](http://www.iclfincorp.com), the Lead Manager at [www.saffronadvisor.com](http://www.saffronadvisor.com), BSE at [www.bseindia.com](http://www.bseindia.com) and SEBI at [www.sebi.gov.in](http://www.sebi.gov.in).

## ASBA Simple, Safe, Smart way of Application!!! Application Supported by Blocked Amount (ASBA) is a better way of applying to issues by simply blocking the fund in the bank account. Mandatory in public issues. No cheque will be accepted.

UPI - Now available in ASBA for Retail Individual Investors. Bidders are required to ensure that the bank account used for bidding is linked to their PAN.

UPI is now available for Retail Individual Investors submitting bids up to an application value of ₹ 5,00,000, applying through Designated Intermediaries, SCSBs or through the BSE Direct App / Web interface of stock exchange or any other permitted methods. For details of the ASBA and UPI process, please refer to the details given in the Application form and also refer to the section of "Issue Procedure" on page 319 of the prospectus. List of the banks supporting UPI is also available on the website of SEBI at [www.sebi.gov.in](http://www.sebi.gov.in). Axis Bank Limited has been appointed as the Sponsor bank for the issue, in accordance with the requirements of the SEBI Master Circular.

LISTING: The NCDs offered through the Prospectus are proposed to be listed on BSE Limited ("BSE") and BSE shall be the Designated Stock Exchange. Our Company has received an "in-principle" approval from BSE vide their letter no. DCS/BMFI-BOND/03/23-24 dated March 27, 2024.  
GENERAL RISK: Investment in non-convertible securities is risky, and investors should not invest any funds in such securities unless they take the risk attached to such investments. Investors are advised to take an informed decision and to read the risk factors carefully before investing in this offering. For taking an investment decision, the investors must rely on their own examination of the issuer and the issue, including the risks involved. Specific attention of the investors is invited to the chapter titled "Risk Factors" on page 16 and "Material Developments" on page 114 of the Prospectus, before making an investment in this Issue. The Prospectus has not been and will not be approved by any Regulatory Authority in India, including the Securities and Exchange Board of India ("SEBI"), the Reserve Bank of India ("RBI"), any Registrar of Companies or any Stock Exchange in India nor do they guarantee the accuracy or adequacy of the Prospectus.

DISCLAIMER CLAUSE OF BSE: It is to be distinctly understood that the permission given by BSE Limited should not in any way be deemed or construed that the draft offer document has been cleared or approved by BSE Limited nor does it certify the correctness or completeness of any of the contents of the prospectus. The investors are advised to refer to the draft offer document / offer document for the full text of the disclaimer clause of the BSE Limited.  
DISCLAIMER CLAUSE OF USE OF BSE ELECTRONIC PLATFORM: It is to be distinctly understood that the permission given by the BSE to use their network and software of the Online system should not in any way be deemed or construed as compliance with various statutory requirements approved by the Exchange, nor does it in any manner warrant, certify or endorse the correctness or completeness of any of the compliance with the statutory and other requirements; nor does it take any responsibility for the financial or other soundness of this Company, its promoters, its management or any scheme or project of this Company.

NAMES OF THE SIGNATORIES AT THE TIME OF SIGNING OF THE MEMORANDUM OF ASSOCIATION COMPANY AND THE NUMBER OF SHARES SUBSCRIBED FOR BY THEM AT THE TIME OF SIGNING OF THE MEMORANDUM OF ASSOCIATION: Given are the names of the signatories of the Memorandum of Association of the Company and the number of equity shares subscribed of face value of ₹ 10/- each by them at the time of signing of Memorandum of Association: J. Amaranth Kothari (10 equity shares allotted), A. Badal Kanwar (10 equity shares allotted), K. Ashok Bohra (10 equity shares allotted), Subash Chand Jain (10 equity shares allotted), Mahaveer Chand Kothari (10 equity shares allotted) and Narendra Kumar Jain (10 equity shares allotted) at the time of incorporation of the Company aggregating to 70 Equity Shares of face value of ₹ 10/- each.  
DISCLAIMER CLAUSE OF ACUTE: An Acute Rating does not constitute an audit of the rated entity and should not be treated as a recommendation or opinion that is intended to substitute for a financial adviser's or investor's independent assessment of whether to buy, sell or hold any security. Ratings assigned by Acute are based on the data and information provided by the issuer and obtained from other reliable sources. Although reasonable care has been taken to ensure that the data and information is true, Acute, in particular, makes no representation or warranty, expressed or implied with respect to the adequacy, accuracy or completeness of the information relied upon. Acute is not responsible for any errors or omissions and especially states that it has no financial liability whatsoever for any direct, indirect or consequential loss of any kind, arising from the use of its ratings. Ratings assigned by Acute are subject to a process of surveillance which may lead to a revision in ratings as and when the circumstances so warrant. Please visit our website [www.acute.in](http://www.acute.in) for the latest information on any instrument rated by Acute.

DISCLAIMER CLAUSE OF RBI: The company is having a valid certificate of registration dated June 9, 2016 under section 45 IA of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934. A copy of the Prospectus has not been filed with or submitted to the Reserve Bank of India ("RBI"). It is distinctly understood that the Prospectus should not in any way be deemed or construed to be approved or vetted by RBI. RBI does not accept any responsibility or guarantee about the present position as to the financial soundness of the issuer or for the correctness of any of the statements or representations made or opinions expressed by the issuer and for discharge of liability by the issuer.  
RBI neither accepts any responsibility nor guarantee for the payment of any amount due to any investor in respect of the proposed NCDs.

<p><b>LEAD MANAGER TO THE ISSUE</b></p> <p><b>SAFFRON</b> CAPITAL ADVISORS</p> <p>SAFFRON CAPITAL ADVISORS PRIVATE LIMITED 605, Center Point, 6<sup>th</sup> floor, Andheri Kuria Road, J. B. Nagar, Andheri (East), Mumbai - 400 059, Maharashtra, India Tel: +91 22 49730394 Email: <a href="mailto:ipos@saffronadvisor.com">ipos@saffronadvisor.com</a> Website: <a href="http://www.saffronadvisor.com">www.saffronadvisor.com</a> Contact Person: Gaurav Khandelwal / Vign Gupta</p>	<p><b>DEBENTURE TRUSTEE</b></p> <p><b>MITCON CREDENTIA</b> PARTNER WITH TRUSTED CREDITALS</p> <p>MITCON CREDENTIA TRUSTEESHIP SERVICES LIMITED (formerly known as MITCON Trusteeship Services Limited) 1402 / 1403, B wing, Dalamal Tower, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor, Free Press Journal Marg, 211 Nariman Point, Mumbai 400 021, Maharashtra, India Tel: +91 22 22828200 Email: <a href="mailto:contact@mitconcredentia.in">contact@mitconcredentia.in</a> Website: <a href="http://www.mitconcredentia.in">www.mitconcredentia.in</a> Contact Person: Vaishali Urkude</p>	<p><b>REGISTRAR TO THE ISSUE</b></p> <p><b>CAMEO</b></p> <p>CAMEO CORPORATE SERVICES LIMITED Subramanian Building, No.1 Club House Road, Chennai-600002, Tamil Nadu, India Tel: +91 44 40020700 Fax: +91 44 28460129 Email: <a href="mailto:info@cameoindia.com">info@cameoindia.com</a> Website: <a href="http://www.cameoindia.com">www.cameoindia.com</a> Contact Person: Sraeptyy K</p>	<p><b>CREDIT RATING</b></p> <p><b>Acute</b> RATINGS &amp; RESEARCH</p> <p>ACUTE RATINGS &amp; RESEARCH LIMITED 70B, Lodha Supremus, Lodha iThink Campus, Kanjurmag (East), Mumbai - 400 042 Tel: +91 99698 98000 Email: <a href="mailto:chitra.mohan@acute.in">chitra.mohan@acute.in</a> Website: <a href="http://www.acute.in">www.acute.in</a> Contact Person: Chitra Mohan</p>	<p><b>STATUTORY AUDITOR</b></p> <p><b>MANIKANDAN &amp; ASSOCIATES,</b> CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS</p> <p>Manikandan &amp; Associates, Chartered Accountants Krishna Arcade, Near Marathombally Krishna Temple, KSRTC Road, Chalakudy Thrissur, Kerala - 680307 Tel: +91 9447100504, 9606836564 Email: <a href="mailto:ckmauditors@gmail.com">ckmauditors@gmail.com</a> Website: <a href="http://manikandanca.com">manikandanca.com</a> Contact Person: C.K. Manikandan</p>	<p><b>COMPLIANCE OFFICER &amp; COMPANY SECRETARY</b></p> <p><b>VISAKH T.V</b> COMPANY SECRETARY</p> <p>Visakh T.V. ICL Fincorp Limited Main Road, Irinjilakuda Thrissur-680121 Tel: +91 480 267 0400, 282 8071, 283 1305</p>
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INVESTORS MAY CONTACT THE REGISTRAR TO THE ISSUE OR THE COMPANY SECRETARY AND COMPLIANCE OFFICER IN CASE OF ANY PRE ISSUE OR POST ISSUE RELATED ISSUES SUCH AS NON RECEIPT OF INTIMATION OF ALLOTMENT, DEMAT CREDIT OF ALLOTTED NCD'S OR REFUNDS, AS THE CASE MAY BE.

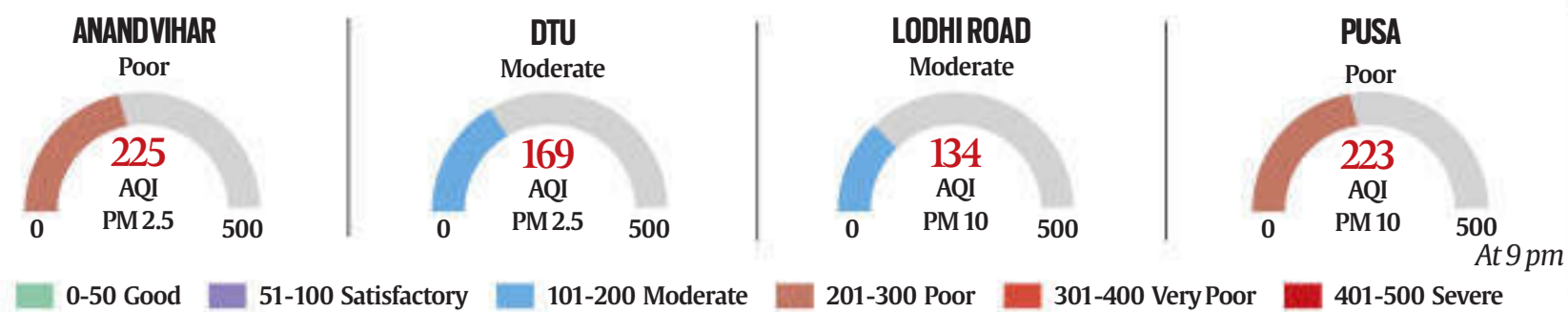
\*MITCON Credentia Trusteeship Services Limited (formerly known as MITCON Trusteeship Services Limited) under Regulation 8 of the SEBI NCD Regulations has by its letter dated March 4, 2024 given its consent for its appointment as Debenture Trustee to this issue and for its name to be included in the Prospectus and in all the subsequent periodical communications sent to the holders of the debentures issued pursuant to this Issue.  
PUBLIC ISSUE ACCOUNT BANK: AXIS BANK LIMITED SYNDICATE MEMBER: SAFFRON CAPITAL ADVISORS PRIVATE LIMITED.  
DISCLAIMER OF THE ISSUER: ICL Fincorp Limited ("Company"), subject to market conditions, and other considerations, is proposing a public issue of secured redeemable non-convertible debentures ("NCDs") and has filed a prospectus dated March 28, 2024 ("Prospectus") with the Registrar of Companies, Tamil Nadu at Chennai ("RoC"), BSE Limited ("BSE") and Securities and Exchange Board of India ("SEBI"). The Prospectus is available on the website of the Company at [www.iclfincorp.com](http://www.iclfincorp.com), on the website of BSE at [www.bseindia.com](http://www.bseindia.com), on the website of SEBI at [www.sebi.gov.in](http://www.sebi.gov.in). Investors proposing to participate in the Issue should invest only on the basis of the information contained in the Prospectus. Investors should note that investment in the NCDs involves a high degree of risk, and for details in relation to the same, refer to the Prospectus, including the section titled "Risk Factors" and "Material Developments" beginning on page 16 and 114 respectively of the Prospectus. Capitalised terms not defined herein shall have the same meaning as assigned to such terms in the Prospectus.

PLACE: Chennai  
DATE: 30.03.2024

For ICL Fincorp Limited,  
Sd/-  
K.G. Anilkumar  
(Chairman & Managing Director) DIN: 00766739



# 4 THE CITY



**SKY WATCH**  
 March 31  
 Partly cloudy sky. Gusty winds (speed 30-40 kmph) likely to prevail.  
**MAX: 35** 2.4°C above normal  
**MIN: 20** 1.9°C above normal

**BRIEFLY**

**ED files first chargesheet in DJB case**

**New Delhi:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) filed its first chargesheet in connection with a money-laundering probe linked to alleged irregularities in the Delhi Jal Board (DJB), official sources said Saturday. The about-8,000-page-long prosecution complaint, that includes 140 operational pages apart from annexures, was filed by the agency before a special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court in Delhi on March 28, sources told PTI. The court has listed the matter for April 1 for taking cognisance of the chargesheet, they said. Four individuals and a company have been named as the accused in the chargesheet — former DJB chief engineer Jagdish Kumar Arora; contractor Anil Kumar Agarwal; former NBCC general manager D K Mittal; one Tejinder Singh; and NKG Infrastructure Limited. The agency has sought prosecution of these accused under the PMLA and informed that it might file supplementary complaints in the future. The ED has alleged that bribe money generated from corruption in a contract issued by the DJB was “passed on” as election funds to the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Delhi. The agency had also summoned Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for questioning in the case, but he did not depose before it.

**2020 Delhi riots: Court rejects Tahir Hussain’s bail**

**New Delhi:** A city court Saturday rejected the regular bail plea of former AAP councillor Tahir Hussain in the alleged larger conspiracy behind the 2020 Northeast Delhi riots, saying the allegations against him were “prima facie true”. Noting the evidence before it, the court also observed that Hussain allegedly funded the riots and participated in other activities resulting in the riots. The court said it was too early to conclude that the charges against him were not a terrorist act, thus not attracting the stringent provisions of the Unlawful Activities Prevention (UAPA) Act. “After hearing the public prosecutor and perusing the final report or case diary, the court arrives at a conclusion that there are reasonable grounds for believing accusations (against Hussain) are prima facie true,” Additional Sessions Judge Sameer Bajpai said. PTI

**TOP INDIA BLOC LEADERS TO BE IN ATTENDANCE**

## At Ramlila Maidan mega rally today, show of Opp strength



Preparations underway at the venue for Sunday’s ‘Loktantra Bachao’ rally. The Delhi Police said it has made elaborate arrangements in and around the venue. *Amit Mehra*

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
 NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

AGAINST THE backdrop of the arrests of AAP chief and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and former Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren, the Capital will witness a show of strength by the INDIA bloc as its leaders come together at Ramlila Maidan for a mega rally to ‘save democracy’ on Sunday. “The entire INDIA bloc will join hands with the public and raise its voice against the dictatorship of the Bharatiya Janata Party,” said the AAP in a statement Saturday. During the day, AAP’s Delhi convener Gopal Rai visited the venue to inspect preparations.

Emphasising the urgency of the rally, Rai expressed concerns over the suppression of democracy, targeting of opposition leaders, and misuse of constitutional agencies. Stating that the rally’s motive was to “Remove Dictatorship and Save Democracy”, he urged the public to join in huge numbers. Over the past few days, AAP leaders have been going door to door urging residents to attend the event.

The ‘Loktantra Bachao’ rally will witness an assembly of political heavyweights including Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, MP Rahul Gandhi; Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann; Jharkhand CM Champai Soren; NCP-SCP chief Sharad Pawar; Shiv Sena UBT chief Uddhav Thackeray; Samajwadi Party

president Akhilesh Yadav; RJD’s Tejashwi Yadav; TMC’s Derek O’Brien and PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti.

Various MPs of DMK; former Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren’s wife Kalpana Soren; National Conference President Dr Farooq Abdullah, and prominent Left party MPs like Sitaram Yechury, D Raja, and Dipankar Bhattacharya are also expected to be in attendance.

Kejriwal’s wife Sunita is likely to be at the rally.

At a press conference held by the Congress, AICC General Secretary and in-charge of the Delhi Congress Deepak Babaria said the rally aims to protest against the BJP government’s bid to crush democracy and the Constitution by misusing the

probe agencies, which is creating an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty among the people.

DPC chief Arvinder Singh Lovely said, “The BJP government is grossly misusing central probe agencies to disturb the Opposition parties and leaders when the dates for the Lok Sabha elections have been declared... the historic rally tomorrow will witness a massive gathering... to send out a strong message that the Opposition parties are united in this ‘Save Democracy’ movement started by Rahul Gandhi.”

AICC General Secretary, Communications Department, Jairam Ramesh said, “... the BJP’s bid to create polarisation in the society has upset people and whipped up unrest... with every section feeling the heat.”

### Traffic curbs for March 31 rally\*

**TRAFFIC WILL BE REGULATED ON THESE ROUTES**

- Ranjeet Singh flyover from Barakhamba Road to Guru Nanak Chowk
- Vivekanand Marg from Minto Road to R/A Kamla Market, Hamdard Chowk
- JLN Marg from Delhi Gate to Guru Nanak Chowk and Ajmeri Gate
- R/A Kamla Market to Guru Nanak Chowk
- Chaman Lal Marg near VIP Gate, Guru Nanak Chowk to Turkman Gate
- Commuters requested to avoid or bypass the roads, if possible, and use public transport. People going towards ISBT, railway stations or airport advised to plan their travel with sufficient time at hand

\*Between 9 am and 3 pm



*Amit Mehra*

### Security strengthened

**New Delhi:** Ahead of the rally at Ramlila Maidan, the Delhi Police said it has made elaborate arrangements, with checking at every gate and deployment of paramilitary personnel in and around the venue. Police granted permission for the rally to take place with certain conditions, including no march, no tractor-trolleys, and no weapons in Central Delhi, a senior officer said.

Although the rally is allowed, Section 144 will remain imposed at the DDU Marg, where the offices of political parties are located, an officer said. No march will be allowed from the Ramlila Maidan, he said, adding that strict action will be taken if any violations take place.

Sources said about a dozen companies of paramilitary personnel will be deployed around the Ramlila Maidan and other parts of central Delhi, including DDU Marg. PTI

## Jat leader & legal voice: Gahlot, latest AAP leader under ED lens

**MALLICA JOSHI**  
 NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

DELHI HOME and Transport minister Kailash Gahlot has a reputation of being a mild-mannered politician — he rarely makes an appearance at press conferences — who plays a behind-the-scenes role within AAP’s circles. The spotlight was on him Saturday as he was summoned by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for questioning in the excise policy case.

Gahlot’s name found mention in the agency’s remand application of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, submitted in court last week, which said the party’s communications in-charge Vijay Nair, whom the ED accuses of playing a key role in orchestrating the deals as part of the case, was living in Gahlot’s government bungalow in Civil Lines.

**An insider-outsider**

Gahlot, 50, is a Jat leader from Mitraon village. Born in Delhi, he studied Political Science at DU’s Sri Venkateswara College and went on to study law. He then practised as an advocate in the Delhi High Court and Supreme Court for 16 years. It was during this time that he came in contact with AAP leaders and decided to contest elections.

He joined the AAP before the 2015 Assembly polls and contested from the Najafgarh seat — which he won by a thin margin of 1,550 votes. He would go on to win the seat again in 2020 by over 6,000 votes.

He was appointed minister of Transport, Law, Information Technology and Administrative Reforms in 2015, and has held on to the Transport and Information



AAP Minister Kailash Gahlot at the ED office. *Amit Mehra*

Technology departments. After the arrest of former Deputy CM Manish Sisodia last year, also in the excise policy case, he was appointed Home Minister.

“AAP has several migrant leaders who appeal to the massive migrant population in the city. Gahlot stands apart as his family has been living in Mitraon village for generations. When he came to the party, the leaders saw him as someone who would have an appeal among the rural Jat population of the city, while also attracting educated people,” said an AAP insider.

Over the years, AAP had utilised Gahlot’s legal experience over a range of issues.

The ED summons are not Gahlot’s first brush with investigating agencies after joining politics. In 2018, several locations allegedly associated with him and his family were raided by the Income Tax Department. While IT officials said documents indicating tax evasion worth several crores were found, AAP said the raids were politically motivated.

As Transport minister, he has helmed the department through one of its biggest changes — introduction of the Electric Vehicle

policy — and has managed to get over 1,000 e-buses inducted into the city’s ageing bus fleet.

Gahlot is also seen as among the few ministers who has not got into tussles with officers. “Since he joined office in 2015, he managed to get things done while mostly keeping officers on his side. There have, however, been a few instances where he has got into arguments with officers over policy formulation... but none that escalated...,” said an AAP leader.

One of the incidents he was referring to happened in 2018, when Gahlot accused the then transport commissioner of trying to override his authority. The matter was finally resolved after the officer was transferred.

Another cloud that hangs over him is the BJP’s allegation of irregularities in contracts given for maintenance of buses. In 2021, the MHA wrote to the CBI recommending an inquiry into a DTC deal related to the purchase and Annual Maintenance Contract of 1,000 low-floor AC buses in which a committee, formed by then Lt-Governor Anil Bajjal, had flagged various lapses.

## ED must probe ‘South Group’ link to BJP: AAP

### Electoral bond biggest scam, says Congress

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
 NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

INDIA ALLIES AAP and the Congress Saturday went after BJP over donations allegedly received from people who are part of the ‘South Group’ lobby — named by the Enforcement Directorate in investigation related to the liquor policy case — and encashed by the party.

Senior AAP leader and Delhi Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj questioned how Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP leaders were rallying support for Magunta Sreenivasulu Reddy, father of Raghava Reddy, who is a government witness in the alleged liquor scam.

“The man who, under pressure, testifies against CM Arvind Kejriwal is directly associated with BJP. The TDP has made Magunta Sreenivasulu Reddy their candidate, and he has been campaigning for the past few days,” Bharadwaj alleged.

“ED should also investigate Magunta Reddy and Raghava Magunta’s direct association with BJP. Details of their mutual phone calls for years will be there. Even a small investigation

will separate fact from fiction,” he added.

Both father and son, AAP Minister Atishi said, joined BJP ally, the Telugu Desam Party, on February 28. The next day, on Friday, Magunta Sreenivasulu Reddy received a ticket from the TDP to contest the Lok Sabha polls.

“Today, I challenge the ED that if it is truly an independent investigative agency, then it should bring on record all these facts. Investigate the relationship between the BJP and the South lobby, and present the relationship of the BJP and South’s liquor businessmen in front of the court by making the BJP an accused in its chargesheet,” she said.

Meanwhile, Delhi Congress president Arvinder Singh Lovely accused the BJP of misusing Central probe agencies to “upset and unsettle” the Opposition when the Lok Sabha elections were round the corner.

AICC General Secretary, Communications Department, Jairam Ramesh said the “opaque Electoral Bond was the biggest scam” and intended to “swell the coffers of the BJP through threats and coercion of industrial houses to force them to shell out crores” through electoral bonds.

## AAP & Cong on same side of corruption saga, says BJP

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
 NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

ON THE eve of the Opposition “mega rally” at Ramlila Maidan, the BJP accused AAP and Congress of standing on the same side of “corruption sagas” pervasive across all INDIA bloc partners.

Targeting both parties, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said “new exposures” regarding the “corruption stories of AAP and Congress” had come to light on the eve of the event.

“AAP Minister Kailash Gahlot’s role has come out in the liquor scam on one hand, and, on the other hand, a revelation that Congress revealed around Rs 626 crore in cash from different companies between 2014 and 2019...,” Sachdeva alleged.

Tomorrow’s rally, said Sachdeva, would trigger tears in the eyes of people who would witness AAP leaders standing with Congress and other INDIA leaders whom “they cursed in this very Maidan” in August 2011 during Anna Hazare’s movement.

# At Kejriwal’s ancestral village, uncle remains steadfast, others sceptical

## Not sure if he is entirely innocent, Siwani villagers kept waiting for him to build AAP in state he belongs to

**AISWARYA RAJ**  
 SIWANI (HARYANA), MARCH 30

IT IS nearly evening and at the Siwani Anaj Mandi, an animated Girdhar Lal Bansal is busy playing cards with five men from the village. He chides them for cheating and reshuffles the cards for the next game. But as the conversation shifts to his nephew Arvind Kejriwal, Bansal falls silent.

“He was an honest man and rose to power due to his principles. Now he is in jail, as are (Manish) Sisodia and Sanjay (Singh). They spoke against Narendra Modi and (were arrested),” says the 70-year-old, who is one of three brothers of the Delhi Chief Minister’s father Gobind Ram. He lives with his family in Gurgaon and travels to Siwani in Haryana’s Bhiwani dis-

trict by bus every month to check on his house and ancestral land.

Kejriwal, Bansal says, was born in the village on August 16, 1968, but left at an early age to study at Hisar. “He would come often, but after assuming the post of CM, the visits dropped. Three years ago, he visited Siwani for an event at the local temple,” he says.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader is the fourth CM from Bhiwani, the others being Haryana CMs Bansil Lal, Banarsi Das Gupta, and Master Hukam Singh. Among locals in his ancestral village, there is palpable discontent as some say Kejriwal has not visited them enough since becoming CM. His arrest also has a few questioning him.

Jagdish Prasad Kedia (65), a businessman, says: “We were proud someone from our village



*Gajendra Yadav*

quit his job to work against corruption and later became a CM. Around 50 of us from the village went to Delhi to watch the swearing-in ceremony in February 2015. Three years ago, we went to ask him for donations for an event at a temple; he visited and left after an hour. He did not visit the *mandi*, talk to people or donate. Many of

us were disillusioned.” Kedia says he isn’t convinced about Kejriwal’s innocence: “Even after repeated ED (Enforcement Directorate) summons, he didn’t go for questioning...”

Somnath Sharma, who runs a general store at Anaj Mandi, says Kejriwal runs a good government and has made the lives of people

easier in the Capital. But he is disappointed that the AAP could not flourish in Haryana. “The party will win again in Delhi... But they won’t win in Haryana... When Arvind doesn’t even visit his birthplace, how will the party grow?” says the 60-year-old.

Anup Sharma, a labourer at the market, says he joined AAP



Arvind Kejriwal’s uncle Girdhar Lal Bansal (left) with local residents in Siwani village.

when the party was launched. “But nothing happened... The candidate AAP has fielded from Kurukshetra (for the Lok Sabha polls), Sushil Gupta, is a stranger to us. He is from Delhi and is a Rajya Sabha MP. How will he be popular... in Haryana?...” Asked about Kejriwal’s arrest, the 52-year-old echoes the

Delhi CM’s old guru Anna Hazare. “His India Against Corruption movement was against the rot of corruption in the system but he got arrested following graft allegations, that too against liquor policy, something he was against...”

Bansal, however, is not swayed and firmly believes in his nephew’s innocence. The last time he met Kejriwal was three months ago, he says. “I’d gone to visit him and things seemed fine. Now, Sunita is speaking up about all of this. She is an educated yet humble woman... Modi is going after all Opposition governments... this is just another ploy to defame everyone against him.”

Though the AAP is still a marginal force in Haryana — in the 2019 Assembly polls, it contested 46 seats and polled fewer votes than the NOTA option — it claims to have expanded in recent months and has geared up to protest against Kejriwal’s arrest. “We have planned a massive protest at Ramlila Maidan with

other INDIA bloc members; in Haryana, we held a candle march Friday. We are planning an awareness campaign across the state to discuss the accusations levelled against Kejriwal and the funding the BJP has received from liquor companies,” says AAP state unit’s senior vice-president Anurag Dhandra.

The party’s Bhiwani district youth president Manjeet Singhania claims the anger over Kejriwal’s arrest is palpable in the region. “We have around 25 circles in the district unit, each comprising five villages, and workers have been going around planning candle marches in the wake of the arrest,” he says.

State Congress leaders have also spoken out against the arrest. “This is a clear misuse of constitutional bodies against a sitting CM. It could be anyone next... Akhilesh or Rahul Gandhi... We have to fight and protest peacefully against the NDA,” says Captain Ajay Singh Yadav, a former minister.



8TH LIST: PUNJAB, ODISHA, BENGAL BJP releases 11 more LS names, Mahtab among four defectors

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE CHANDIGARH, BHUBANESWAR, KOLKATA, MARCH 30

THE BJP Saturday named 11 more Lok Sabha candidates, four of whom had jumped from other parties - including former BJD leader Bhartruhari Mahtab and former Congress leader Preet Kaur.

The party's eighth list of nominees comprised two candidates from West Bengal, three from Odisha and six from Punjab, taking its total number of announced candidates to 411 so far.

A notable inclusion in the list was that of former IPS officer Debashish Dhar from West Bengal's Birbhum seat, where he will contest against three-time TMC MP Satadhi Roy.

Dhar was suspended as Cooch Behar SP after the 2021 West Bengal Assembly elections during which four people were killed in Sitalkuchi area in alleged firing by central forces.

On March 20, the IPS officer resigned from service citing "personal reasons". The other candidate from Bengal is Pranat Tudu, a doctor who will be pitted against TMC's Kalipada Soren in Jhargram.

The BJP has so far named candidates to 40 out of the 42 seats in West Bengal. The Diamond Harbour seat, which Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee represents, is one of the two seats it is yet to name candidates for.

In Odisha, Mahtab will contest from the prestigious Cuttack constituency, which he has been representing since 1998 as part of the BJD.

The son of Odisha's first chief minister Harekrushna Mahtab, he recently resigned from the regional party expressing displeasure over its functioning.

Mahtab will take on BJD's Santprukh Misra, former HR head of Aditya Birla Group. In the communally-sensitive



Bhartruhari Mahtab will contest from Cuttack, Preet Kaur from Patiala

Kandhamal, the BJP fielded Sukanta Kumar Panigrahi, who has a strong RSS background. The BJD has been winning the seat since 2009, when it broke off ties with the BJP.

Panigrahi will face BJD's Achyuta Samanta, who won the seat in 2019. The BJP has named Rabindra Narayan Behera, a technocrat, from Jajpur, a seat reserved for Scheduled Caste candidates.

He will contest against the current MP, BJD's Sarmishta Sethi. With these three names, BJP has announced candidates for all 21 seats in Odisha.

In Punjab, the BJP's inaugural list of six candidates includes three turncoats. Among them is Preet Kaur, who is former Punjab CM Amarinder Singh's wife.

Punjab has 13 Lok Sabha seats. While Preet Kaur Singh Bittu, who defected from Congress to BJP on March 26, will contest from Ludhiana where he is the current MP.

Sushil Kumar Rinku, a former AAP leader who joined BJP on March 27, has been fielded from Jalandhar. Rinku won the Lok Sabha bypolls from the same seat last year.

Preet Kaur, a former Congress MP from Patiala who switched to the BJP in March, has been fielded from Patiala again.

Hans Raj Hans, a Sufi singer-turned-politician, and retired diplomat Taranjeet Singh Sandhu will contest from Faridkot and Amritsar, respectively.

Hans Raj Hans is pitted against Karamjit Anmol, a singer and actor close to Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann. The party also decided to field Dinesh Singh 'Babbu', a seasoned MLA, from Gurdaspur in place of actor Sunny Deol.

Past Punjab's revolving door, 'new BJP' is the 'old Congress'

RAAKHI JAGGA LUDHIANA, MARCH 28



Former CM Amarinder Singh; three-time MP Ravneet Singh Bittu

"THE NEW BJP is the old Congress in Punjab," said a BJP insider as three-time Congress MP Ravneet Singh Bittu, grandson of former chief minister Beant Singh, switched on Tuesday to the BJP, which now has a host of ex-Congress leaders among its ranks.

Bittu has been a close aide of Rahul Gandhi. The Punjab Congress has seen an exodus of leaders since the exit of party stalwart and ex-CM Captain Amarinder Singh in September 2021.

Amarinder, who belongs to the erstwhile Patiala ruling family, then floated the Punjab Lok Congress and contested the 2022 Assembly polls in alliance with the BJP but failed to open his account. He subsequently joined the BJP with his daughter Jai Inder Kaur, merging his outfit with it.

Currently, Amarinder is a member of the BJP's National Executive while Jai Inder is the party's Mahila Morcha president and a member of the state campaign committee.

Earlier this month, Amarinder's wife and Patiala MP, Preet Kaur, who was suspended by the Congress last year, also joined the BJP. She is likely to be fielded by the BJP from her seat.

"Many more leaders, not only from the Congress but also AAP and Akali Dal will join in coming weeks," a party leader said.

Apart from the erstwhile royals, the Congress got a setback in May 2022, when its ex-state president Sunil Jakhar shifted to the BJP. He is now the Punjab BJP chief.

Jakhar made scathing remarks while quitting the Congress, saying it had no intention to save itself despite facing an existential crisis. Jakhar was said to have been miffed with the party for not mak-

ing him the CM after Amarinder's resignation as senior leader Ambika Soni, who had declined the CM's post herself, had insisted on a Sikh face for the post.

Since his switch to the BJP, Jakhar has been building his own team. The state BJP executive committee constituted by him includes many ex-Congressmen. "Many Sikh faces in the panel are from the Congress, helping the BJP project a secular face before the masses," a party leader said.

The BJP also welcomed ex-Congress MLA Fateh Jang Bajwa, brother of Leader of the Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa, into its fold in December 2021.

Punjab BJP secretary Harjot Kamal Singh, a former Congress MLA from Moga, joined the party ahead of the 2022 Assembly polls after being denied a ticket by the grand old party.

The state BJP's core committee too has a significant number of former Congress leaders including ex-MLAs Arvind Khanna and Kewal Dhillon, and ex-ministers Manpreet Singh Badal and Rana Gurmeet Singh Sodhi.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

In final Karnataka list, Cong adds more kin of leaders, resolves Kolar dilemma

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE BENGALURU, MARCH 30

THERE WAS disappointment in store for former Union minister Veerappa Moily when the Congress announced three Lok Sabha poll candidates from Karnataka on Friday, with a fourth added on Saturday morning that completed the party's list for all 28 Lok Sabha seats in the state.

While the veteran leader, also a former Chief Minister, lost out, the sons of two other senior leaders got the nod. Among the names announced on Friday was former Youth Congress leader Raksha Ramaiah, who has been chosen for the Chikkaballapur seat in south Karnataka over Moily.

Chikkaballapur is considered to be a battle of candidates with deep pockets. Ramaiah, a young Turk, is the son of former MLA M R Seetharam and hails from the M S Ramaiah family that runs

major educational and health institutions in the state. The BJP has fielded former Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar.

A second young candidate in the Congress list is Sunil Bose, the son of state social welfare minister H C Mahadevappa who is in the fray from the Chamarajinagar (SC-reserved) seat against the BJP's S Balraj. Bose has been aspiring for an electoral debut for nearly a decade and has used the current situation, where the Congress needs candidates who can self-finance their campaigns, to bargain for a ticket.

The Congress initially attempted to persuade Bose's father Mahadevappa, a veteran leader and close associate of CM Siddaramaiah, to contest. But he refused to take the plunge just like several ministers in the Siddaramaiah Cabinet. The BJP has described the "fear" among Congress ministers to contest the Lok Sabha polls as an indication of precaution against an-

other Modi wave. The third candidate announced on Friday was the sitting Bellary MLA E Tukaram, a former minister from the Sandur region, on the Bellary (ST-reserved) Lok Sabha seat.

Tukaram is believed to have the capacity to self-finance his campaign because of his association with Congress minister and Bellary mining baron Santhosh Lad. He also enjoys the reputation of being a people-friendly worker, which could hold him in good stead in the poll battle against the BJP's long-time ST leader B Sreeramulu.

On Saturday, the party finally settled for a "neutral" candidate in the Kolar (SC-reserved) seat after infighting over the proposed nomination of the son-in-law of state minister and seven-time MP K H Muniyappa delayed the announcement and threatened to derail the party's prospects in the constituency.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

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EC suspends official over 'casual checking' of DMK candidate A Raja's car

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

The Election Commission Saturday ordered the suspension of an official leading a flying squad in Tamil Nadu's Nilgiris district for failing to check the vehicle of DMK candidate A Raja thoroughly, according to EC sources.

The action came after media reports of the flying squad checking the vehicle that was carrying several suitcases at an inter-state check-post near Coonoor, Kerala showed a "casual attitude", as per an EC source. Taking into account media reports and a subsequent in-

quiry by the Nilgiris Returning Officer and Expenditure Observer, the head of the team, Geetha, was suspended and the entire team replaced.

As per EC instructions, candidates' vehicles are to be checked if cash of more than ₹50,000 or gifts worth ₹10,000 and above are found, they are to be seized. According to EC sources, the Expenditure Observer deployed by the poll panel visited the spot and viewed the two videos recorded by the flying squad. The flying squad's own videos and the media reports showed superficial checking and the other cars in the cavalcade were not checked at all, the poll panel source said.

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## 6 DECISION 2024



Youngsters now are not loyal to one party, says Surendran. File

## 'In Kerala, Cong will be irrelevant after LS elections'

There is a pro-Modi wave, says BJP candidate up against Rahul Gandhi

THE BJP, which has never won a Lok Sabha seat in Kerala but views the state as an important avenue to achieve its target of 370 seats has fielded its state president **K SURENDRAN** from Wayanad. In an interview with **SHAJU PHILIP**, he speaks about the challenges the party faces, its chances in the state, the Modi factor and other issues. Excerpts:



THE EXPRESS  
INTERVIEW

K SURENDRAN  
KERALA BJP CHIEF

### How do you see the BJP's chances in the state in the coming Lok Sabha polls?

The people of Kerala see the BJP as a strong contestant in this election. We have transformed the fight in most constituencies into a triangular one, while last time, the fight was bipolar in most seats.

### What do you think is working in the BJP's favour?

The Modi factor is significant as his acceptance in the state has gone up manifold. He has won people's hearts. His political rivals too admit that he will return to power. In the run-up to the 2019 elections, many people had created doubts regarding the NDA's return to power. Now, they do not see any reason to keep the BJP at bay.

### Will the Modi factor translate into votes for the BJP?

There is a pro-Modi wave in Kerala and the BJP has fielded candidates who can cash in on the trend. We have (Union minister of state) Rajeev Chandrasekhar in Thiruvananthapuram, where he has managed to crack the impression created by sitting MP Shashi Tharoor that he was unbeatable. In Attingal, where the CPI(M) has a strong presence, we are putting up a good fight by fielding Union minister V Muraliedharan.

### Is it not an uphill task given that the NDA's vote share in the state was only 15% in 2019?

Polarisation of votes between the LDF and UDF is a phenomenon in Kerala, both fronts have a strong organisational structure in the state. But look at the 2019 results. The LDF was defeated in 19 of the 20 constituencies, showing having organisational prowess alone is not enough (to win elections). Only a chunk of votes can be accounted for by the

work of the party machinery.

Also, Kerala has a large number of swing voters. Youngsters now are not loyal to one party and analyse situation before casting their vote. People long for development and they now realise that only Modi can deliver on this front.

### How important is the poll outcome in Kerala for the BJP?

Even if the BJP wins a record number of seats in the elections, the PM will rejoice only after winning seats from the state. Such is the importance he has accorded to Kerala. A breakthrough in Kerala is the BJP's dream.

### Will the BJP's campaign revolve only around 'development' by the Modi government?

Along with the development the Centre has brought to Kerala, our campaign will highlight the failures of the state government. The BJP will bring out a vision document for each constituency besides a 'chargesheet' against the state government and sitting MPs. We have done our homework...

### The Congress alleges the CPI(M) and BJP have an understanding...

It is baseless. In Kerala, both the Congress and CPI(M) are our rivals, but the Congress will become irrelevant after this election. We see anti-BJP forces are consolidating wherever there was a triangular fight in the past.

### Why is state BJP chief contesting from Wayanad, a seat considered safe for Congress?

We are fighting all seats with same amount of seriousness. Last time, people (in Wayanad) believed Rahul Gandhi will become PM. But this time, nobody thinks on those lines. **FULL INTERVIEW** [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

## ON THE BACKFOOT IN SEAT-SHARING TALKS

# Pushed around by allies, Cong walks a tightrope

Cong leadership does not want to antagonise regional partners as it is said to be wary of optics, even as party leaders across states call for drawing the line

MANOJ CG

NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

FROM BIHAR to Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu to Uttar Pradesh, the Opposition INDIA bloc's partners have either managed to push the Congress to the backfoot in seat sharing negotiations for the Lok Sabha elections, or are trying to do so.

Although upset at being pushed around, the Congress is left with few options, as it is a minor player in some of these states, and is heavily dependent on the bigger regional players.

It was no different in Bihar, where the Mahagathbandhan (grand alliance) announced its seat sharing formula for the state's 40 seats Friday. Here too, the Congress did not get some of the seats it was asking for. The biggest setback was the RJD's denial of the Purnia seat to the party. The Congress, which contested the seat as part of the RJD-led alliance in 2019, had sought the seat again for former MP Rajesh Ranjan alias Pappu Yadav, who recently merged his Jan Adhikar Party with the Congress amid fanfare.

Let alone Purnia, the RJD did not even concede Supaul, which was among the seats that Pappu Yadav had on his wishlist as replacement for Purnia. Yadav's wife and AICC secretary Ranjeet Ranjan had represented the Supaul seat twice in the past — in 2004 and 2014. She was in the fray in 2019 as well.

Then there was Begusarai, where Kanhaiya Kumar was in the fray in 2019 as the CPI candidate. The Congress hoped to get the seat for Kumar, who joined



The only saving grace for the Congress was that after much negotiations, the RJD agreed to give it nine seats. File

the party in 2021, but the RJD gave it to the CPI once again. The RJD also denied the Congress the Aurangabad seat, where it wanted to field former governor and senior leader Nikhil Kumar. In 2019, the RJD had given the seat to Jitan Ram Manjhi's Hindustani Awam Morcha, which is now with the BJP.

The only saving grace for the Congress was that after much hard-nosed negotiations, the RJD agreed to give it nine seats. The party is of course upset, but did not want to push the RJD beyond a point.

In Tamil Nadu, the DMK forced the Congress to change three of its seats, which it had won in 2019 as part of a DMK-led alliance. Sources said the DMK initially wanted to change 4-5 of the Congress's 2019 seats and candidates. After much negotiations, the Congress agreed to Tirunelveli, Cuddalore and Mayiladuthurai, as replacement

for Theni, Arani and Tiruchirappalli, of which it had won Arani and Tiruchirappalli in 2019.

With the DMK taking away Arani, the Congress had to shift its sitting MP MK Vishnu Prasad to Cuddalore. The swap also meant the party could not field its former PCC president Su Thirunavukkarasar from Tiruchirappalli, which has now gone to the MDMK. Sources said there was pressure on the Congress to either swap the Karur seat, or change its candidate — sitting MP and Team Rahul member Jothi Mani — but the party did not concede.

In Maharashtra, the Congress is still locked in a tussle with the Shiv Sena (UBT) and the NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar). Neither of the regional partners are willing to concede at least four of the seats the Congress is asking for — Sangli, Bhiwandi, Mumbai South Central and Mumbai

North West.

In fact, the Shiv Sena (UBT) has already named its candidates for Sangli and Mumbai South Central, upsetting the Congress. Unlike in Tamil Nadu and Bihar, the Congress is not a marginal player in Maharashtra, but the party's central leadership is wary of annoying the regional partners in order to keep the INDIA bloc united, although state leaders are insisting that the party draw a firm line.

"The Congress central leadership has to be firm in protecting the interests of the party in the states. But the central leadership does not want to antagonise the regional parties as it is wary of the optics. If we push too hard, these parties would say that as the national party and the main opposition party, we are not showing a big heart. The expectation is that we have to make all the compromises. We may be marginal players in Tamil Nadu and Bihar, but that's not the case in Maharashtra," a party leader said.

In UP too, the Congress was pushed to the sidelines by the SP. It first unilaterally announced that seat sharing had been finalised, and that the Congress would be contesting 11 Lok Sabha seats in the state. The SP then went ahead and announced candidates in many seats that the Congress was seeking. It later raised the offer to 17 seats after the RLD left the INDIA bloc. But the Congress still did not get some of the seats it had sought — including Farrukhabad, Bhadohi, Lakhimpur Kheri, Shravasti and Jalaun — some of which the party had won in 2009.

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KEY PLAYERS

KEJRIWAL IN JAIL:  
FOR MANY NETAS  
BEFORE HIM, JAIL  
HAS BEEN NO BAR

## IMAGE OF THE DAY



Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy in Kurnool during his ongoing bus yatra. ANI

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**PRAJWAL REVANNA, 34,**  
JD(S) Hassan MP, fielded again  
Grandson of former PM Deve Gowda

TOTAL ASSETS	(2019)
₹40.85 CR (2024)	₹9.78 CR
Movable assets	₹5.45 cr
Immovable assets	₹35.84 cr
Liabilities	₹4.49 crore
Government dues	₹3.04 crore

# Govinda aala re: In twilight years, actor in comeback role

VALLABH OZARKAR  
& ALAKA SAHANI  
MUMBAI, MARCH 30

TO THOSE who laughed and danced to the films of Govinda at his peak in the 1990s, it is hard to imagine the youthful actor is now 60. But then, it is also hard to see him as a politician — which is a role he is reprising in real life after a long gap of 14 years.

On Thursday, Govinda joined the Shiv Sena led by CM Eknath Shinde, and is likely to get a ticket as well as one of the party's star campaigners.

The career of the actor, who thrived in risqué comedies and gave Bollywood one of its top dancing stars, has been in the dumps for a while now. However, his next career move was not expected to be politics given how he

burnt his hands last time, with his term as a Congress MP (2004 to 2009) coming to a close amidst a blaze of criticism over his low attendance in Parliament.

He vowed at the time never to return to politics. In 2013, he reiterated this, calling joining politics the biggest mistake of his life. On Thursday, making his comeback, Govinda described it as the end of "a 14-year vanvaas (exile)", to a party leading "Ram rajya", going on to praise the work of the Shinde government.

Like his Bollywood debut with the hit *Love 86*, his political start in 2004, in fact, was also a blockbuster. Contesting on Congress ticket from Mumbai North, he defeated senior BJP leader and five-time MP Ram Naik. Talk is Shinde Sena may field him again from same seat.

When asked about this, while Govinda said the CM will decide,



Maharashtra CM Eknath Shinde welcomes actor Govinda as he joins the Shiv Sena on Thursday. Ganesh Shirshetkar

Shinde stressed the actor had laid no conditions for joining, and he "does not want to contest".

### The unlikely star

Govinda was born to Arun Ahuja, who had been a small-time actor during the 1940s, and

Nirmala Ahuja, an actor and singer. He didn't have the pedigree nor the conventional looks of a star, but he hit gold with his very first film, *Love 86*, released in 1986 (hence the title), a romance with two sets of leads. It would also be the start of Govinda's hit pairing

with Neelam. In 1987, Govinda got married in secret to a distant relative, Sunita, managing to keep the relationship hidden for four years.

Then followed other successful films such as *Ilzaam* (1986), *Khudgarz* (1987), *Jaisi Karni Waisi Bhami* (1989) and *Swarg* (1990), helping him establish his position even as Bollywood still had older biggies such as Amitabh Bachchan and Mithun Chakraborty, and rising stars such as Aamir Khan, Shah Rukh Khan, Salman Khan and Ajay Devgn.

His movies *Aankhen* (1993), in which he played a double role, *Raja Babu* (1994), *Coolie No. 1* (1995), *Hero No. 1* (1997), *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan* (1998) and *Hasena Maan Jayegi* (1999) defined Hindi cinema of the 90s.

What stood out was both Govinda's comic timing — put to best effect in films with Kader Khan as

dialogue writer and David Dhawan as director — and his dance skills, to songs some of which still remain popular. In recent years, Govinda has made appearances as a judge in dance reality shows.

### The unlikely politician

Soon after that 2004 LS win, there were reports of a lack of coordination between Govinda and the local unit of the Congress, with the actor seen as inaccessible and not serious about his new role.

This added to criticism against him of remaining absent from Parliament for long durations, prioritising his film projects. Govinda later claimed that in 2009, the Congress's central leadership wanted to renominate him from Mumbai North, but the state unit did not pass on the message to him.

# In Pawar vs Pawar battle for Baramati, echoes of larger war for Maharashtra

Contest between Supriya Sule and Sunetra Pawar begs the question: Is Sharad Pawar's politics of building alliances relevant in the face of BJP onslaught?



THE NEERJA CHOWDHURY COLUMN

Weekly insight into what's changing in national politics — and why

"HUMARE LIYE maha tension ho gayi hai (For us, it is a matter of great tension)."

This was Baramati resident speaking with great feeling. For, the Lok Sabha battle for Baramati has become a high profile, and in many ways a visceral, Pawar versus Pawar fight. The fight is ostensibly between "tai (sister)" Supriya Sule, the sitting MP of Baramati and daughter of Sharad Pawar and "vehini (sister-in-law)" Sunetra Pawar, the wife of Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar. Ajit is the nephew of Sharad Pawar and was groomed by his uncle. He represents the Baramati Assembly constituency at present. On Saturday, Sunetra was officially announced as the Ajit-led

Nationalist Congress Party's (NCP) Baramati candidate.

Most people said they would not like to choose between one Pawar and another. "If Supriya loses we will not feel good," said a young woman running a small tea shop in Malegaon.

But the fight is not really between tai and vehini. It is really between "saheb", as Sharad Pawar is universally known and "Dada", as Ajit is called. It is the battle for supremacy in the NCP and for the political space it has occupied since Pawar broke away from the Congress in 1998 after Sonia Gandhi's rise. The NCP split last year after Ajit exited with 41 of 53 MLAs to join the BJP-led government in the state. The NCP name and symbol (clock) are also with Ajit now after the Election Commission (EC) ruled in its favour. Though the matter is in court, Ajit is allowed to use the symbol if he adds the disclaimer that the matter is sub judicem. The NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar) has been given the "tootari" or trumpet symbol.

Though Ajit seemingly has control of the organisation, popular sympathy seemingly remains with Pawar. "It is huge sympathy," remarked a housewife in Baramati. "How can we inflict pain on Saheb towards the end of his life when he has done so much for us?" A farmer in Mulshi taluka said, "Ajit Pawar should never have left Saheb's side, and we know he left because of ED. Pawar does not have a son, only a daughter. After all, it was Saheb who gave Ajit Dada the opportunity to do what he has been able to do."

Virtually every Baramati resident conceded that Ajit "dada" had done

"kaam (work)" for the constituency. As he addressed more than a thousand Muslims gathered in Baramati to give them "manzoori" or promissory documents for loans — the first of eight rallies he addressed during the day — talking to the Muslim women I found many of them speak of Ajit's efforts to do "logon ke kaam (people's work)" and his easy access. "During



Ajit Pawar with Sharad Pawar. The 'Battle for Baramati' has divided the Pawar family and the constituency identified with it for half a century. File

Covid, I lost my husband. I have three children. Nobody came to see me. Only Ajit Dada came, to find out what help I needed," said one person.

Thanks to the Pawar uncle and nephew duo, the taluka town pulsates with drive and energy — modern residential buildings, a new bus station with facilities akin to those available at an airport, wide tree-lined avenues, no open drains, and well-

known educational institutions for biotechnology, agriculture and engineering to which people from across the state and beyond aspire to go. "Thanks to the education they received in Baramati, my three children are employed today in Apple, Facebook, and IBM in the USA," said a homemaker.

A Pawar versus Pawar fight poses a "dharam sankat (dilemma)" for many because they

are also really worried that "both sides will somehow get to know how we have voted". Unlike the party, the Pawar clan — they meet every year at a family get-together — is with the senior Pawar. Even Ajit's older brother Shrinivas recently hit out at him and spoke about "how much we owe Saheb". Srinivas's son Yugender said he would support Supriya.

### Why BJP pulling out all stops

All eyes are on Baramati today not only as a widely followed political soap opera with a star cast involving one of Maharashtra's important political families. It also epitomises the larger battle that is being waged for the control of the state. It is a state high on the BJP's radar because of its 48 Lok Sabha seats and is one where the BJP does not seem assured of what is going to happen despite the splits in the Shiv Sena and the NCP.

The BJP-led ruling Mahayuti alliance has been pulling out all stops to gain strength in the

state. Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis, though a rival of Ajit Pawar, has gone out of the way to undo the moves put in place by Pawar to secure Supriya's victory. Pawar has reached out to Mahadev Jhankar, an important leader of the Dhangad community (around 22% in Baramati) who stood Supriya in 2014. To secure Dhangads' support, the veteran leader has offered him support in the neighbouring constituency of Mhada. Fadnavis, however, brought Jhankar over to the NDA side with the promise of a Lok Sabha constituency and photos of the two men embracing each other went viral.

Fadnavis also brought around Ajit's bitter opponents such as Vijay Shivtare in the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena who had announced that he would contest from Baramati.

If Supriya wins, it will reinforce Pawar's position as the "Bhishma Pitamah" of Maharashtra politics and one of the most experienced figures in Indian politics. If Ajit ends up besting his

uncle, he will, in the words of a political wag, "hope to become the Himanta Biswa Sarma of Maharashtra". A defeat for his wife, on the other hand, will be a setback and the Marathas, a proud community, will see it as his inability to safeguard his home turf.

The "Battle for Baramati" has divided the Pawar family and the constituency identified with it for half a century. It has also divided Maharashtra politics as never before. Baramati is also a testing ground. Will Sharad Pawar's politics of more than five decades — the display of shrewdness coupled with a style of building inclusive and coalitional alliances in the backroom — remain relevant before the new, agency-driven, no-holds-barred politics that is evident today?

(Neerja Chowdhury, Contributing Editor, The Indian Express, has covered the last 10 Lok Sabha elections. She is the author of How Prime Ministers Decide)



## 7 DECISION 2024



One-sixth of Arunachal House elected unopposed, all BJP nominees

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
GUWAHATI, MARCH 30

ONE-SIXTH of the total 60 seats in the Arunachal Pradesh Assembly has been filled with candidates elected unopposed, with BJP nominees in all the 10 seats — including sitting Chief Minister Pema Khandu and Deputy CM Chowna Mein.

For candidates, Saturday was the final day to withdraw their nominations and by evening, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Electoral Officer Pawar Kumar Sain declared that 10 candidates had been elected unopposed. Sain directed the respective Returning Officer to issue certificates of election to them.

Khandu won unopposed from his family's stronghold Mukto, which he had also won unopposed in the 2011 by-election after the death of his father and former CM Dorjee Khandu. He had won unopposed again in 2014.

On Saturday evening, he excluded confidence that the BJP would sweep the remaining constituencies.

Mein won unopposed from Chowkham constituency after his challenger from the Congress, Bayamsa Kri, withdrew his nomination Saturday.

The other candidates elected unopposed include Dasanglu Pul from the Hayuliang, Dongru Siongju (Bomdila), Ratu Techi (Sagalee), Techi Kaso (Itanagar), Hage Appa (Ziro-Hapoli), Jikke Tako (Tali), Nyato Dukam (Taliha) and Mutchu Mithi (Roing).

In 2014, when the state was still a Congress stronghold, it saw a record number of unopposed candidates — 11, all from the Congress (including Pema Khandu who was then a part of the Congress). In 2019, with the balance tilted towards the BJP, 3 candidates from the party were elected unopposed.

## BALLOTIN

**YUSUF PATHAN CAN'T USE 2011 WC WIN PHOTOS FOR CAMPAIGN: EC**

**Kolkata:** The Election Commission (EC) has barred ex-Indian cricketer Yusuf Pathan, the TMC candidate from West Bengal's Baharampur, from using photos of the Indian cricket team's 2011 World Cup winning moments while campaigning for Lok Sabha elections. The move comes days after state Congress lodged a complaint against Pathan for using photographs of Sachin Tendulkar and others to campaign in Baharampur, saying it violated MCC. Sources in the office of the CEO in West Bengal said that the poll panel made a detailed evaluation of the complaint and found merit in it. On Friday, the EC directed Pathan to remove all such photographs and posters that were put up in the Baharampur Lok Sabha constituency. **ENS**

## AT RAMLILA MAIDAN

## Differences 'set aside' for now, INDIA bloc mega rally today

AAP leader claims event in protest against Kejriwal's arrest, Cong says it will not be 'person-centric'

**MANOJ CG, JATIN ANAND & ABHINAYA HARIGOVIND**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

NINE MONTHS after the INDIA alliance began taking shape, and after recent troubles, a mega rally at the capital's historic Ramlila Maidan on Sunday will see top leaders from most of the parties in the Opposition bloc come together in a joint show of strength.

The rally comes against the backdrop of arrest of former Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren and Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal in last 2 months. The Congress on Saturday emphasised the objective of "Loktantra Bachao Rally (Save Democracy Rally)" was about saving the Constitution and democracy and not any one leader.

"The rally is not person-centric. This is not for protecting any one person. This is for protecting the democracy and Constitution. This is not the rally of any one party. Over 28 parties are involved in it. All the parties of the INDIA alliance are involved. The TMC is also included. Although, our seat-sharing formula could not work out in West Bengal, senior leaders of the TMC will be present," Congress communications chief Jairam Ramesh told reporters at the party headquarters in Delhi.

Ramesh said the agenda of the rally would be inflation, unem-



Preparations underway ahead of the rally in New Delhi, Saturday. *Amit Mehra*

ployment, economic disparity, and polarisation. "We should not forget Hemant Sorenji. Hemant Soren was the first CM who was arrested (he resigned before being arrested) when the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra was about to enter Jharkhand. Hemant Soren, Kejriwalji, several ministers and leaders of different states including Delhi, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu are being targeted."

Ramesh's comments came a day after the AAP's Delhi convener Gopal Rai said the rally was "against the arrest of Shri Arvind Kejriwal and to save the country's democracy". Rai added, "The tyranny in Delhi has escalated to

the point where the CM has been arrested, and everyone is gathering in the mega rally to express their concern. The way dictatorial tendencies are being executed, democracy is being murdered, and elected CMs of the opposition are being arrested, it's wrong."

Rai termed the Ramlila Maidan the "birthplace of movements". It happens to be the place where the India Against Corruption movement spearheaded by social activist Anna Hazare was centred in 2011, ultimately leading to the birth of the AAP and creating the momentum that led to ousting of the Congress-led UPA government from power at the Centre.

An AAP leader, however, clarified that the effort was to project the rally as one crucial for the country and not just the AAP and Delhi. "This is an open call... and a big issue that goes beyond just the AAP," said a party leader.

Among those expected to participate are Jharkhand CM Champai Soren, Hemant Soren's wife Kalpana, NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar) chief Sharad Pawar, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, CPI (M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, CPI general secretary D Raja, NC leader Farooq Abdullah, PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti, SP president Akhilesh Yadav, DMK's Tiruchi Siva, and TMC's Derek

O'Brien. Since the alliance formation in June 2023, it has seen 4 Assembly polls, the desertions of key members such as Nitish Kumar and Jayant Chaudhary, the failure to strike up seat-sharing pacts in West Bengal, and the arrests of Soren and Kejriwal.

While earlier this month the RJD organised a large public meeting in Patna and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra culminated with a rally in Mumbai, only a few INDIA bloc leaders attended both events. The Sunday rally will be the first joint event where leaders from most partners are expected to be present. The Congress is expected to raise the matter of I-T Department notices it has been served, including fresh notices for Rs 1,745 crore and taking the total demand of the tax authorities to roughly Rs 3,567 crores. The CPI too received an I-T notice on Friday.

The Congress is planning to mobilise 2,000 to 3,000 of its supporters before Rahul arrives at the event. "We'll march to the venue where the crowd of supporters from several parties whose leaders will attend it will finally culminate," said a Congress leader.

Meanwhile, the rally will bring together TMC and Congress. The parties are pitched against each other in West Bengal while Left and Congress are fighting each other in Kerala.

## LJP RELEASES ALL FIVE NAMES

## At 25, LSR graduate and Bihar Minister's daughter in LS race from Samastipur

Chirag moves to father's turf Hajipur, brother-in-law Arun Bharati from Jamui

**SANTOSH SINGH**  
PATNA, MARCH 30

LOKJANSHAKTI Party (Ram Vilas) Saturday announced its candidates for all five seats for the Lok Sabha elections as part of the NDA seat-sharing deal. With party chief Chirag Paswan contesting from Hajipur, his brother-in-law Arun Bharati has been fielded from Jamui, with hopes of retaining the seat, which Chirag represented twice in the Lok Sabha.

The highlight of the list is the decision to field Sambhavi Choudhary, daughter of JDU Minister Ashok Kumar Choudhary, from the reserved seat of Samastipur, which was represented by Chirag's cousin Prince Raj. Sambhavi, who is 25 years and nine months old and a third generation politician, would be the youngest Dalit woman candidate to contest Lok Sabha polls. Her grandfather Mahavir Choudhary was a former Bihar minister from Congress.

Sambhavi told *The Indian Express*: "I am simply overwhelmed with the honour of being given chance to contest Lok Sabha polls at the age of 25. It also gives me a sense of huge responsibility, especially because of my political background and high benchmark set by father and grandfather."

Sambhavi was pursuing her doctorate on "intersectionality of gender and caste in Bihar politics" after completing her masters in sociology from the Delhi School of Economics. Sambhavi did her graduation from the Lady Shri Ram College. She is married to Saayan Kunal, son of philanthropist and scholar Acharya Kishore Kunal, a former IPS officer, who is credited with appointing a number of Dalit priests in



Sambhavi is daughter of JDU Minister Ashok Kumar Choudhary. *Express*

temples in Bihar.

The then PM V P Singh appointed Kunal an officer on special duty to mediate between Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Babri Masjid Action Committee. The SC verdict on Ayodhya also referred to Kishore Kunal's book 'Ayodhya Revisited'. The party's list features Veena Devi as the only sitting MP to get a ticket from Vaishali while old-time party worker and businessman-turned-politician Rajesh Verma was given a ticket from Khagaria. Verma, a former Bhagalpur deputy mayor, has been active in politics for over a decade. He had contested in the 2020 Assembly polls from LJP but lost.

An MBA graduate, Arun Bharati, who is married to Chirag's elder sister Nisha Paswan, has been active in politics over the last 15 years. Chirag has taken on himself the task of winning the battle in Hajipur, a seat represented by his father Ram Vilas Paswan nine times. Though it was expected that the Hajipur contest would be between Chirag and his estranged uncle and sitting Hajipur MP Pashupati Kumar Paras, there is no word yet on Paras either being fielded by RJD or contesting from his own party.

## PARTY HOPPERS

## 'I felt suffocated': Another MP leaves BJD, may join BJP

**SUJIT BISOI**  
BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 30

THE BJD suffered another setback in Odisha ahead of the simultaneous Lok Sabha and assembly polls, with its Kendrapara MP and actor Anubhav Mohanty resigning from the party Saturday. Two more former MLAs — Priyadarshi Mishra and Akash Das Nayak — also left the party citing neglect.

Mohanty, who was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 2014 on a BJD ticket, was fielded against BJP heavyweight Baijayant Panda from coastal Kendrapara Lok Sabha seat in 2019.

"Despite my unwavering loyalty and deep admiration for you sir, who I have regarded as a fatherly figure, I've been grappling with undisclosed concerns that have made me feel suffocated over the past four years," Mohanty wrote in his resignation letter to Patnaik. In December last year, the Orissa HC had granted divorce to the actor-politician from his wife Varsha Priyadarshini, also an actor, ending a long and bitter legal battle. He is likely to join the BJP.

Akash, also a popular actor, was elected to the state assembly from the Korei Assembly seat in Jajpur district in 2014. He was sidelined in the party after he was denied a ticket in 2019.

Mishra, who represented the Bhubaneswar-North Assembly seat from 2014 to 2019, was also



Kendrapara MP Anubhav Mohanty

denied a ticket in 2019.

Mishra is the son-in-law of former BJD MP Prasanna Patasani, who was also denied a ticket in the last general election. Hours after quitting the BJD, he joined the BJP at the party headquarters. Both Akash and Mishra were BJD ticket aspirants from their seats. They decided to quit after they were sure their tickets were not considered by party, BJD sources said.

The Congress also faced a jolt with exit of two former MLAs — Chiranjib Biswal and K Surya Rao. Biswal, a two-time MLA and the elder son of former deputy CM Basant Biswal, was unhappy with the Congress leadership after his suspension from the party in July last year. Though his suspension was revoked in January, Biswal continued to maintain a distance from the party. The elder brother of former RS member and former IPL chairman Ranjib Biswal, the Biswal family has dominance in two assembly seats — Jagatsinghpur and Tirtol — in coastal Jagatsinghpur district. Hours after quitting Congress, Rao, who won the Telugu-dominated Paralakhemundi seat in 2014, joined the BJD. He is likely to be BJD nominee from the seat this time.

## Shivraj Patil's daughter-in-law in BJP, to take on Anil Deshmukh

**SHUBHANGI KHAPRE**  
MUMBAI, MARCH 30

IN ANOTHER instance of the BJP reaching out to Opposition leaders and their family members, the daughter-in-law of senior Congress leader and former Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil, Archana Patil, joined the BJP in Mumbai Saturday. Archana joined the BJP in the presence of Maharashtra Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis and state BJP chief Chandrashekhra Bavankule.

Sources within the party said Archana would contest from the Latur City Assembly seat later this year, taking on former Congress minister Amit Deshmukh. Amit is the son of former Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh and has been representing the constituency since 2009. Fadnavis said Archana had a "desire to associate with the BJP" because she was "drawn by the ten years of good governance under PM Narendra Modi".

"She is the daughter-in-law of veteran Congress leader Shivraj Patil. Although Shivraj Patil and we represent two different parties, we hold him in high regard," he added. It is learnt that BJP's Rajya Sabha MP and former Congress leader Ashok Chavan, who has been associated with Patil's family for years, played an important role in bringing Archana to the BJP fold.

## Why Latur is significant

Patil, 88, hails from the Chakor village in the Latur district of the Marathwada region. He represented the Latur Lok Sabha seat between 1980 to 2004. He was the Speaker of the Lok Sabha be-



Veteran Congress leader and former Union Minister Shivraj Patil's daughter-in-law Archana joins BJP in presence of Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis in Mumbai, Saturday. *PTI*

tween 1991 and 1996 and the Union Home Minister in Manmohan Singh's UPA-I government between 2004 and 2008.

At the moment, he is involved in behind-the-scenes roles for the Congress. His son Shailesh Patil, Archana's husband, is the Congress state secretary. A doctor, Archana has been engaged with social work through her foundation called Urja since 2005. She is also chairperson of the Lifecare Hospital and Research Centre in Latur and has never been associated with politics before this.

"In the BJP, I see a greater prospect to pursue my social work. The ability to work is high and the party transcends caste, community and religious barriers," she told *The Indian Express*.

She added she chose the BJP because of Modi's "focus on women empowerment". "The legislation providing 33% reservation to women is a great step. Such initiatives give women equal opportunity and rights will empower women," she said.

Patil has a sizeable following

in Latur, Nanded and the Dharashiv districts of Marathwada region and the BJP hopes it can capitalise on this. Patil belongs to the Lingayat community, which is a sizeable voter group in parts of Marathwada and Western Maharashtra. But it is a challenge to take on Amit, considering Latur has been a Vilasrao Deshmukh family bastion for a while now.

The former CM started his career in Latur and became CM of Maharashtra twice (1999 to 2003) and (2004 to 2008). The Deshmukh family also has strong connections to the cooperative and educational institutions in the region. The seat is also one of the remaining bastions of the Congress in the state. The party won the seat all but once under Deshmukh between 1985 to 2004. Amit has been winning the seat since.

But the BJP hopes it can make a breakthrough. BJP leader Sambhaji Patil Nilengekar said, "We wanted Archana Patil to join the BJP in 2019... With her joining, the BJP will surely gain more strength in Latur."

## Row over Cong MLA's 'fit to cook' remark on woman BJP candidate

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
DAVANAGERE, MARCH 30

DAVANAGERE SOUTH MLA and educationist Shamanur Shivashankarappa has courted controversy by passing a sexist remark on the BJP's candidate for the constituency Gayathri Siddeshwara, saying she is only "fit to cook".

The 92-year-old MLA made further adverse remarks, saying that Gayathri "cannot even speak properly and should understand her constituency first before seeking votes".

Addressing Congress workers recently at Bunts Bhavan, Shivashankarappa said, "She can't even speak properly. She is fit to cook food at home. Let her understand the problems of Davanagere before seeking public support in LS polls." "She is asking voters to back the BJP in the LS polls so that she can present the lotus to Modi," he said.

Gayathri expressed anguish over Shivashankarappa's remark and said it seems that 'Ajja' (elderly person) is not aware that

women are making a mark in every sector today. "Shamanur Shivashankarappa has insulted women with his remarks. Are we confined only to the kitchen?" she asked. "PM Narendra Modi has given importance to women empowerment. But these people keep insulting women," she said.

On X, former World No 1 badminton player Saina Nehwal said, "Woman should be restricted to the kitchen" - This is what a top Karnataka leader Shamanur Shivashankarappa ji has said. This sexist jibe at @bjp4india candidate from Davanagere Gayathri Siddeshwaraji is least expected from a party that says 'Ladki Hon, Lad Sakti Hoon'." Saina, who joined the BJP in 2020, sought to know what the Congress party would have preferred her to do when she won international medals for India on the playfield.

BJP leader Shaina Chudasama Munot alleged, "Whether it is S Shivashankarappa or Congress, they are all anti-women. Indian women are worthy to be scientist, pilot, etc. However, they are typecasting women."

## GROUND REPORT

## Dissent in Gujarat BJP, minister faces 'Kshatriya ire', party 'surprised'

**LEENA MISRA, GOPAL KATESHIA & ADITI RAJA**  
AHMEDABAD, MARCH 30

THE WITHDRAWAL of the candidature of two nominated leaders, anonymous posters, and a Union Minister facing backlash from the Kshatriya community over remarks. A series of episodes in Gujarat over the past week has put a question mark on the state BJP unit that is known for its organisational discipline.

This comes at a time when the BJP is widely expected to repeat its performance in a state where it won all 26 Lok Sabha con-

stituencies in 2019 and followed it up with a record-breaking victory in December 2022 Assembly polls (bagging 156 of 182 seats).

Vadodara's two-term MP Ranjanben Bhatt who was given a ticket for the third time for the same seat opted out of the race on March 23, days after posters opposing her candidature over allegations of corruption surfaced. She has now been replaced by Hemang Joshi, the vice chairman of the Vadodara Municipal Corporation school board.

The same day, Bhikhaji Thakor who was set to fight his first election from Sabarkantha backed out after having launched

his campaign. His replacement is government schoolteacher Shobhana Baraiya, who is wife of former Congress MLA Mahendra Baraiya who joined BJP a year ago.

Bhatt and Thakor's names had been finalised by the parliamentary board. In Bhatt's case, four people, including two Congress workers, were arrested for putting up posters. Bhatt was the deputy mayor of Vadodara when she was "handpicked" for the 2014 by-election to the seat by then CM Anandiben Patel after PM Modi vacated it to retain Varanasi, said party sources.

A day after Bhatt's name was announced, BJP's Mahila Morcha



The Kshatriya community demanded that Parshottam Rupala withdraw from polls.

national vice-chairman Jyoti Pandya went public to oppose it. Staking claim to the seat, Pandya questioned "party's compulsion

in repeating Bhatt". The BJP suspended her minutes before she could announce her resignation.

In Sabarkantha, workers openly opposed Baraiya. They gathered outside the district BJP headquarters in Modasa and threw away their saffron scarves outside the gate in protest. Denied entry into the building, one of the protesters from Aravalli told *The Indian Express*, "What BJP is doing is wrong. We demand the cancellation of the ticket to Shobhnaben, who is not even an active and primary party member... the party chose someone based on her husband who joined the BJP only one and a half years ago." A Gujarat BJP

office-bearer, denying the induction of Congress turncoats was behind the dissent, said, "We too are surprised with what happened. Perhaps the long gap between nomination day and voting day is giving them (party and candidates) more time to rethink."

## The other protests

Porbandar too saw a campaign against ticket-holder Mansukh Mandaviya, a Union minister. Anonymous banners with pictures of Mandaviya in the company of his Congress opponent Lalit Vasoya, describing the BJP candidate as "imported", surfaced in Dhoraji town on the night of

March 25. Things have been tougher for Mandaviya's ministerial colleague Parshottam Rupala against whom a complaint of defamation was lodged at the Rajkot magistrate's court Friday by Congress leader Adityasinh Gohil, who claims "royal" lineage. The complaint was against the remarks Rupala made at an event on March 22 about "kings bowing to the British" and "breaking bread with them and giving their daughters in marriage", videos of which went viral.

Although Rupala tendered an apology the following day, the Kshatriya community refused to relent and demanded that he

withdraw from the election. The minister was forced to issue another apology in public at a community event in Rajkot Friday. On Saturday, Kshatriya community leader Raj Shekhawat, the national president of a faction of Rajput outfit Kami Sena, resigned from the BJP in protest against the comments. BJP insiders said candidate selection has been affected by dissent within local units. "The party allot tickets after taking multiple factors into account. But there were voices of protests against selection in some places, which the BJP listened to and made appropriate changes," said a state leader.



Classifieds

PERSONAL

I, FARHAN SHAKIL SIDDIQUE, S/O. SHAKIL AHMAD SIDDIQUI, ADD-R-73, 2ND FLOOR-FRONT-SIDE, GALI NO-1, JOGA BAI-EXTN, OKHLA JAMIA-NAGAR SOUTH-DELHI-110025, changed my name to FARHAN SHAKIL SIDDIQUI, for all, future purposes. 0040722247-8

I, RAMPAL SHARMA S/O RAMNIWAS R/O HNO.54, NAI BASTI BANKNER NEAR MADARSHA, NARELA, DELHI-110040, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO RAMPAL. 0040722244-2

It is for general information that I, Sushma Kumari D/o Ravi Shankar Kumar R/o Kahtarwa, Mathurapur Kahtarwa, Mathurapur, Sheohar, Bihar-843329, declare that name of my mother has been wrongly written as Vandana Devi in my Senior School Certificate & Marks Statement, Bachelor of Technology Statement of Marks of First Semester, Second Semester, Third Semester, Fourth Semester, Fifth Semester, Seventh Semester, Eighth Semester and Migration Certificate. The actual name of my mother is Vandana Devi, which may be amended accordingly. 0070896653-1

Qualified, Handsome, Cultured Family Boy. 1991 Born, 5'8", 70 kgs, Hindu Brahmin lead Manager of an SNE Company based in Mumbai with 3 Flats, Seeking for a good looking equal match. Caste No Bar. SUDHIR BHATT 9920099889 / 9619101019 / 20 sudhirmatrim@gmail.com

Probe one-sided: Kerala court acquits 3 in 2017 murder of madrasa teacher

Prosecution also failed to establish any connection of accused with RSS: Court

of March 20, 2017. Ajesh, Nidhin and Akhilesh, all from Kudlu village in the district, were arrested days later. The prosecution alleged that the three men had entered the village and trespassed into the mosque premises "with the common intention to kill any Muslim". It cited their involvement in at least three previous attacks on members of the Muslim community. The court, however, said "none of the three incidents allegedly projected as reason for enmity of accused against Muslim community is proved". The prosecution also "failed to establish any kind of connection of the accused with RSS", the court said. "Nothing was produced to prove the allegation that the accused are fanatic workers and believers of RSS. Therefore, it is already found that the prosecution miserably failed to prove the motive alleged against the accused," the court said. Slamming the police investigation, the court said three mobile phones, a memory card and five SIM cards were recovered from the room of the madrasa teacher immediately after the incident. But none of these were examined and no attempt was made to identify the call details and images stored in the devices, the court said. "The reluctance to conduct DNA analysis of an old dhoti with blood sample of the first accused shows that the investigation was one-sided," the court said. "Therefore, this failure in the investigation is sufficient to consider that there are serious omissions in the collection of evidence in this case. So, this is another reason to doubt the allegation of prosecution against the first accused that he had stabbed the victim..." the court said. Riyas's wife, who was present in the court, called the verdict "disappointing". His family members said they never expected such a judgment. "The courts did not even grant bail to the accused for the past seven years. The accused were not connected with Maulavi in any manner. Even the police charge sheet clearly mentions that the crime was an attempt to create communal unrest," Riyas's relatives said. Slamming Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, Opposition Leader V D Satheesan said Saturday's verdict in the murder case showed "the failure of police". "Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan should reveal whether he had entered into a secret understanding with RSS to save the accused," he said.

Dacoit gets death for murder of cops, civilian

Lucknow: A Court in Farrukhabad on Friday sentenced a 48-year-old dacoit to death for his involvement in the murder of three policemen and a civilian during an encounter in the Kampil area of the city in 2005. The court also imposed a fine of Rs 7.05 lakh on Devendra Kumar alias Fauji, a member of the Kallua gang. According to the prosecution, the incident dates back to September 2005, when a police team embarked on a search for members of the Kallua gang, which was known to be active in Farrukhabad, Shahjahanpur and Badaun. ENS



BHARAT RATNA AWARDED

President Droupadi Murmu confers Bharat Ratna, the country's highest civilian honour, posthumously on former prime ministers P V Narasimha Rao and Chaudhary Charan Singh, agriculture scientist M S Swaminathan and former Bihar chief minister Karpoori Thakur during a ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Saturday. PTI

PUBLIC NOTICE

Under the instructions and on behalf of my clients Shri Hemendra Pal Kapoor, aged 55 years, S/o Late Shri Baldev Raj Kapoor and his wife Geeta Kapoor aged 53 years both R/o 23/5-8, Ganga Floor, Tikal Nagar, New Delhi-110018. I do hereby give Public Notice in your Daily News Paper: "Public at large is hereby informed that my clients Shri Hemendra Pal Kapoor, aged 55 years, S/o Late Shri Baldev Raj Kapoor and his wife Geeta Kapoor aged 53 years both R/o 23/5-8, Ganga Floor, Tikal Nagar, New Delhi-110018, have deeded their son named Anshu Kapoor, aged about 23 years. My clients have deeded him from getting any right in any Property/Vests, movable or immovable, which belongs to my clients, because he is not under the control of my clients and by carrying the instructions and directions of any clients. In future, my clients having no concern or relation with him. Any person(s) dealing with him in any manner, be/for himself stand responsible for the same." Sd/- Dr. Vimal Verma Advocate Ch. No. 183 A, Padma House Courts New Delhi-110001

PUBLIC NOTICE

General Public is hereby informed that Mr. Rajesh Khanna S/o Vinay Khanna & Geeta Kler W/o Aswini Kler are filing Substitution application in Land and Development office for Property No. 32/10, East Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110018. In the name of Rajesh Khanna & Geeta Kler on the grounds of Death Certificates. If there are any Objections/Claims from the General Public on this application, the same shall be communicated to LADO with supporting documents through registered Post as by visiting LADO office at 6th Floor, Nirmal Bhawan, Maulana Azad Road, New Delhi or through an Email to LADO@DLN.GOV.IN within 30 days of Publication of this Notice. Sd/- BINOD PODDAR Advocate East. No. D1468-C/3 15, Saket Block, Mandawali, Delhi-92

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that I ANSAR ALI S/O AHMAD SAEEED KHAN R/O B-1496, Gali No-13/11, Subhash Vihar, North Ghonda, Garhi Mundla, North East Delhi, Delhi-110053 declare that name of my father has been wrongly written as MOHD SAEEED KHAN in my 12th Class Educational Documents and name of my father has been wrongly written as MOHMAD SAEEED KHAN in my 10th class Educational Documents & OBC Certificate No-7257/913/SDMS/PUR/99. The actual name of my father is AHMAD SAEEED KHAN respectively which may be amended accordingly.

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PUBLIC NOTICE GOVERNMENT OF HIMACHAL PRADESH DEPARTMENT OF STATE TAXES AND EXCISE NOTICE FOR ALLOTMENT OF RETAIL LIQUOR TENDER LICENSES IN FORM L-2, L-14, L-14A & L-20B THROUGH AUCTION-CUM-TENDER PROCESS FOR THE YEAR 2024-25 IN THE STATE OF HIMACHAL PRADESH.

In continuation to the Public Notice No. 7-232/2024-EXN-5428-5455 dated 02-03-2024 published on 03-03-2024, even No. 5493-5520 dated 03-03-2024 published on 04-03-2024, 5933-961 dated 06-03-2024 published on 07-03-2024, 6028-58 dated 07-03-2024 published on 08-03-2024, 6284-6311 dt. 11-03-2024 published on 12-03-2024, 6326-63522 dt. 12-03-2024 published on 13-03-2024, 6569-6592 dated 13-03-2024 published on 14-03-2024, 6939-66 dated 15-03-2024 published on 16-03-2024, 7908-7940 dated 22-03-2024 published on 23-03-2024, 8473-8499 dated 26-03-2024 published on 27-03-2024 and 8791-17 dated 28-03-2024 published on 29-03-2024, it is further notified for the information of general public that sealed tender applications for allotment of retail Units in Form L-2, L-14, L-14A and L-20B for the retail sale licensed outlets of Country Liquor (L-14/L-14A) and retail sale licensed outlets of Indian Made Foreign Liquor (L-2) in following District of State of Himachal Pradesh is fixed as under :- 1. The date of receiving applications and opening of tender alongwith venue is also given in the schedule below :-

Table with 3 columns: District, Venue, Date of bidding-cum-opening of tender. Row 1: Una, DRDA Hall Una, District Una, 31-03-2024 at 11:00 AM onwards.

MATRIMONIAL

I, BHAVYA D/O-Vijay Kumar, House-no-910, Indra Wali Gali Kucha Pati Ram Sita Ram Bazaar Delhi-110006, Have changed my name to Bhavya Khanna, Permanently. 0040722244-7

BRIDE WANTED

I, FARAH RIAZ, W/O ANWAR AHMED, R/O 6862, GALI FATEHPURI WALLI, BERI WALA BAGH, AZAD-MARKET, DELHI-110006, have changed my name to FARAH ANWAR, for all, future Purposes. 0040722247-6

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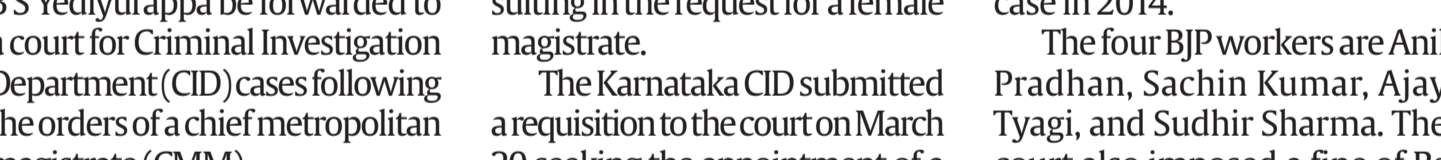
ROAD BLOCKADE CASE UP BJP MLA, 5 others get jail; released on bail

A SPECIAL MP/MLA court in Bulandshahr district on Friday sentenced Sikandrabad MLA Laxmijai Singh, district BJP chief Vikas Chauhán and four other party members to a jail term of 22 months and 20 days in connection with a road blockade case in 2014. The four BJP workers are Anil Pradhan, Sachin Kumar, Ajay Tyagi, and Sudhir Sharma. The court also imposed a fine of Rs 25,500 on each of the six. The convicts were granted bail by the same court on Friday as the sentence period was less than two years. All the six accused were booked under IPC Sections 147 (rioting) and 341 (wrongful restraint) on October 24, 2014, when they along with 10-15 unidentified people had blocked a road outside the Bulandshahr district hospital and raised slogans against the local police for not being able to arrest the killers of one Rajkumar alias Habbu.

POCSO case against BSY: Victim's partially recorded statement to be forwarded to court for CID probe

A MAGISTRATE court in Bengaluru has ordered that the statement of the victim in the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act case against Karnataka former chief minister B S Yediyurappa be forwarded to a court for Criminal Investigation Department (CID) cases following the orders of a chief metropolitan magistrate (CMM). The 17-year-old victim in the POCSO and sexual harassment case provided a portion of her statement on March 19 before the magistrate but sought more time to complete the statement. Sources said the victim's family later complained to the CID that there were some discrepancies in the recording of the statement, resulting in the request for a female magistrate. The Karnataka CID submitted a requisition to the court on March 20 seeking the appointment of a lady magistrate to record the victim's statement. The magistrate referred the requisition "for the appointment of lady JO" to the CMM for a decision. The victim, who was allegedly harassed by the senior BJP leader at his residence in Bengaluru on February 2, was produced before a magistrate on March 19, along with her mother, who filed the police complaint, to record the victim's statement under section 164 (5) of the Criminal Procedure Code.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE BENGALURU, MARCH 30



Yediyurappa has refuted allegations

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE MEERUT, MARCH 30

A SPECIAL MP/MLA court in Bulandshahr district on Friday sentenced Sikandrabad MLA Laxmijai Singh, district BJP chief Vikas Chauhán and four other party members to a jail term of 22 months and 20 days in connection with a road blockade case in 2014. The four BJP workers are Anil Pradhan, Sachin Kumar, Ajay Tyagi, and Sudhir Sharma. The court also imposed a fine of Rs 25,500 on each of the six. The convicts were granted bail by the same court on Friday as the sentence period was less than two years. All the six accused were booked under IPC Sections 147 (rioting) and 341 (wrongful restraint) on October 24, 2014, when they along with 10-15 unidentified people had blocked a road outside the Bulandshahr district hospital and raised slogans against the local police for not being able to arrest the killers of one Rajkumar alias Habbu.

SP leader's wife shot dead, probe underway: Police

The victim, Nazreen, was at home when someone apparently sneaked into the house and opened fire at her, police said. Her husband, Zaheer Salmani (48), claimed that he was not at home, police said. "We have recorded statements of the eyewitness, who are labourers. They claimed that they did not hear noise of gunshots," said SP, Hapur, Abhishek Verma.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE MEERUT, MARCH 30

A 40-YEAR-OLD woman – the wife of a local Samajwadi Party (SP) leader – was allegedly shot dead by an unidentified assailant at her residence in Samia Garden Colony on Bulandshahr Road in Hapur on Saturday, police said. She was taken to a hospital where doctors declared her dead on arrival, they added. The victim, Nazreen, was at home when someone apparently sneaked into the house and opened fire at her, police said. Her husband, Zaheer Salmani (48), claimed that he was not at home, police said. "We have recorded statements of the eyewitness, who are labourers. They claimed that they did not hear noise of gunshots," said SP, Hapur, Abhishek Verma.



# 9 EXPRESS NETWORK

## BRIEFLY

### ASSAM

**Parents meet IIT-Guwahati student held under UAPA**

**Guwahati:** The parents of the IIT-Guwahati student, who had allegedly pledged allegiance to ISIS and was arrested under the UAPA, on Saturday met their son, a senior police officer said. The parents of Touseef Ali Farooqui, a fourth-year B Tech student of the Bioscience department, arrived here on Friday and met him at the police station where he is in custody. The officer, however, did not divulge what transpired during the meeting or how long it lasted. **PTI**

### JHARKHAND

**Maoist carrying ₹5 lakh bounty on head held**

**Latehar:** A member of the banned CPI (Maoist), who was carrying a bounty of Rs 5 lakh on his head, was arrested in Jharkhand's Latehar district, police said on Saturday. The Maoist was identified as Nageshwar Bhokta alias Nageshwar Ganju, a self-styled sub-zonal commander of the outfit, and was wanted in 11 cases registered in several police stations in the district, a senior officer said. **PTI**

### UTTAR PRADESH

**Raj Babbar's conviction suspended**

**Lucknow:** The Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court has suspended the conviction of Congress leader Raj Babbar by a magistrate court in a 1996 case of assault on a polling officer, Justice Mohammad Faiz Alam Khan passed the order on Friday on an application filed by Babbar, 71, against a sessions court order. It was alleged that Babbar, who claimed bogus voting, and his associates beat up polling officer Krishna Singh Rana and Shiv Kumar Singh. **PTI**

### NEW DELHI

**Assets of ex-TMC MP's firm attached**

**New Delhi:** A Beechcraft plane, flats and properties in Himachal, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh — worth more than Rs 29 crore of the Alchemist Group, which is headed by former TMC MP K D Singh, have been attached under the anti-money laundering law, the ED said Saturday. The probe pertains to charges that the group collected Rs 1,800 crore from public on "false promise" of giving high returns. **PTI**

## Rajnath to head BJP's 27-member manifesto panel

Nirmala convener & Goyal co-convener; CMs of Assam, Chhattisgarh and MP among members

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

THE BJP on Saturday constituted its election manifesto committee under the chairmanship of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh for the Lok Sabha elections.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has been named the convener of the committee and Union minister Piyush Goyal is the co-convener.

The other members of the committee include Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai and Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan

Yadav.

Among the Union ministers on the committee are Dharmendra Pradhan, Arjun Munda, Bhupendra Yadav, Arjun Ram Meghwal, Ashwini Vaishnav, Smriti Irani, Kiren Rijiju and Rajeev Chandrashekar. Sources said many senior leaders who are not included in the committee may be made part of other organisational exercises related to the elections.

Senior party leaders such as Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Vasundhara Raje, Ravi Shankar Prasad, Sushil Modi and party general secretary Vinod Tawde are also members of the committee.



Rajnath Singh was the head of the BJP's manifesto panel for the 2019 polls as well

Rajnath Singh, a former BJP president, was the head of the BJP's manifesto committee for

the 2019 polls as well. Many members have been repeated in the current panel as well.

Among the new inductees, Anil K Antony from Kerala, who has also been fielded from the state, is a part of the committee.

The committee shows a balanced mix of members from all major regions of India and also across caste groups. Tariq Mansoor from Uttar Pradesh is the sole Muslim member in the panel.

The manifesto-preparation exercise will incorporate suggestions from people online and also via the party's offline outreach to voters, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced

some time ago. The BJP is already in the process of seeking suggestions from different groups and its national president J P Nadda had last month flagged off 'Viksit Bharat Modi ki Guarantee' video vans, which are meant to travel across the country to collect people's inputs on the contents of its manifesto.

With PM Modi often asserting that his third term will be marked by big decisions, the buzz around its manifesto has been gaining in traction.

The Lok Sabha elections will be held in seven phases from April 19 to June 1, with counting of votes on June 4.

—WITHPTIINPUTS

## 3 Independent MLAs protest in Himachal, want Speaker to accept resignations

**SAURABH PARASHAR**  
CHANDIGARH, MARCH 30

INDEPENDENT MLAS Hoshiyar Singh, Ashish Sharma and K L Thakur staged a protest inside the Himachal Pradesh Vidhan Sabha premises on Saturday, urging Assembly Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania to accept their resignations.

The MLAs, who had submitted their resignations to the Speaker on March 22 and had subsequently joined the BJP a day later, alleged that their resignations were not being accepted to avert bypolls in their seats — Dehra, Hamirpur and Nalagarh.

The MLAs protested for more than two hours but Speaker Pathania, who had served them notices to explain why they were resigning, was not present.

"We submitted our resignations willingly but instead of accepting it, authorities are delaying it. Baseless notices were served to us asking us to explain if we resigned under pressure, where we stayed for the last month etc. Everybody knows that the Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu-led Congress government can collapse at any time in Himachal Pradesh. If our resignations are not accepted, we will go to court," MLA Hoshiyar Singh told The Indian Express.

Hoshiyar Singh, Ashish Sharma and K L Thakur, representing Dehra, Hamirpur and

Nalagarh Assembly constituencies, were among the nine MLAs who voted against Congress candidate Abhishek Manu Singhvi in the election for the lone Rajya Sabha seat from the state last month, plunging the government into a crisis.

The MLAs had submitted their resignations in the presence of former Himachal chief minister and senior BJP leader Jai Ram Thakur on March 22. Later, the trio also met Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla at the Raj Bhavan in Shimla.

All three Independents had sought BJP tickets during the 2022 Assembly polls but were denied the opportunity and then contested as Independents. Later, when the Congress formed the government with 40 legislators, the three Independents supported the government.

The bypolls to six Assembly seats in Himachal Pradesh that fell vacant following the disqualification of the rebel Congress MLAs will be held simultaneously with the Lok Sabha elections on June 1 and the counting of votes will be held on June 4.

The rebel Congress MLAs were disqualified for defying a whip to be present in the House and voted in favour of the ruling Congress during cut motions and budget.

With the disqualification of six Congress MLAs, the strength of the ruling Congress has come down to 34 from 40, including the Speaker, in the 68-member Assembly. The BJP has 25 members.

## Vizag student ends life over 'sexual harassment', probe ordered

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

ADAY after a 17-year-old student was found dead at a private college campus in Visakhapatnam early Friday morning, the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) and the Department of Technical Education have ordered inquiries into the incident.

The teenager reportedly died by suicide after sending a few text messages to her sister alleging

sexual harassment as the reason for her taking the extreme step.

The Commissioner for Technical Education, Chadalavada Nagarani, on Saturday ordered a comprehensive probe and sought a detailed report within 24 hours. The SCPCR, too, sought a report from the police.

The police have registered a case and are questioning the college faculty members and students. They have seized the mobile phone of the deceased and are examining her call data records. The WhatsApp messages that

the teenager sent to her sister are also being examined and treated as a suicide note. The girl is believed to have killed herself around 2 am when her roommates were asleep, the police said.

She reportedly jumped from the top floor of her hostel building. In her last message to her sister, the teenager wrote she had decided to end her life as it would be difficult for everyone to understand her situation and her existence may cause more problems for her family. "My chapter is coming to an end," she wrote.

cepted a hijacked Iranian fishing vessel off Yemen's Socotra coast.

The officials said the fishing vessel was around 90 nautical miles south west of Socotra at the time of the incident. It was reported that nine armed pirates had hijacked the vessel.

"INS Sumedha intercepted FV Al - Kambar during the early hours of 29 Mar 24 and was joined subsequently by the guided missile frigate INS Trishul," a defence spokesperson said. However, after more than 12 hours of intense coercive tactical measures, the pirates on board who had hijacked the fishing vessel were forced to surrender.

The Navy on Friday had received information about a potential piracy incident, after which two ships were deployed in the Arabian Sea and inter-

cepted a hijacked Iranian fishing vessel off Yemen's Socotra coast. The crew comprising 23 Pakistani nationals was given a thorough medical checkup prior to clearing the boat to continue with her fishing activities," the officials said.

The Navy recently rescued a merchant vessel, MV Ruen, at around 260 Nm East of Somalia and rescued 17 crew members and apprehended 35 pirates.

The pirates were later handed over to Mumbai police after which they were arrested under relevant sections of kidnapping, extortion and illegal assembly under the IPC, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, Maritime Anti-Piracy Act and Arms Act.

## DAY AFTER IRANIAN VESSEL RESCUE



The surrendered pirates in the custody of Indian Navy on Saturday. Express

## Nine pirates being brought to India to face legal action: Navy

**SAGAR RAJPUT**  
MUMBAI, MARCH 30

THE INDIAN Navy early on Saturday forced nine pirates to surrender and rescued 23 Pakistani crew members who were onboard an Iranian fishing vessel. Defence officials said that the nine pirates were being brought to India for further legal action in accordance with the Maritime Anti-Piracy Act of 2022.

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cepted a hijacked Iranian fishing vessel off Yemen's Socotra coast.

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## 'CYBER SLAVERY'

# Collaborating with Cambodia, rescued 250 Indians: MEA

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

THE MINISTRY of External Affairs on Saturday said the government is collaborating closely with the Cambodian authorities and has rescued and repatriated about 250 Indians so far.

The Indian Express first reported on March 28 that over 5,000 Indians are trapped in Cambodia, where they are allegedly being held against their will and forced to carry out cyber frauds on people back home. The government estimates that they have allegedly duped people in India of at least Rs 500 crore over the past six months.

In an official statement, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on Saturday that the Indian embassy in Cambodia has been promptly responding to complaints from nationals who were lured with employment opportunities to that country, but were forced to undertake illegal cyber work. "We have seen media reports on Indian nationals stuck in Cambodia. Our embassy in Cambodia has been promptly responding to complaints from Indian nationals who were lured with employment opportunities to that country but were forced to undertake illegal cyber work. Collaborating closely with Cambodian authorities, it has rescued and repatriated about 250 Indians, of which 75 have been rescued in the last three months," Jaiswal said.

"Several advisories have also been issued by the Ministry and the Embassy of India in Cambodia to our nationals about such scams. We remain committed to helping all Indian nationals in Cambodia who seek our support. We are also working with the Cambodian authorities and with agencies in India to crack down on those responsible for these fraudulent schemes," he said.

Earlier this month, the Ministry of Home Affairs held a meeting with officials of the Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre and other security experts to draw up a strategy to rescue the Indians trapped in Cambodia.

"The agenda of their meeting was to discuss the organised racket and bring back those who are trapped there. Data shows that Rs 500 crore has been lost (to cyber fraud originating in Cambodia) in India in the last six months," a source said, adding that investigation by Central agencies has so far revealed that agents are trapping people, mostly those from the southern part of the country, and sending them to Cambodia on the pretext of data entry jobs before forcing them to carry out cyber frauds.



The Indian Express reported on March 28 that over 5,000 Indians are trapped in Cambodia and being forced to carry out cyber frauds

## 'Second wife', kin not liable to be prosecuted in bigamy cases: HC

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
BENGALURU, MARCH 30

THE KARNATAKA High Court has ruled that only the person who got married for the second time despite a prior marriage being in effect would be liable to be prosecuted under Section 494 of the IPC, which deals with bigamy.

The order was passed on March 13 by a single-judge bench of Justice Suraj Govindaraj based on the petition by the man who allegedly committed bigamy, his family members and his 'second wife'. The man's first wife had lodged a complaint against him, his 'second wife' and others for having knowledge of the continuance of the existing marriage and still participating in the ceremony.

The counsel for the petition-

ers argued that the relatives should not be accused in the case as merely participating in the wedding ceremony did not attract the relevant provision. The counsel for the opposing side stated that the high court should not intervene in the matter as it was open to the trial court to add sections pertaining to abetment. Further, it was argued that the bigamous marriage could not have taken place without the abetment of the family members.

The bench observed, "...it is only the person who marries during the subsistence and the lifetime of the earlier spouse and the earlier marriage could be prosecuted and punished... The said provision does not even contemplate the person to whom the husband or wife has married to be prosecuted... Let alone those who... attended the wedding."

# Police vigil, security net at Mukhtar's burial

**ASAD REHMAN**  
GHAZIPUR, MARCH 30

TWO DAYS after he died of a cardiac arrest in Banda, jailed gangster-politician Mukhtar Ansari was buried at a graveyard in his hometown Mohammadabad in Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh on Friday.

The burial took place in the presence of a huge gathering of people who came to pay their last respects to the five-time MLA from Mau.

Heavy police deployment was made to maintain law and order. Policemen equipped with riot-control gear were also kept on standby.

Mukhtar's body, which was brought to his residence in an ambulance in the early hours on Saturday, was taken to the nearby graveyard around 10 am by family members, including his son Umar, brother and Ghazipur MP Afzal and nephew Suhaib among others.



Mukhtar Ansari's funeral at Mohammadabad in Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh on Saturday. PTI

Mukhtar's elder son Abbas, who is lodged in Kasganj jail, could not attend his funeral. He had moved an application on Friday in the Allahabad High

Court seeking permission to attend his father's funeral, but the application could not be taken up by the court.

At the graveyard, there

were some stray incidents of slogan shouting and police resorting to use of light force to control the crowd, which had started gathering since the morning.

There was a heated exchange between Afzal and Ghazipur District Magistrate Aryaka Akhoury after the latter asked the MP to restrict the number of people visiting Mukhtar's grave. Akhoury told Afzal that the number of people will be restricted as prohibitory orders under Section 144 were in place. Afzal countered this, saying it is a religious right of the family and the visitors to offer soil to Mukhtar's grave.

Later, Afzal appealed to the court, asking them to return later to pay their last respects to Mukhtar's grave. A large chunk of the crowd returned. Till evening, smaller groups of people kept coming to the graveyard to pay their respects.

After the situation was controlled, Ghazipur SP Omveer

Singh said, "Those who created a ruckus here will be identified. We have video recorded the funeral procession. They will face action."

Mukhtar died Thursday night after he suffered a cardiac arrest in Banda prison. The post-mortem report conducted by doctors of Banda Medical College cited the cause of death to be "heart attack/myocardial infarction", officials said. Mukhtar's family, however, sought an autopsy by a panel of doctors from AIIMS, New Delhi.

Mukhtar's younger son Umar had on Friday claimed that his father was a victim of an "orchestrated plan". He said that on March 21 both the Barabanki and Banda courts were apprised through lawyers that his father was being administered slow poison in food. He alleged a similar poisoning incident had occurred 40 days ago, which significantly affected Mukhtar's health.

## In 3 yrs, Mukhtar got medical attention 84 times in jail: Govt

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
LUCKNOW, MARCH 30

IN NEARLY three years, while lodged in Banda jail, gangster-politician Mukhtar Ansari received medical consultations on 84 occasions, with medical facilities exclusively provided to him upon complaint of any complications, a government official said on Saturday.

Medical facilities were extended to Mukhtar Ansari both within and outside the jail premises, on the basis of recommendations made by medical professionals who assessed the health condition of the patient, the official added in a statement.

Mukhtar Ansari, a five-time MLA, had been incarcerated since 2005 following his surrender in a communal riot case in Mau, resulting in seven deaths. He was lodged in various jails across Uttar Pradesh before be-

ing transferred to Banda jail in April 2021, following his return from Punjab where he had been detained for over two years.

Prior to his relocation to Banda, Mukhtar was hospitalised at Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute (SGPGI) in Lucknow for two days in January 2018. He was referred to SGPGI from Banda district hospital, having been diagnosed with diabetes mellitus, hypertension, coronary artery disease - Non-ST elevation myocardial infarction and post-myocardial infarction angina (pain).

According to the government official, in September 2018, Mukhtar's wife, Afsha Ansari, petitioned the then President, pointing out that her husband suffered from severe ailments including high BP, diabetes, disease of the back bone (spondylitis and slip disc). She highlighted the lack of adequate treatment, also noting that Mukhtar had suffered a heart attack previ-

ously too, while in Banda jail. Mukhtar was shifted to Ropar jail in January, 2019 and he remained there till April, 2021.

During his time in Ropar jail, Mukhtar wrote to the then President on January 2, 2019, detailing his health issues, including two prior cardiac arrests inside the jail and ongoing conditions such as high blood sugar and diabetes.

According to government statement, Mukhtar received outpatient care at Nehru Hospital's outpatient department in Chandigarh from March 2019 onwards, due to his ailments including diabetes mellitus, hypertension, and a prolapsed disc (L5/S1) with radiculopathy.

Medical reports from Rupnagar in Punjab indicated Mukhtar's diagnosis of a prolapsed disc: L-5,S1 with radiculopathy, NIDDM (noninsulin dependent diabetes mellitus), and depression with somatic symptoms, said the government statement.



Across THE AISLE



PCHIDAMBARAM

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THE WARNING signs were clear. The Opposition parties were able to sense what was coming, but pettifoggish advisers seem to have held back their leaders. The battle-ready troops were not sent promptly to the battlefield, except in Tamil Nadu. In West Bengal, the I.N.D.I.A. formation was still-born; in Bihar, Mr Nitish Kumar's patented somersault attempted to derail the preparations but failed; in Maharashtra, the allies are debating the sharing of seats while the BJP is busy poaching leaders in the Opposition camps; in Uttar Pradesh, the SP and Congress are united but do not seem to have joined the battle yet; and in Delhi and Jharkhand, while the armies are ready, the generals are behind bars. It is only in Tamil Nadu, the battle between I.N.D.I.A. and the opposing parties has really begun reminding one of the adage 'well begun is half done'.

That accounts for 7 out of 29 states. In the other major battlefields such as Karnataka, Telangana, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, it is a straight fight between the Congress and BJP. By contrast, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh seem like stages for a pre-scripted play, not a genuine warfront.

THE ARSENAL

The BJP has unleashed its full arsenal. On top is the huge pile of money col-

Next is Operation Lotus, another patented exercise of the BJP: encourage defections and give tickets to the defectors. I am told that the BJP will eventually nominate a little over 400 candidates. Up to 50 candidates will be defectors

# The final assault on Constitution

lected through the unconstitutional electoral bonds (EB). The truth about the EB — which I had described as legalized bribery — is now in the open. There are several cases where there was a search/arrest, bonds were bought and donated, bonds were encashed and the cases were buried or favours done (licences, contracts). The dates tell the story. A simple straight line will connect the dots. The huge war chest has been deployed through advertisements in newspapers, TV and billboards. BJP is playing on an unlevel playing field.

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DESTABILIZING STATE GOVERNMENTS

A lethal weapon in the armoury is 'arrest and detention'. Among the targets, there are two chief ministers, one deputy chief minister, several state ministers, family members of chief ministers and other leaders, and leaders belonging to Opposition political parties. Currently, the BJP has 383 MPs in both Houses of Parliament, 1481 MLAs and 163 MLCs. These include former non-BJP leaders who were 'whitewashed' in the giant

laundry machine and became pure and spotless. I do not know if there is a *live* and *current* investigation against any of the 2027 individuals; if there is any, it must be the rare exception and a well-guarded secret.

Governors are being used to disrupt the functioning of state governments. The governor of Tamil Nadu refused to read the speech to the legislative assembly prepared by the state government; on one occasion he walked out of the Assembly proceedings. He refused to swear in a person as Minister despite the 'aid and advice' of the chief minister. The governors of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal get into verbal spats with the chief ministers repeatedly. The governor of Telangana (cum LG of Puducherry) had practically remained in Tamil Nadu for several months and, on the day the LS election schedule was announced, she lost no time in resigning her posts and declaring her intention to contest as a BJP candidate! Governors have refused or withheld indefinitely assent to Bills. Such unconstitutional acts do not occur in BJP-ruled states.

BETRAYING THE CONSTITUTION

Another weapon is the destabilization of state governments. The government of NCT Delhi is crippled by the dik-

tat to the All India Service officers to defy the orders of the ministers and the chief minister. Funds have been withheld to state governments such as Kerala and West Bengal on one pretext or other. Borrowing limits of non-BJP state governments have been slashed citing breach of one condition or the other. Disaster relief assistance has been denied to Tamil Nadu on unspecified grounds. The central government insists that UPSC play an important role in the appointment of the director general of police of the state. Between the governor of the state and the University Grants Commission, the authority of the state government to appoint Vice-Chancellors of state-funded universities has been curbed. As a result, power centres owing allegiance to the central government have emerged in states and challenge the authority of state governments. There is a steady erosion of state autonomy.

The RSS-BJP are driven by an agenda. The leaders of RSS think they have waited long enough and a win in the LS elections should be the launch pad to complete the agenda. The agenda includes: one nation one election, Uniform Civil Code (UCC), the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the amendments to the Land Acquisition Act, the Farm laws, and the repeal of the Places of Worship Act. Some more may be revealed in the BJP's election Manifesto. This will be the final assault.

Fifth COLUMN

TAVLEEN SINGH

Twitter @tavleen\_singh



## Surreal reality and reality

IS THERE an increasingly surreal quality to Indian reality? I ask the question seriously because in recent days I have been on long drives in rural India, and been appalled by the squalor and low quality of life. Then, on returning from these excursions, I have attended glittering conclaves in fancy hotels, where I have heard political leaders declare confidently that India will become a fully developed country by 2047. I love the idea of India rising out of the depths to become a fully developed country. And believe that it is wonderful that we should aspire to making this dream real in just over twenty years. It is better by far to aspire to reaching new, seemingly impossible heights than to continue to whine about poverty, misery, and the injustice of the caste system.

If the polls are right and Narendra Modi wins a third term, it could be because his vision of the future is that of a developed India by 2047. As the general elections approach nearer, he repeats this more and more because he senses that voters find the idea inspirational. If Rahul Gandhi looks as if he is unlikely to prevent the Congress Party from losing a third general election, it is because during his recently ended Nyaya Yatra, he has talked mostly about poverty and caste. Indians at the bottom of the heap are those he hopes to appeal to, but they already know more about degradation and poverty than he ever will. What they want to hear more about is how their degradation will end some day in the not too far future.

This is where Modi scores. It is important here to point out that he does this with the unstinting, almost slavish, collusion of our private, supposedly independent, news channels. Last week, when he had his 'chai pe charcha' with Bill Gates, I was astounded to see that every English news channel covered it live, as if it was the main news story of the day. I happened to be watching because it was just before my deadline, when I usually switch from news channel to news channel to make sure that nothing so big has happened that I would need to rewrite the column. The only news on offer was the Prime Minister's private tea party with Mr Gates, where they talked about AI and its future in India, and this is when that sense of a surreal reality hit me hard.

Images of those drives through rural India floated before my eyes. The broken roads and squalid villages. The drab, ugly towns that rose out of clouds of dust and the stench of rotting garbage. The new highways on which something as fundamental as easily readable signage was absent. The schools in which small, barefoot children sat on raggedy rugs on the floor, glancing with tired eyes through tattered textbooks. The windowless kitchens in which village women sat on grimy floors cooking midday meals. And the dilapidated, unclean toilets that rural schoolchildren are forced to use.

This is the real India. It shows no sign yet of reaching that goal of becoming fully developed by 2047. When Raghuram Rajan said last week that Indians must stop believing the 'hype', he came under a fusillade of barbs from Modi's army of social media warriors. He was just a 'parachute economist' they sneered and should mind his own business. What nobody appeared to notice was that he had made an important point that we should pay attention to. The former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, and currently Rahul Gandhi's unofficial economic advisor, said that until more was invested in improving the school system, it was reckless to think of India as a fully developed country in twenty years. He pointed out that more than twenty percent of our schoolchildren dropout before high school and that the literacy rate in tiny Vietnam is higher than India.

In recent years we have lived in a state of hyper-nationalism and paranoid patriotism, so whenever I have drawn attention to how bad India looks in real life, I have been attacked for being 'unpatriotic.' It is a charge that is thrown about casually these days and because it can sometimes get the targeted person into trouble, far too many 'journalists' choose to remain silent. This in my view is being truly unpatriotic. So as someone who believes in real patriotism, I would like to say some things loudly and clearly. We will become a fully developed country one day, but to get there we must not hesitate to confront some harsh truths.

There is no question that in the past ten years we have seen many things happen that should have happened decades ago, but much more needs to change. It is shameful that the average Indian still lacks access to clean water. Shameful that millions of Indians still lack access to sanitation. Shameful that millions of Indian children leave school without learning to read or count. And, shameful that millions of Indians live in windowless hovels in filthy slums and villages.

To achieve the dream of becoming a fully developed country, this is a short list of problems that we will need to acknowledge and change. It is my hope that if Modi wins a third term, as predicted by every poll, he will make the changes India so desperately needs.

## The Sangita Kalanidhi and Carnatic music's great divide

Dalitality

SUANSHU KHURANA



ONE DOES not have to agree with Carnatic classical vocalist T M Krishna's political views to find soul in his music. Even if one disagrees with his ideology that rejects circumscribed concepts of power and privilege, supports Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra and often includes Jesus and Allah along with Tyagaraja, Dikshitar, Subramania Bharati, Iqbal Bano and Tagore in his Carnatic classical concerts, there has never been a question mark on the quality of his music in the age-old art form he's imbued. A child prodigy, his brilliance compels even his harshest critics to accept his artistry and skill.

Similarly, one does not have to be at daggers with Ranjani-Gayatri's right-wing stance or their idea that Brahmins "are the least casteist of all communities" and "soft targets", or tweets equating the word "secular" with "Islamist", to find depth in their polished work. In fact when both — Krishna and Ranjani-Gayatri — sing and venerate Tyagaraja's Ram in the kirtanas that the 19th-century saint left behind, it's easy to surrender to the trance and an intangible emotional experience they offer.

The commonality doesn't end here. About nine years apart, both have withdrawn from the prestigious December Music Season — Chennai's revered celebration in the Marghazi month. Krishna's decision came in 2015 after grappling with uncomfortable questions about the cultural and social mores of the system he was entrenched in. This system, he felt, came with a lack of plurality, an idea of exclusivity and socio-political-cultural barriers. The decision from Ranjani-Gayatri and some others earlier this month came after The Music Academy awarded the Sangita Kalanidhi to Krishna.

What has driven a wedge — at least at the face of it — is that a certain faction of Carnatic classical musicians, all Brahmin, believe that Krishna, also a Brahmin, has insulted Tyagaraja and MS Subbulakshmi besides glorifying political activist Periyar, a founding figure of the Dravidian movement, in his discourse.

Let's try and find these insults. Krishna withdrew from the Sabhas and the Academy despite performing there as part of the December Music Season since his debut at 12 at the Academy, and despite his

granduncle (TT Krishnamachari) being one of the founders of the Academy. When he made the decision, he was struggling with questions of society, politics, culture, music and aesthetics. It was interesting because he came from every privilege possible — caste, class, gender — an insider who was questioning his artistic roots and Brahminical hegemony that went deeper every time he dug things up. Here was an artist examining his art beyond the craft.

If one looks carefully at Krishna's writings, lectures and interviews, his reverence for Subbulakshmi's stirring music falls in the emotional realm. He has touched upon her Devadasi roots and asked whether she would have been so widely accepted if she hadn't "Brahminised" herself or was dark-skinned. He also examined changes in her music — from her days in Madurai to later marrying a Brahmin and tailoring some of the music according to what was required. He feels that "her music was what it was because of the sorrow in her".

These are fair questions and observations. But none of the artistes who withdrew or Chitravina Ravikiran, who returned his Sangita Kalanidhi, engaged with the narrative or had a conversation about it.

While singing Tyagaraja kritis for several years, Krishna has attempted to scrutinise the complexity of the Telugu saint while questioning some of his aesthetic choices, politics and social commentaries. As for Periyar, Krishna had collaborated with Perumal Murugan to commemorate Vaikom Satyagraha, the anti-caste agitation in the 1920s to enter the prohibited premises of Vaikom Temple in Kerala, led by the "father of the Dravidian movement".

Periyar has always divided people. While some call him an iconoclast and egalitarian, others take issue with his anti-Brahmin statements. But how is any of that related to the Sangita Kalanidhi? Fault the music and you have a case. The fact that those opposed to Krishna are withdrawing because they think that the award shouldn't be given to someone whose views they are uncomfortable with, is distasteful.

The difference between the two factions lies in nuance, self-reflection, and the awareness of their own art form's strengths and follies. While representing a rich musical tradition, Krishna has also questioned it, shaking the status quo, thus ruffling the feathers. The opposition to his receiving the Sangeet Kalanidhi is not only misplaced, it is steeped in the same issues Krishna has questioned.

The beauty of one's craft is not just in its sensitivity. It also lies in how it's created. The Sangita Kalanidhi is not only well-deserved. It's also a message to the divided world of Carnatic classical music to look within.

history HEADLINE

CHAKSHUROY



IN 1920, Delhi resident Abdul Majid came to the attention of the British government. He was someone who would ordinarily not be on the administration's radar. His description varied from petty trader to sweetmeat seller and confectioner. In November that year, he filed nomination papers to contest an election. Opposing him were a couple of lawyers and a bangle seller. The government dismissed Majid and the bangle seller as "ridiculous candidates".

Come election day, Majid trumped his rivals, securing 288 votes. The lawyer, who came second, got 26 votes. In official records, a British officer described the contest as "...contrary to expectations impudent buffoonery carries the day". With this win, Majid joined a select group of Indians elected to the highest law-making body in the country.

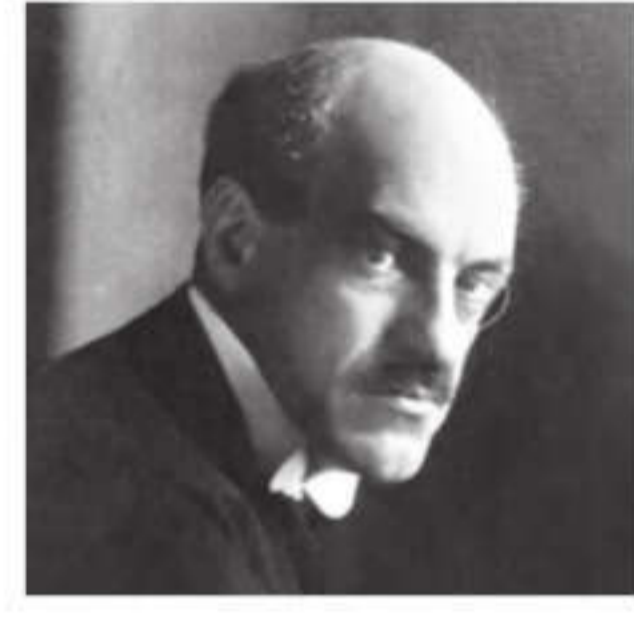
The 1920 elections were the starting point for direct elections in India. Until then, the colonial policy was to select a few educated Indians for the legislature and use them to understand the needs of the masses. However, it became difficult to ignore public sentiment on more Indian representation in legislatures. Our colonial administrators responded in 1909 by increasing Indian members through limited elections. A controversial measure was a separate electorate for Muslims.

The report on Indian Constitutional Reforms 1918 (popularly called the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms) highlighted the shortcomings of the 1909 election process. The report noted, "At present electorates of a general character hardly exist. Almost all are designed to represent special classes or interests and consist of very few persons. Those which represent Muhammadans were intended to be fairly inclusive but even those are limited to a few hundred electors."

The Montagu-Chelmsford report recommended setting up a national legislature with two Houses. One of the Houses in this law-making body would have members directly elected by the people. The report also suggested setting up legislatures at the state level with elected members. The British Parliament accepted these recommendations and passed the Government of India Act, 1919. Until then, there was no need for a full-scale electoral law. However, with these recommendations coming into effect, lawmakers had to be elected by the people. The government needed an electoral framework to hold the first large-scale elections in our country.

The 1919 law and the rules made under it provided the nuts and bolts of the elec-

## 1920: The start of India's election journey



Edwin Montagu (left) and Lord Chelmsford of Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms fame. Wikipedia



tion process. Together, they specified the qualifications for voting and contesting elections, and the mechanism for preparing the electoral roll. Eligible voters and candidates had to be British subjects. The age for voting was 21. For contesting elections, it was 25. Women could neither vote nor contest elections unless the legislature in the state removed the sex disqualification (which they did). The law also provided for different constituencies, such as Muhammadan and non-Muhammadan (rural and urban for both), Sikh, European, Landholders and Chambers of Commerce. Voters and candidates also had to meet domicile, income, and property holding criteria to participate in the elections.

The bewildering array of qualifications for election participation meant that the administrative workload was reduced and resulted in a minimal franchise size. For example, in the election for the national legislative assembly, that Majid contested from the Delhi constituency, there were a total of 3,300 voters.

After the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms became operational, the British government scheduled the first direct elections towards the end of 1920. In August that year, Mahatma Gandhi launched the non-cooperation movement. A part of that movement was to not participate in the election process. Prospective candidates were discouraged from contesting. In some cases, individuals whose success at the ballot had the potential to ridicule the reform process and embarrass the British government were also put up.

In Lahore, the election process turned violent. A government officer reported, "It seems to me that these incidents are the direct results of violent speeches made by

advocates of non-cooperation during the last month or two. Owing to this series of speeches the British Government of India is now hated by the ordinary citizens of Lahore. The gift of responsible government which is being made to India is now despised."

The 1919 law and the elections a year later led to more Indians in the legislature, but the right to vote was the domain of very few Indians. However, there were learnings that independent India's Parliament would build over. For example, the colonial government in 1920 passed a law criminalising threats, bribery and inducement during an election. It penalised these corrupt practices with both jail time and a fine. They were added to the Indian Penal Code and continue to be a part of it. Since Independence, our Parliament has worked towards strengthening legal provisions to keep elections free and fair. However, the most significant step has been ensuring that everyone over 18 is enrolled to vote. Now, roughly a billion Indians will be on the electoral rolls in the upcoming general elections.

Edwin Montagu, the catalyst for the 1920 elections, noted, "The honest education of the electorate is a matter of primary importance. May one who takes an anxious interest in India's future echo the appeal that there should be no appeal to racial or religious prejudices and express the hope that, in the turmoil of an election, the great charm of Indian courtesy may not disappear?" His words are as important today as they were a hundred years ago.

The writer looks at issues through a legislative lens and works at PRS Legislative Research

She SAID

RINKUGHOSH



MUSKAAN RUNS her nimble fingers through the mad, tousled hair that's sitting on my chaotic head. She works out the stress and the knots of worry with it through kneading and rhythmic tapping, moulding me like clay with her intuitive finesse. And just when I am suitably relaxed, she gets me to talk and ramble, as she dribbles hot oil that never quite has the same effect when you attempt the same self-care at home. "Hmm," is all she says as we get into another session of what psychologists are calling "trauma-dumping."

Hairdressers and beauty salon hands are emerging as a woman's new best

## Life lessons from a beauty salon

friend, non-judgmental yet intimate enough to share our thoughts and concerns with. Over the last 10-odd years, Muskaan has literally gotten under my skin as she treated me to the luxury of her undivided attention during a haircut or treatment, even putting her mobile away. I've always appreciated her ability to listen and sense of perspective, but this time it's different.

Pulling out her phone, she shows me a photo montage of all the clicks we had shared after a haircut or styling (that's her way of documenting her work). And in a momentary flash, I see my hair growing shorter and my girth going wider, my 10 year younger self suddenly looking strangely inspirational. If that's the intention, pat comes the truth bomb. "Your hairstyle is still the same, your salon time is still

the same, your weekly routines the same, why isn't your weight? Shouldn't we be looking into it?" she asks, rotating the swivel chair, bouncing up my hair, handing me my complimentary cup of green tea minus the cookie that comes with it.

As I protest, she takes out roasted chana from her bag that she had tossed in peri peri powder. "I made this. You can too. It's so much better. So much protein and fibre, you won't feel hungry and be energetic enough to walk. It's low-fat," she says. As I wonder if the salon had introduced some clandestine way of selling a wellness package, Muskaan tells me how she had signed up for a nutrition course online as she wanted to widen her horizons and help her 60-year-old mother recover from a stroke. And how she herself is getting her body

clock back to a circadian rhythm because it's good for her hair and skin. "It will do wonders for you too," she nudges. Indeed, studies have shown how hair follicles become stronger in daylight hours, while sleep restores our skin.

So Muskaan now wakes up at 4.30 am, goes for a run, packs mini meals for work, doesn't have packaged or outside food, doesn't eat anything after a fruit bowl at 5 pm and sleeps by 9.30 pm. For the first time in years, she shared such intimate details of her life. And the reason she did so was because she sees far too many women in their 50s not care about putting their bodies first, thinking half their lives are over anyway and are content shelving themselves.

Muskaan's maternal aunt has diabetes and kidney issues, her paternal aunt had

caner. "All their lives they took care of their families, did chores and never exercised. And now they are battling illnesses when they should be travelling, relaxing and having fun," she tells me. That's why she is changing her life and encouraging her clients to do the same, as she wants them to stand by her for many more years and take those selves.

Muskaan's story had done what friends, peers and family could not — set me thinking about how women over a certain threshold feel irrelevant, not only to others but to themselves. I had probably been invisibilising myself too, finding letting life pass by was much easier than owning it. Muskaan was no shrink, but in a salon, with hair all in place, she made me want to begin again.



# ECONOMY

## Irdai glare on Hinduja proposal to take over RCap, its insurance arms

GEORGE MATHEW  
MUMBAI, MARCH 30

THE INSURANCE Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) has flagged several issues with the Hinduja group's proposal to take over Reliance Capital Ltd (RCap), an insolvent company in the Anil Ambani-led Reliance group. The proposal was submitted by the RCap administrator, appointed by the Reserve Bank of India, to Irdai for approval.

As the execution of the resolution plan for financially distressed RCap is now in the final lap, administrator Y Nageshwar Rao has sought Irdai's approval for the deal as RCap has three insurance companies — Reliance General Insurance Company, Reliance Nippon Life Insurance Company and Reliance Health Insurance Company.

In February, the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) had approved Hinduja Group firm Indusind International Holdings (IIHL) ₹9,650-crore resolution plan for RCap and later set the date of May 31 to complete the transaction.

The administrator, among other things, has sought approvals for transfer of shares from RCap to a new holding company promoted by the Hinduja group called Aasia Enterprises LLP (AELLP). Ashok PHinduja, youngest of the four Hinduja brothers, Harsha A Hinduja and Shom A Hinduja are the directors of AELLP.

In a letter to the administrator, Irdai said: "The said transaction structure is (an) indicative structure subject to change. You are requested to provide definitive structure, along with details of the entities involved, in order to carry out due-diligence." After initial discussions with the administrator, Irdai has written to it asking for clarifications on some of the fundamental issues involving the deal.

Industry sources said the administrator will now go back to Hinduja group about Irdai's stand on certain issues in the proposal and the group has to make a great deal of changes in the proposal to meet the requirements of Irdai.

"The said transaction structure involves multiple SPVs based outside India. You are requested to provide shareholding pattern and capital structure of the said SPVs including the de-

tails of the said SPVs i.e. name, country of incorporation, year of incorporation etc," Irdai said.

"It is observed that the partnership interest of the AELLP and shares of HoldCo (holding company) of AELLP is proposed to be pledged. Please clarify as to why the same should not be construed as a non-compliance with clause 6 of Schedule 2 of Registration Regulations," Irdai said.

"It is proposed to raise borrowing by the HoldCo or AELLP. Please clarify as to why the same should not be construed as non-compliance with Regulation 6(8)(i) of Registration Regulations," it said.

"AELLP has no major business activity, which indicates AELLP as well as proposed HoldCo are in the nature of SPV," the letter said. The Irdai letter asked the group to provide details of HoldCo.

"The captioned application filed by the insurers do not indicate the consideration to be paid by AELLP for acquisition of shares. You are requested to provide: quantum of consideration to be paid by AELLP, details of recipient of the said consideration and source of funds of said consideration for AELLP," the regulator said.

"As per the structure submitted in the draft response, it is proposed that another company is proposing to acquire entire equity of the RCL, which shall make RCL as a wholly-owned subsidiary of the said another company. Please clarify as to why the same should not be construed as non-compliance with Regulation 2(1)(h)(i) of Registration Regulations," Irdai said.

According to the Irdai letter, it has been informed during discussion with the Administrator, RCL on March 11, 2024, that the RCL will not be having any business operations and will continue to exist as a holding company of various other companies including the insurance companies. "Please clarify as to why the RCL, in view of the same, should not be construed as SPV and therefore, why RCL should not be subject to Regulation 6(3)(iv) of Registration Regulations," it said.

Irdai said, "It is proposed that shares of RCL and IIHL (BFSI) are proposed to be pledged. Please clarify as to why the same should not be construed as a non-compliance with clause 6 of Schedule 2 read with Regulation 6(3)(iv) of Registration Regulations."

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## GDP growth in FY24 seen at 8% or more on average, says Sitharaman

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
MUMBAI, MARCH 30

FINANCE MINISTER Nirmala Sitharaman Saturday said the country's gross domestic product (GDP) will likely grow at an average of 8% or above in the financial year (FY) 2023-24. This is higher than recent data from the National Statistical Office (NSO) which showed that the economy is expected to grow at 7.6% in FY24.

She also said that a third term for the government will see major reforms at the third level of the federal structure — panchayati raj and urban bodies — to encourage businesses to make investments. "When businesses have to start, or investments have to come... they have to be grounded somewhere — at villages or periphery of a city. In those places, if elected bodies are not open, transparent, aware, or ready to be welcoming, everything we do will be on paper and not on the



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

ground," Sitharaman said.

Speaking at an event organised by the *Mint* newspaper, Sitharaman said the country has seen macroeconomic stability with the first three quarters of the current fiscal having registered GDP growth of above 8%. The economy expanded by 8.2% in Q1; 8.1% in Q2; and 8.4% in Q3.

"Hopefully, the fourth quarter which ends tomorrow (March 31) will also have it (growth) in the range of 8 per cent or above 8 per cent, resulting in 2023-24 having an average GDP growth of 8 per cent or over 8 per cent, is what my expectation is," she said.

"We can't grow at 8 per cent without consumption happening," she said, referring to comments made by experts on tepid

### FM: OPP IS RAISING DIVISIVE ISSUES LIKE NORTH-SOUTH DEBATE

Mumbai: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Saturday accused the Opposition of running a 'remove-Modi' agenda by raising issues such as the North-South debate and caste. "The divisive language with which India is being treated again, which was done for 70 years, is this North-South divide... is this vituperative language (meant for) a religion and very kind language for some other religion? This division doesn't hold good in the face of things PM Narendra Modi does," she said. **ENS**

consumption conditions.

Sitharaman said inflation management is far better now compared to the years before

2014 when it was in double-digits. "We are playing in tandem with the RBI in making sure inflation is well within the tolerance band. Food inflation, particularly, is being contained. Seasonal shortages in food do spike up inflation, but that is also under control because there is a group of ministers who are looking at it," she said.

In February, the CPI or retail inflation stayed flat at 5.09% against 5.1% in January.

The Finance Minister said the banking sector's health has improved with banks now providing rich dividends to the government. Banks' non-performing assets (NPA) levels are coming down and they will come down in the next few months, she said.

A recent report by Care Ratings has projected gross NPAs of banks to be at 2.5-2.7% in FY24, and improve to 2.1-2.4% by the end of FY25.

Sitharaman said public sector banks are now being nudged to be a lot more professional in handling

their affairs. These lenders are able to raise money for development activities and are no longer looking at the government to infuse capital every year, she said.

Sitharaman also said the tax notices are being sent by the Income Tax Department under the Central Board of Direct Taxes because of the approaching time-barring deadline for assessment years on March 31. Cases are not being opened beyond six years unless the amount involved is substantial or some search or some seizure somewhere has given reason to think that this particular account has to be opened, she said.

"...many notices which are being sent now are because they have to start honouring that six-year time limitation. And the last assessment year, which comes into the six-year limitation, beyond which they can't open up. This 31 March is when the time bar is imposed on the tax authorities themselves, meaning they can't open it up on 1 April..." she said.

## US updates curbs on export of AI chips and tools to China

REUTERS  
WASHINGTON, MARCH 29

THE BIDEN administration on Friday revised rules aimed at making it harder for China to access US artificial intelligence (AI) chips and chipmaking tools, part of an effort to hobble Beijing's chipmaking industry over national security concerns.

The rules, released in October, seek to halt shipments to China of more advanced AI chips designed by Nvidia and others as Washington cracks down on Beijing over concerns its advancing tech sector could help boost China's military. The new rules, which run 166 pages, go into effect on Thursday. They clarify, for example, that restrictions on chip shipments to China also apply to laptops containing those chips.

The Commerce Department has said it plans to continue updating its restrictions on technology shipments to China as it seeks to bolster and fine-tune the measures.

## No. of unsold homes down in last 3 months: Report

Unsold housing stock fell 7% in the last three months in nine major cities to around 4.81 lakh units as sales were higher than supplies, according to realty analytics firm PropEquity



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"The said transaction structure involves multiple SPVs based outside India. You are requested to provide shareholding pattern and capital structure of the said SPVs including the de-

### Sales outweigh launches in Jan-Mar 2024\*

Housing sales: 1,44,656 units  
New launches: 1,05,134 units

The nine cities are Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, Thane, Delhi-NCR (Delhi, Gurugram, Noida, Greater Noida, Ghaziabad and Faridabad), Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, Chennai and Kolkata.

As per the data, Pune saw the highest fall in the unsold housing stocks — 13% — to 65,788 units at the end of this month from 75,521 units at the end of December 2023.

In Delhi-NCR, the unsold inventories came down 12% to 27,959 units from 31,602 units.

Unsold stock in Mumbai fell 11% to 48,399 units from 54,633 units.

Unsold housing stocks in Bengaluru fell 5% to 44,837 units from 47,370 units.

\*Data for nine major cities; Source: PropEquity, Text: PTI

## Forex kitty up \$140 mn, hits fresh peak of \$642.63 bn

Mumbai: India's forex reserves rose by \$140 million to touch its all-time high of \$642.631 billion during the week ended March 22, the Reserve Bank of India said.

This is the fifth straight week of a jump in overall reserves. The kitty had increased by \$6.396 bil-

lion to \$642.492 billion in the previous reporting week. The previous peak level was recorded in September 2021 at \$642.453 billion.

For the week ended March 22, foreign currency assets, a major component, fell by \$123 mil-

lion to \$568.264 billion, the data released on Friday showed.

The foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. **PTI**

## 'With AI, smartwatches can think, give hyper-personalised insights'

THIS MONTH, Tata Group's Titan entered into a strategic partnership with CueZen, a Seattle-based artificial intelligence (AI) platform for health, to bolster its smart wearables offerings as consumer demand for smartwatches continues to rise following the pandemic. **RAJ NERAVATI**, Chief Product & Technology Officer (CPTO) at Titan Smart Wearables, speaks to **AGGAM WALIA** about trends in demand for smartwatches, the role of AI in shaping user experience, and emerging use cases. Excerpts:



THE EXPRESS  
INTERVIEW  
WITH  
**RAJ NERAVATI**  
CHIEF PRODUCT & TECHNOLOGY OFFICER, TITAN SMART WEARABLES

driven, premium-looking products. They are also opting for mesh and metal straps.

### How does Titan plan to leverage its partnership with CueZen?

CueZen brings a very interesting dimension to us, which is about behaviour management. If you look at consumer archetypes, we have lifestyle-based consumers who are happy-go-lucky and buy a watch because they are generally interested. Then, there is a segment of users that wants to gain or lose weight, there are athletes, and there are those who want to monitor some health conditions. Of all these, around 80% of our customer base is lifestyle users. These people buy a smartwatch with a sense of excitement, which typically lasts anywhere between three to six months. But then, there is monotony. You get your data over a period of time and it eventually becomes static. The minute it becomes static,

you're bored. Your smartwatch becomes a notification device or just to change the watch faces. The interest level drops from 100 to 30%. This is based on behavioural analysis we've done.

How do we meaningfully engage with this lifestyle audience? This is where we utilise CueZen to use AI to create personas of users. We start hyper-personalising the entire behaviour for the watch so that instead of you adapting to the watch, the watch is reverse adapting to your lifestyle and starts giving you meaningful insights, personalised to your behaviour. With this, the whole game is different because now the watch thinks.

### What are some emerging use cases for smart wearables?

Health is one big use case. Sleep tracking has become very big. Logically, for the next feature people would definitely ask for electrocardiogram (ECG), which has to be clinical grade otherwise it doesn't make any sense.

Unfortunately, the average consumer doesn't understand the difference between a clinical-grade versus a regular ECG yet, but it is something they will aspire for. People are also looking for blood pressure monitoring. The next level of upgrade would be dealing with noninvasive continuous glucose monitoring. The second use case that will emerge, but is still in very early stages, is controlling your home automation. The third will be community-based engagements where you are running or cycling — we will see a lot more of corporate wellness.

### Is the smartwatch market concentrated in Tier-1 cities or is more spread out? Also, in terms of sales channels, what does the offline/online mix look like?

People in Tier-4 cities and small villages are also adopting smartwatches. I do not see that as a Tier-1 phenomenon. At Titan, we position Fastrack as our entry point because India is a very price-sensitive market and a lot of consumers want to try out smartwatches at an entry level. We have Fastrack as a brand where you get it but then from there, we have different products at different price points.

For watches below ₹5,000, 70-80% of the market has moved online. Anything that is above ₹5,000 going to ₹10,000, it's the other way around — 80% of the market is offline. People want to have that touch and feel experience to buy it.

**POSTGRADUATE INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL EDUCATION & RESEARCH CHANDIGARH**

**Global Tender Enquiry Notice No. PI(EP)/23-24/G/06 Phone No. 0172-2756469**

Tender applications are invited for purchase of various items against tender No. 1-35 from the Manufacturers or their sole authorized distributors/agents. The bidders can place their bids as per terms & conditions contained on <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>.

S. No	Equipment/Item Name	Qty.	EMD (Rs.)	Bid submission Date	Bid Opening Date	Dept Name
<b>Pre Bid case</b>						
1	Echo and USG Machine	04Nos.	14,00,000/-	02-05-2024	03-05-2024	CTVS & Anaesthesia
2	HDR Brachytherapy on buy back basis of the existing Micro Selection HDR in Cobalt Block	01No.	9,00,000/-	-do-	-do-	Radiotherapy
3	Electrical Impedance Tomography	04Nos.	7,00,000/-	-do-	-do-	Pulmonary Medicine
4	Digital Non Mydriatic Fundus Camera (retina clinic)	01No.	6,00,000/-	-do-	-do-	AEC
5	Cardiopulmonary Bypass Machine	02Nos.	5,50,000/-	04-05-2024	06-05-2024	CTVS
6	High End Operating Microscope	01No.	5,00,000/-	-do-	-do-	ENT
7	Portable Mobile Endoscopy Unit	01No.	5,00,000/-	-do-	-do-	Hepatology
8	Automated Identification and Antibiotic Susceptible System	01No.	4,00,000/-	-do-	-do-	Medical Microbiology
9	Portable Mobile Endoscopy Unit	01No.	4,00,000/-	-do-	-do-	Hepatology
10	Fully Automated IHC Stainer	02Nos.	4,00,000/-	06-05-2024	07-05-2024	Histopathology
11	Echo and USG Machine	01No.	3,40,000/-	-do-	-do-	Gastroenterology
12	Holmium Laser 100W	01No.	3,00,000/-	-do-	-do-	Paed Surgery
13	Laparoscopic Surgical Set with High Definition Camera	01No.	2,50,000/-	-do-	-do-	Renal Transplant Surgery
14	Radiofrequency Generator with integrated vessel sealing and cutting system	02Nos.	2,40,000/-	-do-	-do-	Gastroenterology
15	Portable Mobile Endoscopy Unit	01No.	2,10,000/-	07-05-2024	08-05-2024	Gastroenterology
16	Pediatric high resolution fibre flexible bronchoscope with recorder and screen display	02Nos.	2,00,000/-	-do-	-do-	Anaesthesia
17	Cavitron Ultrasonic Surgical Aspirator (CUSA)	01No.	2,00,000/-	-do-	-do-	Neurosurgery
18	ECHO and USG Machine	01No.	1,80,000/-	-do-	-do-	Pulmonary Medicine
19	Automated Nucleic Acid Purification System (96 Well)	02Nos.	1,80,000/-	-do-	-do-	Hematology
20	Automated Slide Stainer	01No.	1,20,000/-	08-05-2024	09-05-2024	Immunopathology
21	Automated Immunoassay (chemiluminescence based)-Fully Automated with UPS back up	01 No.	1,60,000/-	-do-	-do-	Biochemistry (SGR)
22	ECHO and USG Machine	01No.	1,60,000/-	-do-	-do-	Anaesthesia
23	Pediatric Bronchoscope Set	01No.	1,50,000/-	-do-	-do-	Pediatrics
24	Next Generation Sequencer-Lower Version	01No.	1,40,000/-	-do-	-do-	Stem Cell
25	Radiofrequency Generator with integrated vessel sealing and cutting system	01No.	1,00,000/-	09-05-2024	10-05-2024	GI Surgery, HPB, Liver Transplantation
26	Vacuum Assisted Tissue Processor	02Nos.	2,40,000/-	-do-	-do-	Histopathology & Cytology
27	Flow Cytometer Advanced (with Buy Back)	01No.	12,00,000/-	-do-	-do-	Hematology
28	HPLC Based Automated Analyser for HbA1C/Hemoglobinopathy Testing on a buy-back basis	01No.	1,00,000/-	-do-	-do-	Hematology
<b>Non-Pre Bid case</b>						
29	ICP Monitor (Buy Back)	03Nos.	90,000/-	18-04-2024	19-04-2024	Pediatrics
30	Pediatric Bronchoscope Set	01No.	50,000/-	-do-	-do-	Pediatrics
31	Pediatric Bronchoscope Set	01No.	50,000/-	-do-	-do-	Pediatrics
32	Immunoassay (Chemiluminescence based) fully automated with UPS backup	01No.	50,000/-	22-04-2024	23-04-2024	Pharmacology
33	Digital Non-Mydriatic Fundus Camera	01No.	20,000/-	-do-	-do-	AEC
34	Sweat Collection and Chloride Estimation	01No.	30,000/-	-do-	-do-	Pediatrics
35	Automated Clinical Electrophoresis with Buyback	01No.	60,000/-	-do-	-do-	Hematology

Tender document can also be downloaded from website [www.pgimer.edu.in](http://www.pgimer.edu.in) and can be applied on website [www.eprocure.gov.in](http://www.eprocure.gov.in). Bid Security (EMD) should be for the amount as per tender documents either in the form of Account Payee Demand Draft, or Fixed Deposit Receipts (FDR), Banker's Cheque or Bank Guarantee Form issued by Scheduled Commercial Bank having its validity at least for one year & duly pledged in favour of Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh. The tenders will be opened on the dates given above at 12:00 PM in the presence of the authorized intending tenderers. Tenders not submitted on the prescribed form, not accompanied with Bid Security shall be summarily rejected. The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders received without assigning any reason thereof. "PRE-BID CONFERENCE" WITH INTENDING BIDDERS FOR ITEM Sr. No. 01 to 28 shall be held on 24.04.2024 from 03:00 P.M. ONWARDS IN THE P.I.E.P., OFFICE, PGIMER, CHANDIGARH. The intending bidders are free to join Pre bid Conference through video conference. For more details contact: 0172-2756469 at Procurement Branch (Import).

**NOTE 1.** The terms and Conditions of the original Notice Inviting Tender (NIT) available on PGIMER Website will remain same. However on switching over to e-tendering on e-Procurement, the bids will be received in electronic form on e-Procurement website and no bid will be received in Physical form. The EMD will be received in Physical form in Procurement Branch (Import) and scan copy is to be uploaded in electronic form on e-Procurement website, CPPP Portal (Central Public Procurement Portal).

**NOTE 2.** If any of the tender opening dates happens to be a holiday in PGIMER, Chandigarh, then the same shall be opened on next full working day.

**Additional Terms and Conditions.**

- The Institute has adopted amended Notice Inviting Tenders (NIT) which is available on e-Procurement website (<https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>) and Website: [www.pgimer.edu.in](http://www.pgimer.edu.in). Therefore the bidders are requested to go through the Instructions Carefully before submitting bids.
- The above items are relaxed to invite Global Tender Enquiry under rule 161 (IV) of G.F.R. rules 2017, therefore Para 5 of Annexure 'A' of NIT will not be applicable in these cases.

**Professor In-Charge (EP)**





FORTY-YEAR TRADITION ENDS

## CHINA'S MACAO HOLDS ITS FINAL HORSE RACE

After more than 40 years, Macao's horse racing track hosted its final races on Saturday, bringing an end to the sport in the city famous for casinos. In January, the city government said it would terminate its contract with the Macao Jockey Club in April. The decision came at the request of Macao Horse Race Company, which cited operational challenges as part of reasons for closure.

## TOP OF THE WORLD



The suspect being detained. Reuters

THE NETHERLANDS  
Hostage drama ends with arrest of suspect

Ede: A hostage drama at a nightclub in the eastern Netherlands ended peacefully after several hours on Saturday with the arrest of a suspect — a man wearing a balaclava mask who exited the building and surrendered to police. "The last hostage has just been released. One person has been arrested," a police statement said. "We cannot share more information at this time." Several people, including employees, had been taken hostage at the Cafe Petticoat in the town of Ede early on Saturday morning. The motive was unclear. Officials said the suspect, who was previously known to police, had threatened the hostages with knives. REUTERS

CHINA  
65th anniversary of Tibet takeover celebrated

Beijing: China, which is building numerous villages in Tibet close to its borders with India and Bhutan, has held several celebratory events to mark its takeover of Tibet in the new border villages with a mix of border troops and the local population, the official media here reported. China, which refers to Tibet by its Chinese name Xizang, in recent years as part of new nomenclature of all references to the Tibetan region celebrates March 28 as democratic reform day in the Himalayan region marking the end of the rule of the Dalai Lama, who fled to India in 1959. Chinese troops took over Tibet in 1951. PTI

UNITED KINGDOM  
Indian-origin teen 1st to get new cancer treatment

London: Yuvan Thakkar, an Indian-origin teenager diagnosed with cancer, says he is now able to enjoy the things he loves after life-changing treatment thanks to a fund set up by the UK's state-funded National Health Service to make innovative therapies accessible to thousands of patients. According to NHS England, 16-year-old Thakkar from Watford near London was the first child in the UK to benefit from a pioneering CAR T therapy called tisagenlecleucel thanks to its Cancer Drugs Fund. PTI

PAKISTAN  
PIA suspends crew member after detention

Islamabad: Pakistan's ailing flag carrier PIA has suspended a crew member after she was briefly detained by Canadian customs authorities along with two others for carrying the passport of an unrelated person, according to a media report on Saturday. Hina Sani was detained along with two other crew members who were also on duty with her on flight PK-789 from Lahore to Toronto, the Dawn reported. PTI



SEA AID: A cargo ship (right) and a ship belonging to the Open Arms aid group outside the Cypriot port of Larnaca, Cyprus, on Saturday. Ships carrying 332 tonnes of food left Larnaca port on Saturday in a convoy which will reach Gaza early next week. It is the second shipment, sourced by US charity World Central Kitchen (WCK), for Palestinians. AP

## Dispute over exemption to group from military service poses fresh threat to Bibi

PATRICK KINGSLEY & JOHNATAN REISS  
JERUSALEM, MARCH 30

ISRAELI PRIME Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is facing his most challenging political threat since the start of the Israel-Hamas war because of a disagreement among members of his coalition about whether ultra-Orthodox Jews should retain their long-standing exemption from military service.

An unwieldy right-wing alliance of secular and ultra-Orthodox lawmakers, the coalition's members are divided about whether the state should continue to allow young ultra-Orthodox men to study at religious seminaries instead of serving in the military as most other Jewish Israelis do. If the government abolishes the exemption, it risks a walkout from the ultra-Orthodox lawmakers; if it lets the exemption stand, the secular members could withdraw. Either way, the coalition could collapse.



Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

The situation poses the gravest challenge to Netanyahu's grip on power since Hamas raided Israel on Oct. 7, prompting Israel to invade Hamas' stronghold in the Gaza Strip. The end of the coalition would probably lead to new elections, and polling suggests that Netanyahu would not win.

The ultra-Orthodox have been exempt from military service since the founding of Israel in 1948, but as the numbers of the ultra-Orthodox have grown so have resentment and anger over these privileges.

The issue came to the fore Thursday night when the government announced that the coalition had not agreed on an extension to the exemption by April 1, when the exemption elapses. That news prompted the

## TROOPS KILLED TWO ON GAZA BEACH: ISRAEL ADMITS AFTER VIDEO

Gaza: Israeli troops shot dead two Palestinians and wounded a third on Gaza's beach, the military acknowledged Saturday, responding to an Al Jazeera video that showed one man falling to the ground after walking in an open area and then a bulldozer pushing two bodies into the garbage-strewn sand. The military said troops opened fire after the men allegedly ignored warning shots. AP

Supreme Court to instruct the government to suspend special educational subsidies that support seminary students if those students have failed to answer their military call-ups. The court's decision spurred outrage among ultra-Orthodox leaders. NYT

## 3 UN observers, translator injured in Lebanon blast

Beirut: Three United Nations observers and a translator were wounded on Saturday when a shell exploded near them as they were carrying out a foot patrol in south Lebanon, the U.N. peacekeeping mission said, adding it was still investigating the origin of the blast. The UN peacekeeping mission known as UNIFIL, as well as unarmed technical observers known as UNTSO, are stationed in southern Lebanon to monitor hostilities along the demarcation line between Lebanon and Israel. Hezbollah has been trading fire with the Israeli military since October in parallel with the war in Gaza.

UNIFIL said that the targeting of peacekeepers is "unacceptable" and that the wounded staff had been evacuated for treatment. REUTERS

## Zelensky fires more aides as Russia strikes across Ukraine

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
KYIV, MARCH 30

UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT Volodymyr Zelensky dismissed a longtime aide and several advisers on Saturday in a continuing reshuffle while Russia unleashed fresh attacks overnight.

Zelensky dismissed top aide Serhiy Shefir from his post of first assistant, where he had served since 2019. The Ukrainian president also let go three advisers, and two presidential representatives overseeing volunteer activities and soldiers' rights. No explanation was given immediately for the latest changes in a wide-reaching personnel shakeup over recent months. It included the dismissal on Tuesday of Oleksii Danilov, who served as secretary of the National Security and Defense Council, and Valerii Zaluzhnyi as head of the armed forces on Feb. 8. He was appointed Ukraine's ambassador to the United Kingdom earlier this month.

Ukraine's air force said Saturday that Russia launched 12 Shahed drones overnight, nine of which were shot down, and fired four missiles into east-



A woman with a portrait of her son Evgeny, who served in Russian armed forces and was killed in the battle, inside her apartment at Luganske in the Donetsk region. Reuters

ern Ukraine. Russia unleashed a barrage of 38 missiles, 75 airstrikes and 98 attacks from multiple rocket launchers over the last 24 hours, Ukraine's armed forces said in social media posts.

Ukrainian energy company Centrenergy announced Saturday that the Zmiiv Thermal Power Plant, one of the largest thermal power plants in the eastern Kharkiv region, was completely destroyed following Russian shelling last week. Power outage schedules were still in place for around 120,000

## Biden: Most of world leaders told me not to let Trump win

'It would put democracies in danger'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW YORK, MARCH 30

MAKING A forceful case for his re-election, US President Joe Biden has claimed that during his meetings with world leaders, including at the G20 summit in India, almost every one of them told him not to let his predecessor Donald Trump win in 2024 as they feel it would put their democracies in danger.

Former Presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton also joined Biden on Thursday night in New York at the most lucrative fundraiser of the 2024 campaign, warning fellow Democrats that Trump, a Republican, must be defeated.

"Trump says if he loses again — again in November, there will be a 'bloodbath.' What the hell is with this guy? No, I'm — I'm not — no, I'm really serious. It concerns me the most," Biden said.

"And — but whether it's the G20 meeting in — in India or whatever the meeting where there are other heads of state, I am not exaggerating when I say — and I say it in front of the press without giving the names — almost every one of the world leaders finds an excuse to get me alone for a moment, put their hand on my arm, and say, 'You can't let him win.'"

"My" — meaning his country or her country — "my democracy is at stake. My democracy is at

TRUMP POSTS VIDEO OF HOG-TIED BIDEN

Washington: Presumptive Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump has drawn criticism for posting a video on social media that contains the image of a hog-tied President Joe Biden painted on the tailgate of a passing truck. The Biden campaign was quick to condemn the video for suggesting physical harm to the sitting Democratic president. Trump campaign spokesman Steven Cheung responded Friday night: "That picture was on the back of a truck that was traveling down the highway. PTI

stake," he said.

India hosted the G20 Summit in New Delhi for the first time from September 9-10. Biden also slammed Trump for walking away from NATO.

"This is a guy who walked away from NATO... told Putin he could do whatever he wants if they're not paying their dues," Biden said. All Americans including Democrats, independents, and Republicans should say that there is no place ever for political violence, for physical violence in the country's political system, he said.



## In first conviction in May 9 violence, 51 PTI supporters get 5-yr jail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
ISLAMABAD, MARCH 30

A PAKISTANI court Saturday convicted 51 supporters of former prime minister Imran Khan for five years of rigorous imprisonment on two counts for their involvement in attacking key military installations last year.

In May last year, Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) supporters had allegedly attacked several military installations, including the army headquarters in Rawalpindi and the ISI building in Faisalabad, to vent their anger against the arrest of their party founder in a corruption case. This is the first conviction in the cases registered against the PTI leaders, workers and supporters in connection with the May 9 riots.

The convicts include PTI lawmaker Kaleemullah Khan.

The anti-terrorism court (ATC), Gujranwala handed down a year-long term to 51 supporters of PTI on two counts for attacking the Gujranwala Cantonment (some 80 km from Lahore), law enforcement agencies personnel and



Jeffrey Donaldson

## Ireland: Charged with sexual offence, DUP chief steps down from party post

THE NEW YORK TIMES  
LONDON, MARCH 30

JEFFREY DONALDSON, leader of the Democratic Unionist Party and one of Northern Ireland's most prominent and influential politicians, resigned his leadership of the party Friday, after being charged with "historical" sex offences. The resignation, which sent shock waves through Northern Irish politics, was announced in a statement from the DUP, which said it was also suspending Donaldson as a party member pending a judicial process. The party said that it had received a letter from Donaldson, the longest-serving member of Parliament in Northern Ireland, "confirming that he has been charged with allegations of an historical nature and indicating that he is stepping down as leader."

Earlier Friday the Police Service of Northern Ireland said that it had "charged a 61-year-old man for non-recent sexual offences." It added that "a 57-year-old woman was also arrested and charged at the time for aiding and abetting additional offenses." In line with British police practice, the statement did not state the identities of those charged, but said they would appear in a magistrates court on April 24. The DUP, whose members are mainly Protestant, wants Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom, and Donaldson is a member of the British Parliament in London. He was honored with a knighthood for political service by Queen Elizabeth II in 2016.

## 'INTEL INTERFERENCE IN JUDICIARY': CABINET NOD TO PROBE PANEL

Islamabad: Pakistan's cabinet Saturday approved the constitution of an inquiry commission led by former Supreme Court chief justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani to probe the allegations of the Islamabad High Court judges about the interference of intelligence agencies in their work. The one-member commission would hold an inquiry into the allegations levelled by the judges through a letter and submit its report in 60 days. PTI

torching police vehicles. According to a court official, the court also imposed a fine of PKR 10,000 on each of them.

The proceedings of the cases against the convict remained in-camera. In the May 9 violence in Gujranwala, one PTI worker was killed and scores of PTI workers and policemen were injured.

## 13 YEARS AGO, A STORK LANDED ON A FISHERMAN'S BOAT FOR FOOD; MIGRATORY BIRD HAS COME BACK EVERY YEAR SINCE

## A stork, a fisherman and their unlikely friendship enchant Turkey

BEN HUBBARD & AFAK TIMUR  
MARCH 30

THIRTEEN YEARS ago, a poor fisherman in a small Turkish village was retrieving his net from a lake when he heard a noise behind him and turned to find a majestic being standing on the bow of his rowboat.

Gleaming white feathers covered its head, neck and chest, yielding to black plumes on its wings. It stood atop skinny orange legs that nearly matched the color of its long, pointy beak.

The fisherman, Adem Yilmaz, recognised it as one of the white storks that had long summered in the village, he recalled, but he had never seen one so close, much less hosted one on his boat. Wondering if it was hungry, he tossed it a fish, which the bird devoured. He tossed another. And another.

So began an unlikely tale of man and bird that has captivated Turkey as the passing years — and a deft social media campaign by a local nature photographer — have spread the pair's story as a modern-day fable of cross-species friendship.



Adem Yilmaz in his fishing boat with his stork companion, Yaren, in Eskikaraagac, Turkey, March 20, 2024. NYT

The stork, nicknamed Yaren (Turkish for "companion"), not only returned to Yilmaz's boat repeatedly that first year, the fisherman said, but after migrating south for the winter, returned the next spring to the same village, the same nest — and the same boat.

Last month, after Yaren appeared in the village for the 13th year in a row, the local news media gleefully covered his arrival like the springtime sighting of a Turkish Punxstawney Phil.

The pair's story has brought unexpected fame, but no serious fortune, to Yilmaz, 70, and

Yaren, estimated to be 17. They have co-starred in a children's book and an award-winning documentary. A children's adventure movie featuring a cameo by Yilmaz (and a digital rendering of the stork) is expected to debut in cinemas across Turkey this year.

Stork lovers everywhere can watch Yaren and his partner, Nazli (Turkish for "coquette"), as they preen, contort their necks, clack their beaks, renovate their nest and occasionally mate, thanks to a 24-hour webcam set up by the local government.

"This is not a tale. This is a

true story," Ali Ozkan, mayor of Karacabey.

The bird's celebrity has bolstered municipal efforts to increase local tourism with walking paths and coffee shops near the district's lakes and wetlands, he said. The story has put Yilmaz's village of Eskikaraagac — population 235 — on the map, drawing groups of students and tourists who stroll its narrow streets to see the storks and take boat rides on neighboring Lake Ulubat. Many visitors seek out Yaren's nest, which sits on a platform atop an electric pole near Yilmaz's house. NYT



BRIDGE

Dealer: South Vulnerable: North/South

<b>NORTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>
♠ AQ8	♣ K63
♥ 982	♥ J103
♦ 863	♦ J1092
♣ KQ54	♠ 1063

**WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH**

pass 3NT pass pass

South plays in 3NT with the lead of the seven of hearts. East puts up his ten and that forces out the King. South leads the Jack of spades and finesse it to East's King. What should East do, and why?

Some players malign the rule of eleven but it does have its good moments. East wants to know whether to lead a heart back to switch to another suit. Can you tell him that the rule of eleven will give you the answer?

If you think West is leading fourth best, you use the rule of eleven to see if this is so. Seven from eleven is four. Four cards higher than the seven in the North, East, and South seats. At trick one when the dummy came down, East noticed that dummy had the nine and eight of hearts and East has the Jack and ten. If the seven of hearts is fourth best, it means that East's ten will win the trick because South ought not to have a higher heart. But South took his King. What do you lead back?

West can not have a strong heart suit. The strongest his hearts can be at this point is AQ7xx, and that would mean that he had led the seven which is his third best, not his fourth best. The conclusion that East should make is that West has led top of nothing, not low from a good holding.

If East draws this conclusion, he will know there is no future in hearts and will look for another suit. The West hand: S-752H-7654D-AQ54C-J9. The South hand: S-J1094H-AKQD-K7C-A872

Diamonds are a logical choice and East takes a stab at them by leading the Jack. Four diamond tricks later, East is thinking the rule of eleven for helping him see that the heart suit was not worth pursuing.

Dealer: North Vulnerable: North/South

<b>NORTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>
♠ 106	♠ 97
♥ 10874	♥ KQJ9
♦ AKQ	♦ J832
♣ KJ82	♣ A54

**West North East South**

10♣ pass 1S♠

pass 1NT pass 4♣♠

pass 4♥♥ pass 6S♠

pass pass pass

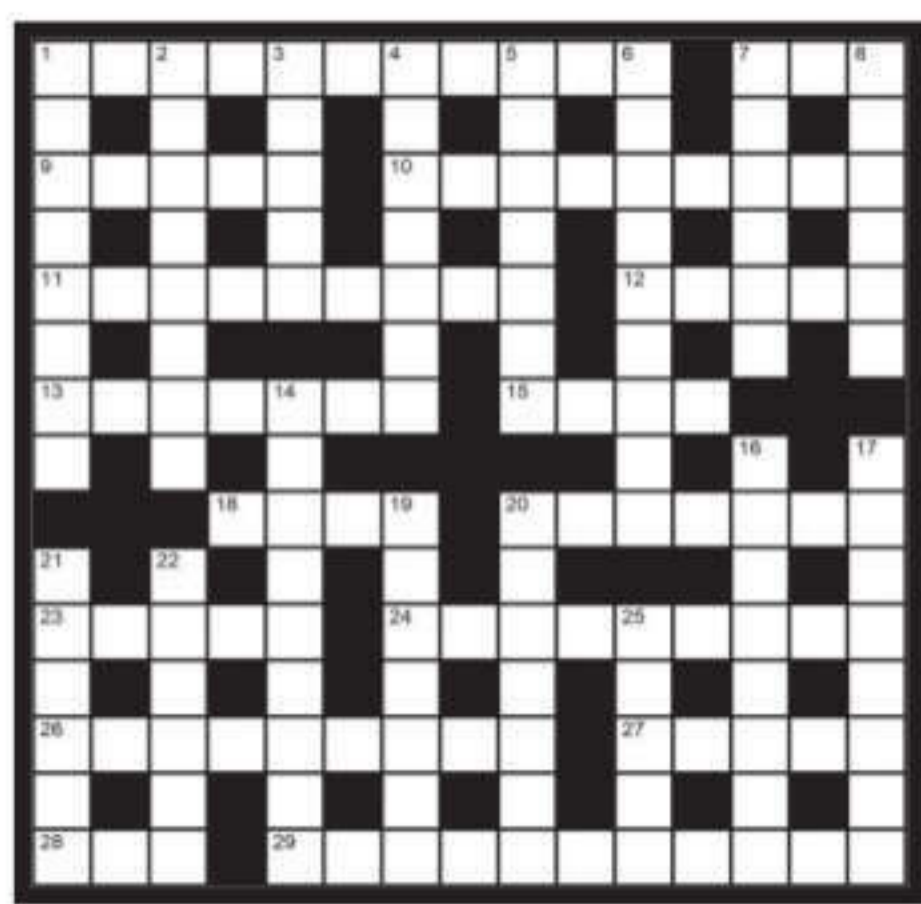
North opens 1C and South responds with 1S and on the next round asks for aces with his Gerber bid. North shows an ace and South bids 6S. West leads the six of clubs. Dummy plays the Jack and you win. What do you return?

SUNDAY CROSSWORD 2471

- QUICK CLUES ACROSS**
- Relevant instance (4,2,5)
  - International racketeer gp.?(3)
  - Die Hard star Willis (5)
  - Bruise (9)
  - The astronomical measure of large distances (5,4)
  - Feline, furtive or skulking (5)
  - Makes gentle sounds as of leaves blowing in gentle breeze?(7)
  - Printer's direction (4)
  - Male offspring (4)
  - Legal authority (7)
  - Russian mountains (5)
  - Severity (9)
  - An old person (9)
  - Popular tourist destination in North India (5)
  - Spasmoid twitch (3)
  - Marches or cavalcades (11)

- DOWN**
- They repair shoes (8)
  - Slow-moving (8)
  - That is to Cato (2,3)
  - Small parcels or big envelopes? (7)
  - Disregards (7)
  - Baton (9)
  - Arm joints (6)
  - Harasses or bothers (6)
  - Be quick in a rather smart manner? (4,5)
  - Where Napoleon did surrender (8)
  - Puts out again (8)
  - Playful musical movement (7)
  - Extraordinary occurrence? (7)
  - Plan of spending (6)
  - Cloth (6)
  - Treks (5)

- CRYPTIC CLUES ACROSS**
- A hill town where speed of progress is restricted (5-2,4)
  - Douglas might identify one in the Republic of Ireland (3)
  - Family supply (5)
  - Overtime for the small part actor? (5,4)
  - A crowd attempts to gamble with a lack of guts (9)
  - Pulls Americans (5)
  - No one left as ideal partner? (2,5)
  - That comes at last, or after it before the soldier (4)
  - Act up about one making an unhappy sound (4)
  - Ah, using new ways to cause pain! (7)
  - Old and wise American Indian (5)



- Person examining involvement of tsar with court (9)
- Rebs to can fresh edible crustacean from southern states (5,4)
- Joined together... with eggs, by the sound of it (5)
- What a blow backwards and forwards this can deliver! (3)
- Keep soft here, they help to keep our homes dry (4-7)
- Five-year period of craving spirit (7)
- New bio-race requiring oxygen (7)
- Five hundred over paper money, for a change, indicates inflation (6)
- Uncouth person may go a lot astray (6)
- Cheers with plaything vowels? (2,3)

Solutions to 2470

- QUICK CLUES ACROSS:**
- Cockpits, 5
  - Samosa, 9
  - Creating, 10
  - Smitty, 12
  - Resisting, 13
  - Sloth, 14
  - Eton, 16
  - Skinner, 19
  - Marquee, 21
  - Pins, 24
  - Haiku, 25
  - Aborigine, 27
  - Shiver, 28
  - Rigorous, 29
  - Sights, 30
  - Fondness, 31
  - Cicero, 2
  - Cheesy, 3
  - Putts, 4
  - Tension, 6
  - Admission, 7
  - Outgoing, 8
  - Anywhere, 11
  - Eggs, 15
  - Truculent, 17
  - Emphasis, 18
  - Training, 20
  - Erst, 21
  - Proviso, 22
  - Ploose, 23
  - Versus, 26
  - Hold, 27
- CRYPTIC CLUES ACROSS:**
- Backlash, 5
  - Ever-so, 9
  - Unbutton, 10
  - Bright, 12
  - Ding-a-ling, 13
  - Limbo, 14
  - Mobs, 16
  - Engines, 19
  - Morale, 21
  - Vats, 24
  - Align, 25
  - Horse-shoe, 27
  - Evaded, 28
  - Bedsores, 29
  - Treads, 30
  - Ayrshire, 31
  - Bounds, 2
  - Cabins, 3
  - Lotta, 4
  - Stories, 6
  - Vergil, 7
  - Regiment, 8
  - Outhouse, 11
  - Ogle, 15
  - Onionweed, 17
  - Immanent, 18
  - Dracago, 20
  - Ha ha, 21
  - Variety, 22
  - Chichi, 23
  - Jessie, 26
  - East's

If it's your Birthday

**Sunday March 31**  
A fresh-faced Moon signifies a bold new start. You'll be ready to make the most of your many talents, but you have to be prepared to strip away dead wood.

**Monday April 1**  
You'll be juggling commitments and you may be a little more emotional than usual. You'll also be putting your ideas forward with confidence, and you'll be persuading partners.

**Tuesday April 2**  
The Moon begins a new pattern very soon, continuing its empowering role in your life. You are therefore set for a full fair share of emotional warmth.

**Wednesday April 3**  
The coming year is one of personal opportunity. The main word of advice is not to make demands on partners that they can never fulfil.

**Thursday April 4**  
Mars is pounding its way through your chart, upping your energy level and generally lending you that extra bit of oomph necessary if you are to succeed.

**Friday April 5**  
You're about to have a second chance to take a long-term decision. You have another couple of weeks before you need make up your mind again.

**Saturday April 6**  
Events seem to be shifting for the better, and over the next few weeks you'll be made more aware of the need to take a down-to-earth and practical approach to almost everything.

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

**ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)**  
Mercury is changing its position, becoming more intense. Wild ideas will be flowing thick and fast although it's likely that some will be too impractical to implement. But then there are times when even your best-laid plans just don't work out.

**LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)**  
Venus's current location signifies that whatever troubles you encounter, you'll bounce back. Saturn is advising caution, so you'd be advised to tread carefully in personal matters. You have no intention of upsetting someone you rely upon.

**TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)**  
Someone, probably a close partner, deserves your affection. Don't hold back, because appreciation of what has been done on your behalf will guarantee good relations in the future. Monetary stars look best around the middle of the week.

**SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)**  
A happy atmosphere at home may be knocked off course by a personal surprise. Partners and loved ones will be so enthusiastic about their plans that they may be unwilling to compromise. So, you could make it your goal to bring everyone together.

**GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)**  
You may need to work hard if you are to persuade other people to fall in with your plans. Don't worry if you can't secure the co-operation you need as there's nothing to be lost in going it alone. Venus is keeping your social stars buoyant, so get out and about mid-week.

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 23)**  
The combined movement of the Sun and Mercury is due to take the heat off at home and allow you more space for your own personal needs. You must try to get out and about as much as you can. Jupiter, your ruler, has more surprises in store within a few weeks, so plan your hoped-for improvements now.

**CANCER (June 22 - July 23)**  
The two planets influencing your financial affairs are Venus and Mars, which explains why, although you stand a good chance of boosting your earnings, the most likely result will be an increase in your outgoings. Make the most of increasingly happy social stars, and take the initiative, rather than sitting by the phone, waiting to be asked.

**CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)**  
The emphasis is shifting to your home life and it now seems that long-term plans may finally come to fruition. Indeed, there is every chance that events will now move towards a satisfactory conclusion. Pay more attention to financial affairs - there are healthy profits to be made.

**LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)**  
You're more dependent on partners than you sometimes admit. The respect of your friends is vital to sustain your sense of emotional well-being. Such attention should be in plentiful supply this week, thanks to the affectionate planet, Venus. Now that Mercury is also being so helpful, you must listen to other people's good advice.

**AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)**  
It's a lively time for Aquarians, mainly on an intimate, personal level. The pressure on your finances should ease, which is one reason why you may now contemplate new purchases. You can act in the knowledge that the fates are with you, although you can never be totally sure what twists and turns await you.

**VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)**  
Work may be hard but it should also be enjoyable, perhaps throwing up a new friendship. If you have any practical interests which seem to have been stalled, do team up with like-minded people. One or two minor crises now may be necessary in order to push you on to the next stage.

**PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)**  
For the next three to four weeks money is going to be on your mind. You will be surprisingly assertive where your finances are concerned, pushing your interests as hard as you can, which is all to the good. Positive trends are forecast for Pisceans for the next five months.

JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given clue.

Man's \_\_\_ is his best friend; \_\_\_ his worst enemy. - William Temple (6...5)

DVIOO	FIODMY
EMLLS	ELLOFW

SOLUTION: OVOID, SMELL, MODIFY, FELLOW  
Answer: Man's wisdom is his best friend; folly his worst enemy. - William Temple

SUDOKU 5517

Difficulty Level 1s  
Instructions  
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

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

SOLUTION SUDOKU 5516

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

SEARCH FOR MISSING BOY

General public is hereby informed that one boy (depicted in the Photo) **Namely: Harsh @ Monu S/o: Sh. Anil Kumar, R/o: Sector-21, Rohini, Delhi, Age: 20 Years, Height: 5'11", Complexion: Dark, Wearing: Green T-Shirt, Black Lower and Blue Sports Shoes in Feet, Missing Since 22.12.2023 from his house under area of P.S. Aman Vihar, Delhi.**

In this regard a **FIR No. 35/24 Dated 22.12.2023** has been registered at Aman Vihar, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this boy but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this boy kindly inform to the following.  
E-Mail: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) SHO  
Website: <http://cbi.nic.in> P.S.- Aman Vihar, Delhi  
Ph: 011-24368639 Ph. 011-27581812, 8750870321  
Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641 DP/3767/RD/2024

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused **Mukesh @ Aadu @ Aalu S/o Satnarayan @ Rambahadur R/o B-248, Aman Vihar, Delhi @ A-577, Hari Enclave, Aman Vihar, Delhi also at: B-111, B-Block, Hari Enclave, Part-II, Kirari Suleman Nagar, Delhi** has Committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 1093/2019 U/s 21(A) NDPS Act, P.S. Sultanpuri, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said **Mukesh @ Aadu @ Aalu** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said **Mukesh @ Aadu @ Aalu** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).  
Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Mukesh @ Aadu @ Aalu** of case **FIR No. 1093/2019 U/s 21(A) NDPS Act, P.S. Sultanpuri, Delhi** is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint/case on or before **30.04.2024**.  
By Order  
Sh. Sanaya Dalal  
Ld. Metropolitan Magistrate  
Room No. 102  
Rohini Court, Delhi  
DP/3754/OD/2024(Court Matter)

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that one male was found unconscious at Harayana Saree Kamlia Nagar, Delhi, on 24.03.2024. Vide MLC No.-1542/24 he was died during treatment in Hindu Rao Hospital. In this regard a **vide DD No. 15A, Dated 27.03.2024** has been lodged in **P.S. Maurice Nagar, Delhi**. The description of the dead body is given as under:  
**Name: Rajkumar S/o: Keshwar, R/o: Unknown, Age: About 85 Years, Height: 5'8" Feet, Complexion: Wheatish, Face: Oval, Built: Medium Wearing: Blue Colour Shirt and Brown Colour Lower**  
Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the information about the dead male but no clue has come to light so far. If any one is having any information about this dead male please inform the undersigned.  
S.H.O  
P.S. Maurice Nagar, Delhi  
Ph: 9717021933  
DP/3786/N/2024

"IMPORTANT"

Whilst care is taken prior to acceptance of advertising copy, it is not possible to verify its contents. The Indian Express (P) Limited cannot be held responsible for such contents, nor for any loss or damage incurred as a result of transactions with companies, associations or individuals advertising in its newspapers or Publications. We therefore recommend that readers make necessary inquiries before sending any monies or entering into any agreements with advertisers or otherwise acting on an advertisement in any manner whatsoever.

उ.प्र. पावर ट्रान्समिशन कार्पोरेशन लि. ई-निविदा निरस्तीकरण सूचना इस कार्यालय के पत्रांक 1793, दिनांक 04.03.2024 के द्वारा इण्डियन एक्सप्रेस (अंग्रेजी दैनिक), नई दिल्ली तथा दैनिक जागरण (हिन्दी दैनिक), मुरादाबाद में दिनांक 05.03.2024 को प्रकाशित इस कार्यालय की ई-निविदा सं.-09 को जो दिनांक 02.04.2024 को खोली जानी थी, अपरिहार्य कारणवश निरस्त की जाती है।  
हस्ता.-/अधीक्षण अभियन्ता विद्युत परिषद मंडल द्वितीय उ.प्र. पावर ट्रान्स, कार्पो लि. मुरादाबाद पत्रांक: 1880/वि.पा.मं. द्वि.मु./ई-निविदा /2024 दिनांक 28.3.2024

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that one girl **Namely Shalini d/o Ram Chandra R/o H.No. D-59 first floor, Parmveer Gujjar ka makan main road Ankur Enclave, Karawal Nagar Delhi** has been missing /kidnapped from her House, since: 12.03.2024. In this regard, a case **FIR No. 110/24 dated 14.03.2024**, has been registered at **P.S. Karawal, Delhi**. The description of the missing girl is as under.  
**Age: 14, Height: 4'0", Complexion: Fair, Built: thin, Face: Round, Wearing: white colour Kurti, and blue colour jeans pant and red colour chappal in feet.** Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out her but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone has any information about the missing girl then please inform **P.S. Karawal Nagar, Delhi** at following Tel No./e-mail: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) and Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>, providing clue about the person.  
Sd/-S.H.O.  
Karawal Nagar, Delhi  
Tel No. 9868388280  
DP/3707/NE/2024



SHALINI

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

**03 MAR 1961 - 31 MAR 2002**  
In proud memory of Hav Chhota Lai of 6th Battalion The Dogra Regiment, who made the supreme sacrifice while serving the Nation at Nowshera (J&K) on 31 Mar 2002. To the loved ones we have lost. You are forever in our hearts and minds. Your service and sacrifice to our country will always be remembered.  
"BRAVES DIE, BUT ONLY ONCE"  
Remembered by **Commanding Officer and All Ranks 6 DOGRA.**



LATE HAV CHHOTA LAL

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified person, **Namely: Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Age: about 50 years, Height : 170 CM, Complexion : Shallow, Face : Long, Built : Thin, Identification : A Mole on chest Wearing : Black colour shirt and pant** has been found dead at Safdarjung Hospital, Delhi on 01.03.2024. In this regard a case vide DD No. 42A dated 01.03.2024 has been lodged at P.S. Safdarjung Enclave, Delhi.  
Any person having any information or clue about this dead found person may kindly inform to the following:-  
SHO :  
P.S. Safdarjung Enclave, Delhi  
South West Dist., Delhi  
Tel. No. 011-24106346, 24106345, 7065036231  
DP/3746/SW/2024



**KENDRIYA VIDYALAYA SANGATHAN, REGIONAL OFFICE SALAWALA, HATHIBARKALA, DEHRADUN - 248001**  
Website- <https://rodehradun.kvs.gov.in> / E-Mail- [ackvsroddr@gmail.com](mailto:ackvsroddr@gmail.com)  
Phone: 0135-2749510/2743192/2746371

**Admission Notice: 2024-25**

- Online Registration for Admission to Class-I in Kendriya Vidyalayas for the Academic Year 2024-25 will commence at 10:00 am on 01.04.2024 (Monday) and will close at 05:00 pm on 15.04.2024 (Monday). The Admission details are available on website <https://kvsonlineadmission.kvs.gov.in>
- Minimum age for admission in Class-I will be 6 years. Reckoning of age for all Classes shall be as on 31.03.2024. Reservation of seats will be as per KVS Admission Guidelines 2024-25 available on the Website (<https://kvsangathan.nic.in>)
- Registration for fresh admissions, in Class II and above, will be started from 01.04.2024 (Monday) at 08:00 am to 10.04.2024 (Wednesday) up to 04:00 pm, if vacancies exist, in offline mode only. The duly filled up form needs to be submitted to the office of the Principal in the respective KV.
- All Information regarding Admission & Registration forms for Class-II and above are available in the Vidyalaya Websites and registrations can be done as per the Schedule for Admission 2024-25.
- Registration for fresh admissions in Class-II and above will be accepted only if vacancy exists in the concerned KV.
- Admission will not be granted, if wrong and misleading information in the application form is found at the time of scrutiny by the KV.
- Contact Principal/Admission In-charge, only when called, in the given time slot.

Deputy Commissioner

पंजाब नैशनल बैंक Punjab National Bank

Circle SASTRA Office, Bhagalpur (Ground Floor-Naulakha Apartment), Opp DIG Kothi, Badi Khanjarpur, Bihar-812001, (Email : [cs8197@pnb.co.in](mailto:cs8197@pnb.co.in))

Possession Notice [Under Rule 8 (1) of security interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002]

As per the powers conferred under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and under Section 13(12) of the Securities Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 read together with Rule 8, the Authorized Punjab National Bank. The undersigned as an officer issued demand notice as mentioned in the table below, asking the borrowers/guarantors to pay the amount specified in the respective notices against their names in the table within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said intimation in writing, was asked to The following borrowers/guarantors have not paid the amount specified in the respective notices issued under section 13(2) within the stipulated time, the aforesaid borrowers/guarantors and the general public are hereby informed that the undersigned has made payment against the property concerned have taken symbolic possession of the properties (guaranteed assets) mentioned in the following table in compliance with the powers conferred on them under section 13(4) of the said Act read with rule 8 of the said rules on the dates mentioned. In particular the aforesaid borrowers / guarantors and the general public are hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties mentioned in the following table and any transaction with the said properties shall be effected on the amount mentioned in the relevant column of the table and thereon. The interest will be subject to the charge of Punjab National Bank.

S. No	Branch Name	Name of Borrower / Guarantor	Claim Amount on Date	Date of Demand / Date of Possession	Description of Immovable Property
1.	PNB Begusarai (060620)	Mr. Yogendra Paswan S/o Late Basudeo Paswan	Rs. 21,23,345.05 (Rupees Twenty One Lakhs Twenty Three Thousand Three Hundred Forty Five and Five Paise only) + Interest w.e.f. 01.11.2023)	13(2)-17.11.2023 13(4)-14.03.2024	1. Registered Sale Deed No-5051 Dated 05-08-2017 In Favor Of Punjab National Bank By Yogendra Paswan & Kameshwar Paswan Deed No-2731 Dated-13-04-1992 Khata No-158, Khesra No-557, Mauza-Baghi, Tauzi No-6979, Thana No-376 Area-17dthur 10 Dhurki Boundary:- North- Brahm Deo Mahto, South- Vender The Purchaser East-Wali Hassan & Rehman Hassan, West- Banke Paswan & Others 2. Sale Deed No-2732, Dated-13-04-1992, Khata No-158, Khesra No - 557, Mauza-Baghi, Tauzi No-6979, Thana No-376 Area-15dthur 10 Dhurki Anchal Begusarai, Ward No-24. Boundary:- North- Brahm Deo Mahto, South- Wife of Rameswar Rai East: Smt. Kiran Devi, West: Smt. Tara Devi & Meena Devi

Place- Begusarai  
Authorized Officer  
Punjab National Bank





Have you seen Joe Root and Zak Crawley fans fight? Or have you seen Joe Root and Jos Buttler fans fight? It's crazy. Have you seen Steve Smith and Pat Cummins fans fight in Australia? —R Ashwin on Hardik Pandya facing fan hate

## BRIEFLY

## Sri Lanka reach 314-4 at stumps

**CHATTOGRAM (BANGLADESH):** Sri Lanka dominated the opening day of the second and final cricket test against Bangladesh, riding on strong contributions from its top three batters. No. 3 Kusal Mendis struck 93, Dimuth Karunaratne hit 86 and his fellow opener Nishan Madushka added 57 as Sri Lanka reached 314-4 in 90 overs at stumps on Saturday. Star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, whose last international match was at the 2023 World Cup in India, returned figures of 1-60 in 18 overs. Dinesh Chandimal (34 not out) and captain Dhananjaya de Silva (15 not out) will resume Sunday. De Silva hit centuries in both innings of the first test, which Sri Lanka won by 328 runs. Fast bowler Hasan Mahmud claimed 2-64 on his test debut.

**Brief score:** Sri Lanka 314/4 (Nishan Madushka 57, Dimuth Karunaratne 86, Kusal Mendis 93, Dinesh Chandimal 34 not out) vs Bangladesh. **AP**

## Real Kashmir FC register fluent win

**Srinagar:** Real Kashmir FC dished out a fine performance to outclass NEROCA FC 3-0 in the I-League here on Saturday, the result relegating the Manipur outfit to the second division following a poor season. Goals from Real Kashmir's Gnohere Krizo (35'), Hyder Yousuf (45') and Shaher Shaheen (67') sealed the fate of NEROCA FC in the league. This loss left the Orange Brigade in 12th place, with a total of 13 points from 21 matches. Their record of four wins, one draw, and 16 losses reflects the challenges they faced throughout the season. With only three matches left to play, NEROCA find themselves in an insurmountable position. **PTI**

## Rasquinha criticize TN's Athletics body

**Mumbai:** Former India hockey captain Viren Rasquinha criticised Tamil Nadu's Athletics Association statement questioning the decision to name star table tennis player Achanta Sharath Kamal as India's flagbearer for the upcoming Paris Olympics. In a press note, TNAA called for Neeraj Chopra to be flagbearer but in the process, described Sharath Kamal — a decorated multi-medallist at Asian Games and Commonwealth Games — 'a non-descript sportsman'. Rasquinha said on X, "Very poor choice of words in this letter by TNAA. One might have a point in saying that Neeraj Chopra should be flag bearer at Paris, but one cannot be disrespectful towards Sharath, he did not ask to be the flag bearer." **ENS**

## Sikki-Sumeeth lose in Madrid semis

**Madrid:** India's challenge in the Madrid Spain Masters Super 300 tournament ended here on Saturday after the mixed doubles pair of N Sikki Reddy and B Sumeeth Reddy crashed out in the semifinals. The Indonesian pair of Rinov Rivaldy and Pitha Haningtyas Mentari did not have to work too hard as they prevailed 21-17, 21-12 over the Indian duo in a contest lasting only 29 minutes. This was the first meeting between the two mixed doubles pairs. N Sikki Reddy and B Sumeeth Reddy had earlier beaten Indonesia's Rehan Naufal Kusharjanto and Lisa Ayu Kusumawati in the quarterfinal on Friday, beating the fourth seeded pair 14-21, 21-11, 21-17. **PTI**

On the face of it, the allrounder has just returned to the franchise that made him a star, and who want him to lead. It's absurd to publicly shame someone for being aspirational and pursuing higher professional goals.

## Hardik doesn't deserve hate for being ambitious

**SANDEEP DWIVEDI**  
MARCH 30

THIS IPL season has seen the most venomous targeting of a player ever. And this time, it has gone way beyond the usual online trolling.

Hardik Pandya, following his switch from Gujarat Titans to Mumbai Indians, got hysterically booed all through his team's first outing in Ahmedabad, his home venue for the previous two seasons. The anger was apparently because of Gujarat's sense of betrayal. The accusation was mounted on weak legs. It fell flat pretty quickly.

In the very next game, in Hyderabad this time, the screeching jeers from the stands didn't stop. Visuals also emerged of a shower of shoes hitting a giant screen on which a smiling Hardik spoke after MI's second successive loss. This Monday, MI play their first home game of the season. And there are those who believe that the Wankhede loyalists, aka fans of previous captain Rohit Sharma, too might not instantly warm up to the new skipper.

Worryingly, Hardik, in the first two games, wasn't subjected to the usual theatrical harmless hooting and hollering that one hears at sporting venues around the world. Many match-day stadium clips on social media, featuring the new Mumbai captain, have chants of 'Chhapri' — the casteist slur used to label those with unconventional hairstyles as uncool and uncultured. It is also a derogatory discrimination of the marginalised.

The diligent boy from the other side of the track, who reached lofty heights without push or pull, was being collectively pulled down by those who once applauded him. This wasn't cricket, it went beyond the Rohit-Hardik transition drama. Fans have booed many, but here they were selectively diabolical in their name-calling of Hardik.

So, what had Hardik done to deserve this? It wasn't that he had managed some overnight bloodless coup to overthrow Rohit. Nor did he manipulate the dressing room to stake his claim on the Mumbai throne.

Prima facie, it's just about him agreeing to a massive pay hike, a move back to the team that spotted him, and lead IPL's most prominent franchise. If it was right to publicly shame someone for being aspirational and pursuing higher professional goals, the nation's young need to recalibrate their own ambitions.



Hardik Pandya has faced fan anger for moving from GT to MI.

Sportzpics

Fans forget that Hardik has been India skipper and also won an IPL title in his debut season as captain. And it was MI that came calling and told him that they believed in him. Saying no would have been timid. Players of Hardik's calibre look for tough assignments to test themselves. He took the challenge and also knew it wouldn't be easy. It has never been.

## Tough childhood

Growing up, Hardik would never leave his mother's side, more so when the family, with modest means, would occasionally eat out at a dhaba. On Gaurav Kapoor's YouTube show Breakfast with Champions, Hardik had relived his childhood trauma. Typically, he would keep it light, frame it as a joke. "I had cut my hair very short. I never used to go to dhabas to eat without my mother because people used to think I worked there as a

**So, what had Hardik done to deserve this? It wasn't that he had managed some overnight bloodless coup to overthrow Rohit. Nor did he manipulate the dressing room to stake his claim on the Mumbai throne.**

waiter. It has happened many times. I would go to wash my hands and someone would ask me to pick their plates..." he recalled.

That was the time in Hardik's life when his father had shifted to a new city, did odd jobs and coaxed coaches to give his underweight, under-confident son a chance to show his skills. With elder brother Krunal by his side, while surviving on just a Maggi

meal all day at times, the two honed their skills under the unforgiving Baroda sun.

Success would follow them, they would become Baroda's famous Pandya Brothers. They had a big role to play in MI winning IPL titles. The shy boy, the mother's pet, would grow in confidence. He would play Tests, and be compared to Kapil Dev.

On a high, he wasn't bothered when the world judged him for his fashion taste. It seems that hasn't changed. In the first two games this season, despite the outside noise, he didn't snap. He has gone about his business with a smile on his face. Even that has infuriated some fans. "How can he smile when the team is losing?" they ask.

Hardik has a tough act to follow. Being MI captain has its perks and privileges, but to be Rohit's successor, at this moment in time, comes with impediments and inconveniences. Probably at the peak of his pop-

## Fast and furious Mayank Yadav lights up Lucknow on debut

## SYNOPSIS

When Punjab Kings were on track to chase 200 down, thanks to a century opening stand, 21-year old debutant Mayank Yadav turned the match with his searing pace.

**VINAYAK MOHANARANGAN**  
MARCH 30

## Fast and furious

THE official Lucknow Super Giants website lists Mayank Yadav as right-arm medium fast. That would definitely need an update, as the pacer from Delhi lit up the Ekana on Saturday night. Sample this: He bowled nine deliveries of 150+ kph, his average speed was 148kph, the slowest delivery was clocked at 141kph.

When Shikhar Dhawan and Jonny Bairstow were in the middle, run-scoring seemed smooth for Punjab. The right-left



Nine of 20 deliveries bowled by LSG fast bowler Mayank Yadav were clocked at 150 kph-plus and the fastest was 155.8 kph. **PTI**

**NUMBER PLATE**  
**155.8 KPH**

Mayank Yadav bowled the fastest ball so far in IPL 2024. His average speed on the night was 148 kph.

duo put on a century partnership and were keeping the required rate under check.

Enter Mayank Yadav. The right-hander had bowled a fiery first over already, but he'd start the second with a 155.8kph delivery — the fastest of the season so far. In that over, he removed Bairstow with a short-of-length delivery that hurried on. In his third over, he bowled another quick short ball that hit Prabhsimran Singh high on the bat. He welcomed Jitesh Sharma with two sensational short ones. Perfume balls, as they are called with the batter able to smell the leather. In his final over, he removed Prabhsimran with a similar delivery.

Morne Morkel revealed later that Mayank had to miss the entirety of the last IPL season after an injury in the warmup

matches. Former pacer Brett Lee would tweet: 'India has just found its fastest bowler ... very impressive'. As Dhawan put it, "Mayank outsmarted us". "That's the story of the night, eh? He has been through a lot in terms of injuries. It wasn't just about bowling fast, he was accurate as well," Nicholas Pooran added.

## Krunal aces his exam

When Punjab rolled the dice to bring in Kagiso Rabada and bowl him out by 16th over, the pace responded by removing a well-set Nicholas Pooran bowled. With Lucknow not exactly boasting batting depth, it was a move that could have potentially shaved off 20-30 runs from the home team's total.

Krunal Pandya, though, had other ideas. He made his intentions clear from the word go, starting off with a superb pull shot for six off Rabada. Krunal then targetted Harshal Patel in the 18th over. The left-hander could have easily been bowled off an inside edge that nearly hit the stumps but earned a streaky four.

But he went on to make it big, smashing a four past extra cover and a six down the

ground. The drive earned rich praise from one of the masters of the shot, Brian Lara, who told Krunal during the mid-innings chat: "Just wanted to tell you I loved your drive, beating the extra cover and deep point fielder, well played."

Krunal finished with a 22-ball 43 that powered LSG to 199. "I have always prepared that way that I'll be flexible as a batter, I am ready to go anywhere from No 3 to 7," Krunal said. "I take it like an exam where if you study well, your paper will go well."

## An eventful day for KLR

KL Rahul didn't walk out for the toss, with Nicholas Pooran leading LSG. In an apparent move to ease Rahul back into the scheme of things, he was to be utilised as an Impact Player. After a watchful start, he tried a flurry of shots before guiding one to Jonny Bairstow at backward point. Not the greatest of impacts, but a better show of intent.

**Brief score:** LSG 199/8 in 20 overs (Quinton de Kock 54, Nicholas Pooran 42, Krunal Pandya 43 not out; Sam Curran 3/28) bt PBKS 178/5 in 20 overs (Shikhar Dhawan 70, Jonny Bairstow 42; Mayank Yadav 3/27) by 21 runs.

## STRIVING TO IMPROVE

## CSK's Dube rewarded for working on Achilles Heel — the short ball

**VENKATA KRISHNAB**  
CHENNAI, MARCH 30

IT WAS the 14th delivery that Shivam Dube faced on Tuesday night. Seconds after Spencer Johnson ran in and delivered a well-directed, shoulder-high bouncer, the 33,400-odd spectators at Chepauk cleared their throats for the umpteenth time. Dube got inside the line of the ball and deposited the Aussie left-armed well into the stands beyond deep fine-leg.

For a batsman who has been at unease when facing chin music, Dube did well. The reward for all the hard work he had been putting in behind the scenes in domestic cricket, to confront the short-ball challenge. "I know they are going to bowl short balls and I'm ready for that," Dube would say later. He faced six short balls on the night, and not once did he look rattled.

Short balls and bouncers were supposed to trouble Dube. Last IPL season as Dube went about smashing the spinners, opposition captains didn't waste time in bringing on the pac-

ers and testing him with short stuff.

With two bouncers allowed per over this IPL, Dube was among those batsmen whose comfort level against pacers was bound to be tested. Having looked clueless last season against short balls, he now has not one fall-back option but two. One where he is keeping the ball down by rolling his wrists, and another where he stands tall and uses his power to clear the fence, like he did against Johnson.

Dube's long-time coach Satish Samant said that there was a technical flaw, which Dube corrected during the off-season. He also credited the player himself for being ready to work on eliminating his Achilles' Heel. "It was a technical issue as well as mental. At the time of the release of the ball, his shoulder used to be closed and at the same time, he was lifting his bat with the bottom hand. With that kind of technical flaw, he could play the short ball well against those who bowled at 120 kmph but against a 135 kmph bowler, his body was locked," Samant said.

Dube used to face short balls for hours and the coach made him open his shoulder a bit. "We used to start at 80mph and then



Shivam Dube is no longer a sitting duck against the short ball. **Sportzpics**

slowly used to increase the speed to 85 mph. He began to connect with each ball. He had more control over his pull shot. By practicing daily, he removed that mental block. The best part of Dube is that he kept his ego aside. He sincerely wanted to work on the flaw," Samant added.

CSK batting coach Mike Hussey said there

**"We used to start at 80mph and then slowly used to increase the speed to 85 mph. He began to connect with each ball. He had more control over his pull shot. By practicing daily, he removed that mental block."**

**SATISH SAMANT,**  
DUBE'S COACH

is a world of difference between Dube from two years ago and Dube now.

"If you rewind one, maybe two, years ago, teams would come in and bowl short balls and Dube would either duck out of the way or defend," Hussey said. "And that's all he had until he got in... Then he could maybe play some shots against it. Now bowlers are still coming in with the same plan but he's able to score off it as well. And he's been able to find boundaries if he gets into the right position as well. So that's testament to the work he's put in behind the scenes..." Hussey said.

The Aussie was supposed to work with

Dube during the pre-season to address this issue, especially with the new rule coming in. But a side-strain Dube picked up during the Ranji Trophy meant he joined the set-up only two days before the opening fixture. There were concerns in the Chennai ranks. But it was a case of much ado about nothing.

## Trump card

Since joining the franchise in 2022, Dube has been Chennai's trump card with the bat, one who tactically opened up situations like nobody else. Having batted out of position at Royal Challengers Bangalore and Rajasthan Royals, Chennai have used him at No 4 & 5 to take down spinners. For a batsman who had 22 sixes in his first three seasons, he hit 16 & 35 in 2022 and 2023 respectively. In two matches this season, he has already smashed half a dozen sixes.

It is this incredible six-hitting ability, especially in the middle overs when opposition teams look to slip in a few quiet overs with their spinners, that has made Dube a superhit among fans at Chepauk.

At the M Chinnaswamy Stadium on

Monday, when Virat Kohli hit Kagiso Rabada for a six, the noise levels recorded by the broadcaster hit 124 decibels. On Tuesday at Chepauk, it hit 127db as Dube made his entry after being restless in the dug-out as Rashid Khan and Sai Kishore were beginning to slow down the run rate. And when the left-arm spinner dismissed Rahane off the first ball of the 11th over, Dube wasted no time in walking out to the middle.

This was his favoured match-up. And he showed why. The first ball, hit with brutal power, sailed over long-on. For the next, Sai Kishore responded by going slower, and this time Dube went over mid-wicket.

Two overs later, Rashid wanted to have a go at Dube. His last two deliveries to him in the IPL final last year had seen the left-hander hitting two huge sixes. And here, after taking a single off the first delivery from Rashid, Dube picked the googly and deposited it over long-on, before Gujarat turned to Johnson. And Dube went about showing Chepauk why the moniker Aaru Saamy (six god) fits him perfectly.

INPUTS FROM DEVENDRA PANDEY



# Son secures comeback win for Spurs

REUTERS  
LONDON, MARCH 30

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR captain **Son Heung-min** struck late to secure a 2-1 come-from-behind victory over Luton Town to bolster his side's Premier League top-four ambitions on Saturday.



Son started and finished a flowing Spurs move in the 86th minute to leave relegation battlers Luton with nothing to show from a spirited display in north London.

Tahith Chong gave Luton a surprise early lead with Son being denied by the woodwork soon afterwards.

Tottenham equalised in the 51st minute when Issa Kabore scored an own goal and the hosts' pressure was eventually rewarded with Son's clincher.

Tottenham moved into fourth place with 56 points, ahead of Aston Villa on goals scored after 29 games, though the latter were in action later at home to Wolverhampton Wanderers.

Luton had moved out of the relegation zone during the international break courtesy of Nottingham Forest's four-point deduction for breaking financial rules, but defeat meant they slipped back below the Midlands club into 18th place.

Tottenham's last game before the international break was a 3-0 drubbing at Fulham and when they fell behind against Luton they were in danger of dropping more points.

But South Korean Son again proved their saviour with his 15th league goal of the season. "The three points is massive for us. We don't want it to always end like this, it could be nicer when we have it earlier to make it three points," said Son, whose 160th Tottenham goal put him fifth on the club's all-time scorers' list.

"It was a really tough. It was an intense game."

Ange Postecoglou's Spurs side were forced to do it the hard way after Luton went ahead in the third minute following a counter-attack which ended with Ross Barkley picking out Chong to shoot past Spurs keeper Guglielmo Vicario.

Luton had a huge let-off when Son went around keeper Thomas Kaminski but watched his shot strike both posts before Pape Matar Sarr's follow-up was cleared off the line.

Tottenham sent on Brennan Johnson at halftime and the Welsh winger quickly made his presence felt as his low cross towards Timo Werner was netted by Luton's Kabore.

Johnson thought he had put Spurs in front when his close-range effort was millimetres from crossing the line, although Luton still posed the occasional threat with substitute Jordan Clark forcing a sharp low save by Vicario.

Luton were hanging on for a point but eventually buckled as Son began a move deep in his own half and raced forward to meet Johnson's assist and drive a shot past Kaminski to claim the points.

"There was a bit of anxiety around the place, every game now for every club there will be because there's extra significance, but I thought the lads stayed calm," Postecoglou, whose side go to West Ham United in mid-week, told reporters.

## CONNECTIONS ON AND OFF THE TURF

# Fulton plots roadmap for Paris

Ahead of the Test series against Australia, men's hockey coach lists out areas for improvement before the Summer Olympics

MIHIR VASAVDA & VINAYAK MOHANARANGAN  
MUMBAI/NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

BEFORE THEY climb the proverbial mountains in the coming months, starting by taking on Australia in Australia from April 6, India's hockey team scaled an actual one. In Cape Town, last January.

The journey to the top of Table Mountain wasn't just supposed to be a scenic hike with a group photo at the summit. It turned out to be a lesson in philosophy and goals were set.

"On the top of Table Mountain, we had a really good talk about what we're trying to achieve this year. And relating it back to a journey of obviously getting to the summit and then obviously descending and doing everything together," India coach Craig Fulton tells The Indian Express.

A medal at the Olympics goes beyond mere skills. Fulton knows that, like his predecessors. In the lead-up to the Tokyo Olympics, Graham Reid got each of the men to read about the yesteryear heroes, learn from their journeys, and share it with the rest of the team. Sjoerd Marijne, on the other hand, didn't have to ask his players to dip into the past – their stories in themselves were dramatic and so, he asked the women to talk about their lives and inspire others around them.

Fulton collaborated with Paddy Upton, the South African mental expert who will be with India at the Paris Olympics. Upton, the mind master, spun the hike in a way that climbing the mountain became a metaphor: The steep climb – resembling the challenges – and the peak – this summer's Olympics.

"It's not just, 'go climb a mountain, and then take a picture'. It's really about setting a process in place for where we go through the different competitions in the year, to try and obviously peak at the right time," Fulton says, the play of words not lost on him.

While the first part of the task was to seek a connection off the field, the more important aspect is to find the right connect between players on the turf as they get ready for the Paris quest.

### Insights from Pro League

Indeed, Britain have come a long way since the quarterfinal defeat to India in Tokyo and are one of the genuine dark horses. And Spain under Max Caldas look a lot more solid. But the biggest challenge for India comes from the Big Four – Australia, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany. And to zoom in even further, against those opponents India have consistently struggled to score freely.

In that sense, the FIH Pro League home stretch gave India a great chance to test themselves against some of the best. There was a high-scoring defeat against Australia (4-6), but also a valiant draw (2-2). Both matches against Netherlands, the current world No.1, ended in draws after regulation time (2-2 and 1-1).

"It's good to match up against the top teams. That's what you need to do more often. And that's ultimately what the Pro League is supposed to help us do. Then we try to look for more games. And that's why we've chosen Australia as an opposition (to tour)," Fulton says. "The bottom line is to beat



Manpreet Singh, Hardik Singh and Krishan Pathak pose at the Table Mountain during a team-bonding session. Instagram



CRAIG FULTON, INDIAN MEN'S HOCKEY COACH

**A lot of the top teams have good set pieces. And if you make mistakes around them, you normally concede... So being very consistent in the set pieces ... that is really important."**

**A lot of the time Indian players like to face the goal to score while a lot of the Europeans, don't face the goal to take shots... They're hitting through the defender. It's difficult to defend."**

Holland consistently or get two results and beat them is a good sign. It's what we are training for."

The lessons Fulton learned about his team from the Pro League are geared around the setpieces. "A lot of the top teams have good set pieces. And if you make mistakes around them, you normally concede," the South African explains. "So being very consistent in the set pieces – that's penalty corner defense and then having a consistent conversion rate from penalty corner attack. That's really important because a lot of teams are putting a lot of numbers in the D, so it's become very difficult to score field goals."

### Scoring goals with a twist

It's a bit of a paradoxical situation for India.

When you have arguably one of the best-ever drag flickers in your team, of course, it makes sense to rely on his prowess. But how much of India's goal-scoring responsibility

can Harmanpreet Singh shoulder?

Since the start of 2023, among the current top five men's teams in the world, Netherlands score a whopping 64.44% of their goals through open play, followed by Belgium at 59.63%.

It's a little closer below them as Australia's field goal percentage stands at 52.63%, with India at fourth on 51.37%, followed by Germany's 48.84%.

Mandeep Singh, one of India's most experienced forwards, is known for his ability to pull defenders away from the danger area to create space for his teammates. But he is aware that as a striker, he – and the rest of the forward line – must also contribute more goals.

"The biggest thing we worked on in the camp is to create outcomes," the 32-year-old says. "If we can't score then we need to at least create a PC. So we are working on things inside the D as well as without-the-ball pressure on the opposition."

Fulton breaks it down rather simply.

"The problem is sometimes when you look at it as an individual scoring more goals versus collective team defenses. It's 1v2, 1v3. That's difficult. If you don't have combination plays of how to make the goal bigger by having the second post covered, having different options in the D and it's not just one player scoring the goal from the top of the D because that seldom happens these days."

The Big Four are also known to play one-touch hockey near the D at a high tempo. Quick passing and moving is key to this, something India did well at the Asian Games in Hangzhou during their title-winning run, with the likes of Abhishek and Gurjant often combining with Mandeep for 1-2s.

"We have worked on this aspect too, especially to improve give-and-go hockey in the attacking third. It's beneficial because it is tough for a defender to guess where the ball will go from," Mandeep says. "We spoke a lot in Hangzhou, even at the dinner table."

### TEAM'S SCHEDULE BEFORE THE PARIS OLYMPICS

■ India's tour of Australia: 5 Test matches, April 6 to 13

■ FIH Pro League, Antwerp: 4 matches (vs Argentina and Belgium), May 22 to 26

■ FIH Pro League, London: 4 matches (vs Germany and Great Britain), June 1 to 9

■ India's tour of the Netherlands: 2 Test matches, dates TBD

■ Warmup matches in Paris: 2 matches, pre-Olympic Games, dates & teams TBD

We spoke a lot about how to play give-and-go. We developed an understanding because of those constant conversations."

This close to Paris, the answer to these problems lies not in bringing new personnel but in getting better at training. It is why Mandeep reckons Fulton has doubled down on improving the outcomes inside the D during the camp before the Australia tour.

The head coach also points to one specific area where Indian forwards need to get better at.

"A lot of the time Indian players like to face the goal to score goals while a lot of the Europeans, don't face the goal to take shots. They have their back towards the goal and they're hitting through the defender. It's very difficult to defend," the 49-year-old explains.

"We are trying to obviously improve both sides of this, where you can still be able to get in the D and get your shot away. Or you connect with another striker, not with a shot but with a pass. The closer you get to the goal the less time you have to score. So you're not necessarily looking for a big backswing, a big hit. It's all flicking and pushing. And double movements like 1v1 against the goalkeeper. The kind of moves where your back is towards the goal, but you're still able to twist and turn to try and find the target. This takes time," he adds.

### Australian challenge

In the next three months, everything Fulton has tried with the players in terms of addressing the PC and field goal conversion will be put to test.

The home stretch for the Paris Olympics begins in Perth for the five-match series. Then, the team travels to Antwerp and London towards the end of May and June for the Pro League matches against the likes of Belgium, Germany and Britain. From there, they'll proceed for a test series against the Netherlands before leaving for the Olympics.

It gives Fulton a chance to play against all the teams that have proved to be stumbling blocks for India in big competitions.

The most immediate challenge comes in the form of Australia, India's kryptonite. So, coach, what's the mountain you hope to climb in Australia? "Ourselves, and the ability to beat Australia in Australia," he replies. "When was the last time India had a series win in Australia?"

## MAN CITY VS ARSENAL

# Playing tonight: Guardiola vs his shadow Arteta

SANDIPIG  
MARCH 31

THE MANCHESTER City-Arsenal encounter is an event; as well as an event within an event. In the broader scheme of the league, the meeting is a potential title decider, and if that be the case, a symbolic moment. That game when the power transfers from the hands of City to Arsenal, or that match City reimposes itself, or that contest Liverpool sneaks past their rivals to the title march. There is a thrilling intrigue that the league has not sustained for more than a decade.

But even in isolation, delineated from the overbearing title shadow, there are adequate narratives to make their Sunday duel an unmissable celebration of football.

There is a manager in a relentless pursuit to unravel the layers and complexities of the game, a football scientist obsessed with the infinite possibilities of structure and formations. If Johan Cruyff was the Pythagoras of football, Pep Guardiola, his disciple, is Jacques Derrida, the controversial French philosopher whose theory of deconstruction gave us new insights into the meaning of language and aesthetic values.

To the complex world of passing and possession, he has interwoven a directness that has seemed antithetical in theory. He operates with a conventional number nine, Erling Haaland, has an electric-heeled winger Doku; long balls, goals from outside the box and the showy dribbles are no longer blasphemy. He is at once a revolutionary and counter-revolutionary, searching for new barriers and redefinitions, permanently moving on. All the football world is a stage for him, where the footballers are merely actors enacting his script.

Guardiola has touched football, and



In a sense, Mikel Arteta, Arsenal's manager, is closer to the classical Pep Guardiola than Guardiola himself.

touched football managers like few others in the English Premier League. He is Mikel Arteta's inspiration, his structuring of the team Guardiola-like.

In a sense, Arteta, Arsenal's manager, is closer to the classical Guardiola than Guardiola himself. While Guardiola has moved away from False 9, the role's greatest exponent, Arteta has embraced and remoulded Kai Havertz into one. Arteta is deploying Declan Rice as Guardiola once used Ilkay Gundogan, a defensive midfielder with a vast passing spread and an attacking instinct. Arsenal's fortunes would greatly depend on the control Rice would exert; just as City's would hinge on Rodri's. It would be a

### Arteta has internalised Guardiola's management traits too. One of Arteta's roles in his City days was to talk one-to-one with the players.

spectacle of individual battles, of one-upmanship? Rice or Rodri, Havertz or Haaland, Bukayako Saka or Phil Foden, William Saliba or Ruben Dias. The sheer individual quality is matchless in this game.

### Internalising Guardiola

Arteta has internalised Guardiola's management traits too. One of Arteta's roles in his City days was to talk one-to-one with the players. "It's crucial that they feel able to tell us what they think they need to improve. From the start I was absolutely fascinated by Pep's work ethic, by his ability to transmit his ideas to the players and convince them that they're going to work.

It's incredible to see how he simplifies even the most complicated things so that they appear straightforward and easy. It's very difficult to reach footballers like that," Arteta had once said. He has implemented the same at the Emirates too.

Guardiola has a knack of cajoling players into buying his ideas. He converted John Stones—who would miss the game due to an injury—into a deep-lying playmaker in the treble-winning season. He deputised Bernardo Silva and Foden as full-backs.

Similarly, Arteta convinced Havertz to play in the midfield, though the German was repositioned a False 9 due to dearth of striking options upfront. He endured a stormy teething-in time, but thereafter has blossomed and scored and architected impor-

tant goals for his club, like the winner against Brentford or the fashioning Gabriel Martinelli's winner when the two teams met in the league last time.

In his touchline passion, Guardiola could see a younger self in Arteta. Time has mellowed the Spaniard, though the fire brims beneath. The match, thus, has an unput-downable quality that could engage the neutrals as the league enters the last and defining stretch. One has to time-travel to the 2009-10 season to enjoy a closer title race. At the start of March, with nine games remaining, Chelsea led Manchester United by a point and Arsenal by two points. But the Blues would win eight of their last nine games—including, a 2-1 at Old Trafford – to claim the title by a point. The Gunners fell apart and ended a distant third.

There have been a few two-horse races, most notably between City and Liverpool, but none as suspenseful as this current one. The league would not be mathematically decided this Sunday, but though both teams could carry the vibes of the outcome, Arsenal more so if they are to nick the game. A draw would brighten Liverpool's faces.

Provided they beat Brighton, they could go two points clear. All three could, of course, slip up in other games too. Arsenal have the trickiest road—with games at Brighton, Wolves, Tottenham and United, besides a game against the unpredictable Chelsea. City have a straightforward run on paper—Aston Villa and Tottenham being the only two teams in the top six. Liverpool have to face Manchester United and Aston Villa (away), and Tottenham (home). Effectively, the City-Arsenal face-off is not a title-decider in the strictest of sense. But it is an event, and an event within an event.

Live on: Star Sports network, 9 pm

# Indian Open: Nakajima takes a four-stroke lead

NAMIT KUMAR  
GURUGRAM, MARCH 30

EVER SINCE his impressive seven-under par opening late in the first round, Keita Nakajima became the player to beat at the 2024 Hero Indian Open this week. After another gutsy display on Saturday, as he heads into the final round with a four-stroke lead, the rest of the field have a tough task to prove that they can.

The 23-year-old from Japan backed up successive rounds of 65 with a four-under 68 on Saturday to take his score to 18 under par ahead of the final day. Malaysia's Gavin Green shot a remarkable bogey-free eight-under 64 – which was the single-round course record here until Friday, when Norway's Espen Kofstad hit ten-under – to rise to tied-second alongside France's Romain Langasque with an accumulated score of 14 under par. Green was the runner-up at this event in 2017 and the eighth-place finisher last year. Italy's Matteo Manassero and France's Jeong weon Ko are behind in tied-fourth with total scores of thirteen under par.

Among the Indian contingent, 28-year-old Veer Ahlawat shot a solid three under par on his home course to keep his place as sole sixth with a score of 12 under par. Manu Gandas (tied-13th, eight under) and Aman Raj (tied-24th, six under) were the only others in the top 25. Only eight made the cut.

The DLF Golf and Country Club, in the four prior editions it had held this European Tour (DP World Tour) event, held a reputation for being particularly intimidating. But this year, with sunny and less windy conditions, players have paved a roadmap for scoring here, and none more so than Nakajima, who has hit 22 birdies and an eagle across 54 holes this week.

The 23-year-old is in his first full season on the Tour, having earned his card as the topper of the Japanese Golf Tour's Order of

Merit, where he is a three-time winner. This week is his first time playing at DLF G&CC, and his first time in India.

"You have to play tee shots here with confidence, don't think about the course too much. Staying true to my game and my swing and (staying) accurate," he said in as much English as he could muster after his round on Saturday. "This is a tough course, bogeys can happen. It's okay. You have to keep calm, you will (have the chance) to bring it back."

His gutsiness was present throughout his round on Saturday. After a disappointing bogey on the eighth (the same hole on which Langasque hit a birdie to equal scores at the top), he came agonisingly close to bringing it back on the ninth, missing a birdie putt by mere centimetres. Bouncing back immediately, though, he would create more room for himself with back-to-back birdies on the 11th and 12th.

On the par five 18th hole, as opposed to going safe, he went for the braver option of using his second shot to approach the green straight away. He saw the ball go into the thick rough, and pressure ramped up as rival Langasque set up the eagle putt that he could not. Displaying his ease in these conditions, he was out of the rough to putt for a birdie, maintaining his four-shot lead as Langasque buckled to miss the eagle that could have cut it short.

Earlier this week, Nakajima had said he feels comfortable in the lead as opposed to being a part of the chasing pack. That cushion has only grown heading into the final day.

The Japanese player holds one of the more peculiar world records in golf: he was the World No. 1 amateur for 87 weeks, shattering two-time Major winner Jon Rahm's previously-held record of 60 weeks. But as he has been keen to stress this week, his time as an amateur should be put in the past, and a first professional win on the European Tour, well within reach, may do just that.



# Philippines & India

CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF DIPLOMATIC TIES

## India and the Philippines at 75: A Relationship Resurgent

*Celebrating 75 years of diplomatic ties, India and the Philippines stand on the threshold of a major renaissance that will bring shared values and synergies to bear on mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation and stability in the Indo-Pacific.*



**H.E. Mr. Josel Francisco Ignacio**  
Ambassador of the Republic of Philippines to India

IN THE annals of diplomatic history, few relationships stand as a testament to unbroken cordiality, consistent collaboration for mutual growth and extraordinary solidarity in the face of common concerns as that between India and the Philippines - the Indo-Pacific's vibrant, youthful stalwarts of democracy and fastest-growing economies.

This year, these two nations mark the platinum jubilee of their diplomatic ties. The milestone transcends the commemoration of time passed. It is, for both countries, a moment of reaffirmation of the unshakable pillars upon which their multifaceted ties stand: centuries-old historical connections; affinities as pluralistic, democratic Asian republics; demonstrated commitment to free market ideals; steadfast advocates of peace and the rule of law.

Based on these, the jubilee is, for both, doubtless an occasion as well for considered stocktaking and attentive co-deliberation to chart the thrust and trajectory of the relationship.

When India and the Philippines forged diplomatic relations on 16 November 1949, both had just set out on their journeys as newly independent nations -- the Philippines in 1946 and India in 1947. For that point, India and the Philippines would traverse a journey of cultivating cooperation across manifold spheres, serving mutual ends in the bilateral, regional and global arenas. But the journey would for the most part, fall short of fully capitalizing on the relationship's full potential.

But this is no longer the case. The past decade has seen a clear-eyed recognition by both sides of opportunities that need seizing, hence steady intensification of engagement was pursued by both governments. Working hand-in-hand, cooperation in the political, economic, cultural arenas were ramped up, and new grounds broken, most notably in the defense and maritime security realms. Philippines-Indian ties went into turbo mode.

### POLITICAL RELATIONS

Policy dialogues inform and provide direction to the relationship, and India and the Philippines have ardently pursued the convening of discussion mechanisms on schedule, while also seizing inter-sessional opportunities for touching base. Such was the case this past year, which saw Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar visit Manila just last week (25-27 March 2024), barely two months since his meeting with Secretary of Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo in Kampala, Uganda, and less than a year since Secretary Manalo's own visit to



**EAM S. Jaishankar recent visit to Philippines**

New Delhi in June 2023.

Beyond Foreign Ministries, countless other parallel consultations and talks take place among both countries' relevant agencies for cooperation in sectors such as defense, technology, pharma, agriculture, and economic development.

This robust engagement extends to multilaterals such as the United Nations, ASEAN and its related mechanisms, the Non-Aligned Movement and others, where both countries have partnered to advance shared advocacies. Within the ASEAN context, this will intensify in a few months' time, as the Philippines takes the reins as coordinator for ASEAN-India Dialogue relations.

### ECONOMIC TIES

Economic cooperation has been the steady cornerstone of the relationship. In 2022-23, for the first time, trade crossed the USD 3-billion threshold, facilitated by the ASEAN-India Free Trade Area (AIFTA). This

especially in sectors such as IT-BPM, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, and renewable energy where synergies and complementarities abound. Meanwhile, India has been actively participating in the Philippines' ongoing drive to develop its public infrastructure.

### DEFENSE COOPERATION

Burgeoning cooperation in the defense arena underscores the trust and confidence now binding the two nations in their common pursuit of peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific.

The Philippines has turned to India to meet key requirements toward building a credible defense posture. On the 75th anniversary of ties, the Philippines' procurement of BrahMos supersonic missile systems under a USD 375-million deal is a milestone within a milestone. It represents India's largest foreign defense export contract to date, and the first such export of this system. The BrahMos deal is the strongest manifestation yet of the growing strategic complexion of the two nations' ties.

### HARNESSING CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

The growth of other key areas of engagement notwithstanding, both countries have not lost sight of the beating heart of the relationship: the enduring cultural and historical ties, mediated by maritime trade, that have bound the Indian and Filipino peoples for over a millennium. With globalization and connectivity shaping a shrinking world, both are resolved to awaken current generations to their respective rich natural and cultural heritage, via cultural exchanges and reciprocal tourism to foster mutual appreciation and understanding.

The staging of cultural festivals and film

screenings; promotion of educational and other exchanges; consular dialogues; and crucially the pursuit of air connectivity, are seen serving these ends. For the Philippines, the imminent implementation of e-Visas for Indian nationals represents a vital step towards bringing our communities ever closer.

### THE ROAD AHEAD

Interestingly, the Filipino word for destiny ("Tadhana") has origins in the Sanskrit word for bond (sandhana, सन्धान). The destiny of the Philippine-Indian relationship is thus inexorably linked to the ties that bind the two countries. As we look to the decades ahead, Ascendant Bharat and Rising Tiger Philippines find themselves on the cusp of a new and important chapter in the relationship, one that has acquired strategic value both for the attainment of bilateral ends reflecting the aspirations of the Filipino and Indian peoples; and indeed for the future of the Indo-Pacific and global commons.

Against the backdrop of fast evolving geopolitical dynamics, both nations have a stake in safeguarding a rules-based order where freedom of navigation, respect for international law, and inclusive development reign. Building on their shared values, long-standing ties, and common interests, India and the Philippines, as responsible regional players, are well-positioned to contribute significantly to the shaping of this peaceful and prosperous future.

The Embassy and Philippine Country Team in India take great pride in being part of ushering in this new, pivotal era in Philippine-Indian relations — an elevated, strategic partnership attuned to the demands and opportunities of the 21st century.

## BRAHMOS Deal is the beginning of further Defence pacts between India and the Philippines



**How will the BrahMos deal impact the socio-economic ties between the two countries in the future?**

The Republic of Philippines has assumed a very important position in India's 'Act East' policy and the BRAHMOS deal is a testament to it. While the supersonic cruise missile system is going to be a vital asset in the Armed Forces of Philippines' modernization process, this deal has also paved the way to establish a more robust, longstanding multi-faceted relationship between the two countries. In fact, bilateral engagements have expanded to cover many important aspects ranging from defence to maritime cooperation, especially in military training and education, capacity building & capacity enhancement. There is also huge scope in bilateral trade, education, healthcare, travel & tourism and people-to-people ties. November this year, marks the 75 years of diplomatic relationship between India and the Philippines. The BRAHMOS deal has happened at a very opportune time which, in fact, has opened up newer vistas for the two countries to reinvigorate their bilateral engagements in a more robust way.



**Atul Rane, Director General (BrahMos), DRDO and CEO&MD BrahMos Aerospace**

**November this year marks the 75 years of diplomatic relationship between India and the Philippines. The BRAHMOS deal has happened at a very opportune time which, in fact, has opened up newer vistas for the two countries to reinvigorate their bilateral engagements in a more robust way.**

**Post the Philippines agreement, how many nations have expressed interest in the weapon system?**

Philippines is our first foreign customer country with which we have signed our breakthrough export contract in January 2022. BRAHMOS is being liked by many countries as the cost of ownership for 10-15 years becomes significantly economical than any other weapon system of this range/capability due to its very low maintenance cost. The system is in the international market for quite some time, and there are many countries from across continents who have showed strong interest to acquire this universal weapon system to galvanize their military strength. There are countries from Southeast Asia, North Africa, Latin America etc. Some of these nations have renewed their push for BRAHMOS in recent times. We are actively engaged in negotiations with all of them.

**Please elaborate on the operational strategies and logistics you have devised to deliver the missiles?**

We will be delivering BRAHMOS anti-ship missile batteries to the Philippines in a phase-wise manner. Firstly, we will deliver the ground support systems and related equipment. Currently, the construction of Technical Storage facilities is going on and we hope to complete this task soon through joint efforts. These facilities would be used for storage, maintenance and final check-out of the missile system prior to its operational deployment. Once we fully complete this task, we will then move towards the next phase which would involve the delivery of the BRAHMOS missile systems. In the meantime, we have also given operational training to the first batch of Philippine Marine Corps (PMC) personnel in India on the SBASM systems.



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BOOKS, PAGE 3

- Romulus Whitaker with Janaki Lenin's *Snakes, Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll*
- Anisha Shekhar Mukherji's *The Red Fort of Shahjahanabad*
- Amitava Kumar's *The Yellow Book*

# THE LAST DANCE

For 17 IPL seasons, MS Dhoni, with his charm, persona and success has defined Chennai's summers. But with age catching up, and the end looming, CSK romantics are savouring every moment of him

Sandip G

**U**NDER THE canopy in the upper stands of the MA Chidambaram Stadium, billowing in the sea breeze from the Marina Coast are yellow banners that pleaded: "MS, Never Leave Us". This is the first game of Indian Premier League's (IPL) Season 17 but some fear this could be their last.

The banner had been held by thousands of men and women in their twenties, wondering whether this would be MS Dhoni's final season. Or worse, the last time they would see him. Seated beside them were older men, paunchy and balding, in whose minds Dhoni was still invincible. Some of them remembered how several sultry summers ago, he had struck a six into the stands to wrap up a chase, or when he punched the air after clinching the winning run. Watching him now, they were young again. It was yesterday once more.

When Dhoni leaves, the lingering remnants of youth, too, would desert them, they fear. "I would never again take the pain of coming to Chepauk to watch an IPL game. Dhoni was the magnet that pulled us to the stadium, despite the heat, traffic and crowd," Jayaraman, a schoolteacher and a member of CSK cheerleaders Whistle Podu Army, puts it eloquently. As an afterthought, he asks: "Will he ever retire?"

An athlete-deity is immortal in the mind of his devotee, timeless and infallible. But Dhoni is 42, has long relinquished international cricket, his IPL shows are extended cameos. He keeps for a full innings; his batting time has progressively declined. Last season, he faced only 57 balls in 12 innings, that is less than five balls an innings. One in every six balls, soared over the ropes, though, dizzying the crowd. "Athu pothum (that's enough)," says his self-proclaimed super fan Saravanan Hari, an unmissable presence in the stands, coats of yellow splashed over the body, Dhoni No 7 inked on his chest. "Oru thadavu paathale pothum (Just one sight of him is enough)," he says, twisting his body and shaking his head, as he, along with thousands, waits for the first *darshan* of Dhoni this IPL season. The "Dhoni, Dhoni..." staccato soundtrack melts into a deafening rhapsody. They would refer to him as *Thala* (leader), but chant his more tuneful surname, Dhoni.

Anxiety swirled through the crisp breeze. A day before the game, Dhoni had handed over the captaincy to Rituraj Gaikwad. He is phasing out his responsibilities, and at the end of the season, he could be gone too. Saravanan can't wrap his head around it. He pauses in stupor, and then gathers himself. "Sir, *ethuku kavala* (Why do you fear)? Just enjoy every moment of him," he says. Beside him a teenager asks his brother: "Anna, *Tirupati poid-lama*? (Shall we go to Tirupati?) The belief is that your desire will be granted if you shave your head in Tirupati, six-odd hours from the city, in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh.

Suddenly, the stadium shook in pure joy, echoing and re-echoing within the concrete canyon. Thousands of people had jumped wildly to their feet, joyously screaming. Dhoni strode onto the field, the end of his tress tugging his muscular shoulders, his snug-fit training shirt and shorts shining in the floodlight, that flickered to life after the ostentatious opening ceremony, where a mere flicker of his face gathered more fervent applause than the dance and music show by some of the countries leading singers, among them the man they call Mozart of Madras, AR Rahman.

Dhoni walked to the edge of the practice pitch, poked his head out and looked up. He could see nothing above except the packed, towering stands that seemed swaying, and he could see no clouds or the black sky but only a sky of yellow faces. He could feel the breath of 50,000 lungs upon him, 100,000 eyes

watching his every move. For the briefest instant, he walked with his eyes closed, soaking in the adulation. Perhaps, Dhoni would miss the stands and city, just as the stands and city would miss him.

This atmosphere has defined the scorching summers of the city since 2008. The grand old city would miss this when he leaves the franchise. The music, the joy, the bonding, and Dhoni binding it all together like an orchestra conductor, modulating the mood of their evenings and touching their lives. A deathly silence strikes Saravanan when he hears the retirement talk. "I haven't thought of it. Rather, I can't think of it. What will I do? What will we do?" Saravan asks, more like an aside, in the tone of an existential pang.

Life will move on even after Dhoni's farewell. An inorganic connection is already being struck with Rituraj Gaikwad and Shivaji Rao Gaikwad, better known as Rajinikanth, the biggest celluloid star of the state. There are other new stars like Rachin Ravindra and Matheesha Pathirana blossoming. "Of course, we would support CSK, but it wouldn't be the same again," says Jayaraman. The yellow jersey will lose some of its soul.

The summer of 2008 was the harshest of the decade in the State. Power interruptions were common. Water was scarce. Dispute over water sharing with neighbouring states, Kerala and Karnataka, intensified. Industries were forced to work in half their capacity. The mercury rose to intolerable levels; the Opposition leader J Jayalithaa spent most of the year in her controversial Kodanadu estate in Ooty. Then, Dhoni came like a spell of summer shower, bringing freshness and hope.

His acquisition is a compelling story. Other franchises pursued the five icon players, even if most were ageing. But CSK didn't push for any because they knew they had to give them 15 per cent more wages than what they would to the most expensive player. The team management saw this as an advantage and threw their kitchen sink on the auction table for Dhoni. It cost them \$1.5 million, the most expensive signing of the year. But the cricketing logic was sharp — Dhoni was only 26, had already won the T20 World Cup and in a few years would become the most important figure in Indian cricket.

Thus began the Dhoni story in Chennai, not by default or design, but by destiny. He straightaway endeared to the audience. In his first appearance in a function in the then team hotel Adyar Gate, he didn't resort to the staple stool of trying to force a few words in Tamil, or come draped in *veshti*. He was both warm and reclusive at the same time. He didn't do TV shows or give interviews, kept his mind unto himself and his close associates, seldom appeared in public functions, barely ever flaunted his wealth, the commercials he appeared were cultured and kept himself away from controversies. In the anonymity of the night, some said he zipped his super bikes on the sprawling Mount Road. Or he would clandestinely visit the racing racks in Sriperumbudur and take a spin on a race car. All the unverified accounts embellished his mystique (and mystery). He was original; walked his own path.

Apt to parody a one-liner from Rajinikanth's *Badayappa* (1999), that the stadium DJ diligently drops in whenever the on-field screen flashes Dhoni's name: "En vazhi, thani vazhi." Roughly translated as "My path, a unique path."

Bikes and long hair, helicopter shots and flamboyance, you could trace a Rajini-like trajectory. The messy theatrical superhero. He of the sunglass-flip, the cigarette-flick, the slow walks, the iconoclast actor who redefined the image of a hero, that you needed to look and act in a particular way to succeed.

Dhoni's former colleague and the finest

## 133

The number of CSK wins under MS Dhoni, the most by any IPL captain

## 4,376

The number of runs Dhoni has scored as captain for CSK, the second-most by any captain in the league

## 10

The finals CSK has appeared in, with Dhoni on the wheels. No other captain comes close. He has won half of them

## 183

The dismissals effected by Dhoni, the most by any wicketkeeper in the league

cricketer the city has produced, R Ashwin, delves into the city's psychology. "Chennai's love for Dhoni, Chennai's love for Rajinikanth... So on and so forth, you can keep on going. The city has a tendency to celebrate people and love them. Or what they bring to the city and what flavour they bring. Chennai loves its sports and cinema. And Dhoni has successfully won titles for CSK, and that is an important factor."

Just like Rajinikanth kept churning out blockbusters in heaps, and before that another outsider who eventually became the CM, MG Ramachandran, Dhoni and Co delivered titles in abundance. Tamil Nadu had won the Ranji Trophy only twice, despite the love, passion and infrastructure for the game in the State. In 14 seasons of the IPL they have competed in, they won the trophy five times besides a pair of now-scrapped Champions League silverware. The State had birthed cricket stars, but not a megawatt star, until Dhoni came along. "The lack of trophies on the shelf was a big factor. I think the ability of Dhoni, along with his charisma and nature, and the trophies (his team won) has doubled up wonderfully. People would accept you as long as they produce results, and I think Dhoni has wonderfully produced the result," the spinner with 516 Test wickets explained to this newspaper.

He deconstructs the myth of the audience liking him for his flamboyance. "It probably helps in the other parts of the country but I would probably think Chennai is a more conservative city compared to others. It has a lot of old-school values, and 70 per cent of the people who love Dhoni would say, you know what, see how humble he is. They ask him a question and he answers in a simple way. They admire him for that, more than for his bikes and hair; which would probably go down well with other parts of the country," he says.

So has his "etiquette and well-mannered nature". "The one thing that people don't talk enough about Dhoni is when he talks, even if he doesn't like something or doesn't like you, he is so objective and well-mannered in putting that thought across. He never hurts people. If you don't hurt people, your good nature comes through," says Ashwin. The masses in Chennai would agree.

Dhoni was both warm and reclusive at the same time. He didn't do TV shows or give interviews, barely ever flaunted his wealth... In the anonymity of the night, some said he zipped his super-bikes in the sprawling Mount Road

Unlike the heroes on the silver-screen, Dhoni was real, a hero in flesh and bone, a hero in front of them. He was *nijam* (real). Not an illusion or *poi* (lie). He is not filmy. Only that reel stars can act forever. Sportsmen have to retire at some point.

In the season opener against RCB, hope buzzed when CSK lost their fourth wicket, chasing RCB's 174 on the opening night of IPL-17. Dhoni might walk in and hit the winning runs, the perfect script to a perfect match. The DJ, heightening the crowd's anticipation, chimed in another popular line from the Rajinikanth-blockbuster *Muthu* (1995): "Naan eppo varuven, eppadi varuvunu yaarkkum theriyadhu. Aana vara vendiya nerathula correct aa varuven." I don't know when I would come or how I would come. But I will come at the right time."

The right time never arrived. The stadium celebrated the victory. But underneath, hollowness tossed and twisted. Even as CSK players emptied the dressing room, the crowd lingered to catch one last glance of him — MS, Hero, Thala, Dhoni. When there was no one left, a numb sweat shivered through their spine. "Will they see him ever again?" the

question rumbled onto the now quiet shores of Marina at midnight.

Despair displaced joy on their face. Super fan Saravanan, picking himself up, swears he would manage tickets for all games; Dhoni look-alike Rishabh Malakar is not quite optimistic and carefully tucks the ticket into his wallet. "I will frame the ticket, if this happens to be my last game (of watching Dhoni)," he says. Saravanan has carefully preserved tickets of every match he has watched.

The streets outside the stadium are a mess of humans and vehicles. On the sidewalks of Wallajah Road and Bells Road, vendors are still selling Dhoni caps and shirts. "We have stacked double the numbers we usually do. This could be Dhoni's last season, and hence there would be more demand," says Syed Naseeruddin Shahbaz, who owns Dhoni Sports, a shop on the bend of the Wallajah Road, from where the Whistle Podu Army starts their march to the stadium.

Nearly 90 per cent of jerseys are yellow and blare the No 7, though the texture differs. "Have you seen any other jerseys?" quizzes Muthupandi, a roadside vendor. That evening and night alone, he had sold around 1,000 jerseys, each at a minimum of Rs 250. He was a fisherman, but post tsunami in 2004, where he lost several of his friends, he is scared of the sea. "There was a time when I used to sell 1,000 karaipodi (or silver belly, a type of fish found mostly in coastal Tamil Nadu), but now my catch is Dhoni jerseys," he says. He has never watched a game inside the stadium, or even on the television. But Dhoni is his favourite player. "Because, his jerseys sell like no others," he says.

Thus, when Dhoni retires, an industry around him, too, would collapse. The fans would have to discover a new idol, the city would have to find new ways to define their summers, the DJ has to wrack his head over fresh punchlines (those of Rajini seamlessly fitted with Dhoni) to keep the audience engaged, the jersey-sellers would have to find a fresh name and number. Middle-aged men would lose their last slice of youth, the young would grow older, and the banners would keep fluttering under the canopy roofs: "MS, Don't Leave Us."

ILLUSTRATION: SUVAJIT DEY



# DOWN IN JUNGLELAND

RANJIT LAL Author, environmentalist and bird watcher



**SIZE MATTERS**  
Even the smaller yappy-snappy ones can be holy terrors

## Let barking dogs lie

Do the dogs need training or the owners who provoke them?

**O**VERTWENTY breeds of 'ferocious' dogs have now been banished from Indian shores, and those that are here, will have to be sterilised, to ensure the end of their lines. These include the magnificent Rottweiler, the not-quite-pretty Pit-bull, gigantic mastiffs and other 'bully' breeds, which have been bred as guard dogs or for dog-fighting. These dogs, the accusation goes, have been bred to be violent, and hence are a danger to people at large. And as usual, it's not the dogs that are to blame, but us, for selectively breeding and seeding aggressive traits in these breeds, until, to some extent, it becomes inherent in the breed.

It's relatively easy to train a dog to behave violently: by keeping it tied up all day, by teasing it, denying it food and even beating it. All pet dogs (and even strays, which probably account for more dog bites than all the others), like all people, need to be socialised, with us, human beings and with their own kind. And more than them, it's their owners that need obedience training.

My own Boxer, Chops, was a big

Just as undesirable traits can be bred into a dog, they can be bred out of dogs, too

sloppy oaf with my friends because he had been taught how to behave around them, but was a terror with other dogs, simply because I had not taught him how to behave when among his own kind, making him believe he was one big *dada* dog who was boss of the canine world. My Labrador, Wag, was just the opposite: He was unpredictable with people, could not be trusted around children, but was happy to make friends with other dogs (unless they did something unacceptable) simply because I had introduced him to a pair of lovely Labradors, when he was a pup. A little stray pup (of one of his friends), who I named Hands-Up would wait for Wag every evening on the path I walked him on the Ridge, and roll over, squeaking excitedly and squirting away, as Wag trotted up to him and gave him a regal nod, like a Mafia don blessing a novice pick-pocket. But Wag would snatch a biscuit — none too gently from a child with no compunction, just a warning growl maybe. Chops too, once pinched a biscuit from my toddler nephew, but apologetically and very gently, with a lugubrious sigh, suggesting, 'ah, my friend, what to do, such is the way of the world.'

Wag was a perplexing case, because he had been brought up (and socialised) in just the same way as our two earlier Boxers (Bambi and Chops), so why he had these most uncharacteristic, unpleasant Labrador traits was hard to fathom: possibly due to excessive in-breeding (or because he hailed from Hapur). The Boxers, which might have appeared more 'ferocious' were totally harmless and never even growled at anyone, ever.

And, just as undesirable traits can be bred into a dog, they can be bred out of dogs, too. Boxers were originally bred for bull-baiting (as were Bulldogs) and in Germany, could only be given their breed certificates if they (and probably their owners) passed an Army test, for discipline, physical strength and demeanour. So they were tough, no-nonsense soldier dogs if you like. That was until they went to America and the UK, where over generations, these hard-core traits were bred out of them and they became the big, sloppy family clowns they are today. The same holds true of English bulldogs. Don't get me wrong: a badly brought up Boxer can also be a nasty piece of work.

Does size and breed really matter so much? Well, obviously, a big dog can cause more damage if it attacks, but even the smaller yappy-snappy ones can be holy terrors and are more likely to have hair-trigger responses being size-challenged. A beagle, a dachshund, or a Yorkshire can be as much of a terror as a Mastiff or a Rottweiler.

It's the people who breed these violent dogs, or train them to be so, that need to be put away, before their dogs. 'Weaponising' a Bull-mastiff or Pit-bull is as good as opening up with an unlicensed AK-47. More important than merely registering your pet dog with the authorities, it should be made mandatory that anyone who wants to keep a dog, attend and pass — with their dog — a training school, especially mastering primary-level commands: "Sit! Stay! Come! Heel!" The only thing your dog wants is to be able to please you, and, regrettably, if that includes attacking children or the elderly, well so be it, that's what it will do.

What you do have to watch out for is the pack instinct. Dogs are pack animals, and when a pack collects, they can switch into hunting mode, which turns even the sweetest-tempered dog into a horror from hell. We can hardly blame them — look at what happens when our own mob mentality takes over.



# Neurodiversity at Work

As we celebrate Autism Acceptance Month, let's commit to making our workplaces inclusive and safe and where we work with neurodivergent minds rather than against them

## IMAGINE

SHELJASEN



Shelja Sen is a narrative and family therapist, writer, co-founder of Children First. In this column she curates the know-how of the children and youth she has the honour of working with. Email her at shelja.sen@childrenfirstindia.com

**R**ONNY HAD Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) which made him struggle with time management and organisational skills demands at school and college, as these spaces are inevitably designed for neurotypical learning. When he started working in a PR agency, he was excited to start afresh as he had always heard that he had great "people skills" and the job profile promised a fair bit of travel, which he loved. However, what he was not ready for was the way his workspace did not give any space for his neurodivergence. As he explained, "I was required to sit on my chair all the time, answering endless emails, keeping up with the slack messages, and by the end of it seemed I was chasing my tail round and round." If that was not bad enough, there were constant derogatory remarks being thrown at him for tardiness, which immobilised him even further. Most folks with neurodivergence grow up with humiliation and as Ronny put it, "with a sense of disappointing everyone around them like square pegs being pushed into round slots." He tried to numb the despair by partying late or playing video games endlessly, which impacted the work situation further until the time he was "burnt-out, charred and shredded of my dignity."

Sara identified as autistic and "neuro-queer" and got into a computer engineering company after college. However, what she was not ready for was the huge number of meetings she had to attend every day, the open workspace where everyone was constantly talking and interacting with each other. She loved the work but the social aspect of her job left her exhausted. "Every day I return depleted as if I have come back from a war zone," she said. She started falling sick repeatedly and it became so bad that she had to leave her job with the conclusion, "I am just not suitable for work, there is something wrong with me."

Historically, psychiatry has pathologised, medicalised neurodivergence as a checklist of

deficits, delays and dysfunctions that children with ADHD, autism and learning disabilities might be living with. A majority still impose this practice and yet there are some who have taken a step ahead and become part of the neurodiversity movement who do not see neurodivergence as a disorder to be fixed but a different way of being and living in this world. Some schools and colleges across the world have adopted various innovative pedagogies and seen their children thrive. Similarly, parents who have driven the movement have been strong advocates for making homes and public spaces safe for all and not just the neuro-majority. But what do we do when these young people grow up, become adults and start working? The prevalence indicates that in a workspace of 50 people, there would be around two to three people with ADHD and at least one with autism. So we have many Ronnies and Saras navigating their way in an unaccommodating neurotypical world, carrying the burden of failure when actually, it is the world that has failed at keeping them safe.

## Neurodiversity, social justice and human rights

Each person deserves to live a life of dignity and respect. When it comes to neurodivergent folks, there is always an assumption and expectation that they face from their childhood, that only if they tried hard enough or pushed themselves a little more, they could become like everyone else i.e. neurotypical. It pushes pressure on them to mask or what is now being termed adaptive morphing, as a survival skill, in the face of a threatening world. However, it can be crippling as all their energy goes into pretending to fit in a neurotypical world. It can lead to mental health challenges like depression and anxiety. There is nothing wrong with Ronny or Sara, as it is their human right that they are understood and acknowledged for who they are rather than who they are expected to be. The biggest problem with the notions of neuronormativity is that it propagates that there is one "normal" kind of mind which ends up stigmatising anything that is atypical. We have to question this — who does it serve, who benefits from it and who does it privilege? On the other hand, who does it rob of dignity, who gets invisibilised? The question is what steps can we take in our workspaces to make it more neurodiverse safe?

**Acknowledgement** — Respecting diversity means making sure people are acknowledged despite their differences. Where Ronny's innovative ideas and knack for connecting to people are valued and he is allowed to play to his strengths rather than constantly harassed for struggling with time management. Where Sara is able to seek solitude to work on her creative projects without guilt or fear of being judged or discriminated against for not being social. Where people can talk openly about their neurodivergence without shame or being dismissed as being "weird". In our organisation, we practise "neurodivergence pride" and our motto is, "Each person is wired and inspired differently" while still maintaining rigour and quality of our services.

**Accountability** — We are all humans and we all mess up at work from time to time. How can we bring in and let others bring their best selves to work? How can we practise expansive accountability? Systemic injustice is endemic for people who have faced oppression like those who live with disability or neurodivergence, queer folks, women and so on. How can we weave in expansive accountability so that whenever anyone messes up, we can have conversations upholding the respect and dignity of the person and invite agency? Similarly, what processes can be put into place, just like Vishakha guidelines and PoSH in organisations, so that there can be redressal against harassment?

**Allyship** — There might be little scepticism at neurodivergence as "mollycoddling" young people and as a "new age fad." Neurodivergence has always been there but not recognised and these were the people who were dismissed as "lazy", "can't stick to a job", "irresponsible", and "untrustworthy" until we lost them to addictions, internalised shame, or suicide. Ronny and Sara have both opted to work in smaller set-ups that align with their values. I asked them if they had any messages for young people with neurodivergence. Sara said, "You would have to be your own advocate, fight your battles for diversity, but do not take the world's nonsense personally." And Ronny's words were, "Look for joy in what you do, support each other and find your allies."

In April, as we celebrate Autism Acceptance Month, let's commit to making our workspaces inclusive and safe and where we work with neurodivergent minds rather than against them.

●●●  
Respecting diversity means making sure we acknowledge people despite their differences  
●●●

# On the Fast Track

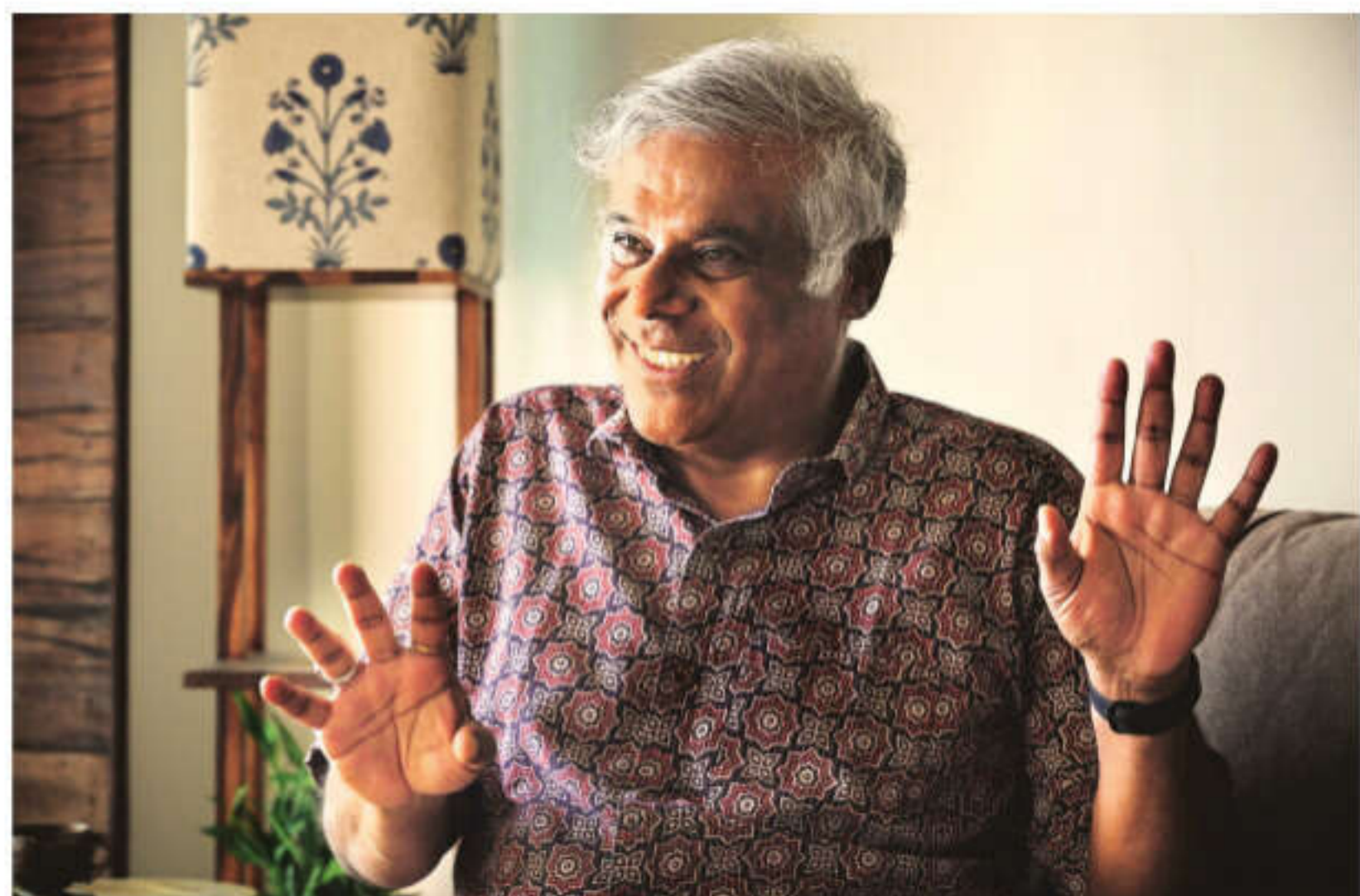
Ashish Vidyarthi, best known for playing the antagonist in films, on being a motivational speaker and his debut as a stand-up comedian

Heena Khandelwal

"calm down" or "take it easy". The idea of doing a stand-up emerged from his experience of working on Vikas Bahl's ZEE5 original web-series *Sunflower* (2021-) that saw him showing his comic side. "That seeded the idea of creating something in the comedy space," he says. Vidyarthi looked around him and began capturing everyday stories.

"It is a laugh on life and at myself. It has observations about filmmaking, about eating out and cooking, about the new found ways of living, as well as marriages and their breaking and making. For me, it is a personal memoir," he says, when we met him at his residence in Goregaon. Defying the post-lunch slump that consumes everyone, he had the enthusiasm of youth as he spoke about the "joy of holding a mic and speaking to an audience".

Born and brought up in Delhi, Vidyarthi, an alumnus of National School of Drama, moved to Mumbai for a film which eventually got shelved. Having no backup plan, he decided to look for work and did everything from reading stock trading rates for a television channel to auditioning for directors



**IN THE WINGS**  
Ashish Vidyarthi at his residence in Goregaon, Mumbai  
SANKHADEEP BANERJEE

and producers in their living rooms while they ate their breakfast. Soon the actor found his footing with *Droh Kaal* (1994), his first film which won him the National Film Award for best supporting actor. "There was glory but there was no money in the bank," he says. Then the commercial roles came. "But, I realised that I am doing the same thing again and again. And,

I couldn't say no because I needed money. So in 1999, I decided to move to south-Indian cinema and there I got better roles and did about 250 films." It was the dissatisfaction with life despite a lot of work and personal joys — he had recently got married and became a father — that led Vidyarthi to join a "life forum" in early 2000. Such was the impact that he de-

ecided to enable others to live a fuller life. A couple of years later, he set up Avid Miner to become a motivational speaker. "Initially companies would hire me for a talk but people there would want to hear Bollywood stories. It took some time before they started calling me for the programme that I was offering," says Vidyarthi. This venture also gave him the privilege of being selective about

the roles he was getting in films. The pandemic introduced him to the world of social media where Vidyarthi has established himself as a food and travel vlogger with 6.65 million followers on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube combined. For him, who always enjoyed sharing his discoveries with others, this was right up his alley. "I bought a GoPro camera and started shooting my travel and food videos. I would go to lesser-known food joints and document them," he says.

It is through vlogging that he met his second wife, Rupali. Talking about the decision to end his first marriage, he shares that it was mutual because the way they saw their future was no longer in alignment. "People were surprised because they couldn't understand. Some even asked 'why are you getting divorced, you guys don't even fight'... I knew I would get married again because I believe in companionship and I had conveyed this to Piloou (Rajoshi, his first wife)." Although not a planner or a strategist, he hopes his stand-up act will receive the applause he's looking for and win him key and central roles in films and webseries. Like Neena Gupta, who put up a post on social media asking for work, Vidyarthi had also put out updates saying he is looking for work, even saying that if people are waiting for him to die to say what a great actor he was. "The actor's job is not to do roles but also to get roles," he says, adding, "I am an extraordinary actor, waiting for an amazing role. Only when they both meet will that magic happen."



In conservationist Romulus Whitaker's latest, he describes life in the wild, his migratory existence and the cocktail of psychedelics and politics in 1960s' US

Stephen Alter

**L**ET ME begin with a confession: If I pick up a book with a blurb by Zeenat Aman that says, "This is one wild trip!", I'm hooked. Romulus Whitaker's new memoir, written in collaboration with Janaki Lenin, certainly takes us on a wild ride from the bucolic woodlands of upstate New York to the tidal pools of Juhu Beach, traversing the Palani Hills of Kodaikanal and the alligator-infested swamps of Florida, interspersed with treacherous voyages on rusty freighters crashing through forty-foot waves in the North Atlantic and motorcycle journeys heading both west and east, not to mention the mystical solitude of Arizona's high deserts, where rattlesnakes sun themselves on the rocks.

The first volume of a planned trilogy on Whitaker's lifelong obsession with reptiles, this book recounts his early years, up to his mid-20s. As the title, *Snakes, Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll*, suggests, it is a chronicle of an era too, from the 1950s through the 1960s, when 78 revolutions-per-minute records, free love and hallucinogenic substances helped ease the terrors of the Cold War and Vietnam.

This is also a story of migration, in which a young American boy travels to India at the age of eight. His mother, Doris Norden, escapes an abusive husband and remarries the ebullient, affectionate Rama Chattopadhyaya, who brings the family to Bombay (now Mumbai) where he sets up India's first motion picture-processing lab and hobnobs with film stars. Though initially homesick, Romulus (nicknamed "Breezy") quickly adapts to his adoptive homeland, particularly the diverse array of wild creatures that creep, crawl and fly along the margins of a rapidly expanding metropolis. He and his sisters, Gail and Nina, are quickly embraced by Rama's family, particularly "Amma-Doodles" (as he calls Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, his new grandmother) with whom he shares a special bond.

A displaced American who grew up in India, Romulus confronts the many ambiguities and anxieties of a global identity. One of the book's most troubling moments is when he and his sister Gail, both blonde and blue-eyed, take their half-brother Neel (born to Doris and Rama) swimming at the Breach Candy Club in Bombay. While they are welcome, Neel isn't allowed entry because of his dark hair and brown skin. Later, when Romulus returns to



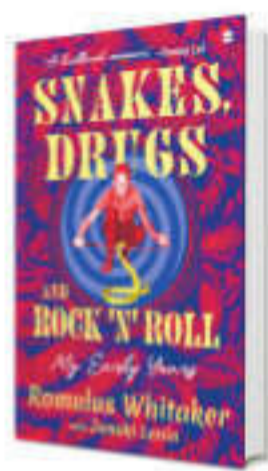
**ON THE WING**  
 Pet kite. Shangrila, Bombay, 1959

COURTESY: JANAKI LENIN

## A TRIP TO REMEMBER

the United States after graduating from high school, he writes of the "trepidation and uncertainty" of arriving at La Guardia airport in New York, where he blends into the crowd of White faces though he feels as if he "belonged to a breed apart", adding, "The States may have been my country of birth but it was foreign. I was more Indian at heart than a Whitey. This cognitive dissonance has lasted all my life." These feelings persist at other points in the story, especially when he confronts racism in America.

Be warned that this is not a book for the faint-hearted or for readers in search of tranquil platitudes about nature. A good deal of violence fills these pages, as Romulus arms himself with catapults, fireworks, pellet guns and an arsenal of even more lethal weapons. While birds and small mammals fall prey to this adolescent hunter-gatherer, the one family of creatures he doesn't kill is snakes. Instead, Romulus is entranced by their lithe and limber forms and catches sand boas, keelbacks and pythons with his bare hands, after which he moves on to handle highly venomous species like Russel's vipers and cobras. Some are kept as pets while others are released back into the wild.



**SNAKES, DRUGS AND ROCK 'N' ROLL**  
 BY ROMULUS WHITAKER WITH JANAKI LENIN  
 HarperCollins  
 400 pages  
 ₹699



**TAKE FIVE**  
 Gail, Doris, Breezy with Neel and Nina.  
 Bombay, 1955

One of the fascinating aspects of this memoir is the way in which predatory human instincts lay the foundations for a career in wildlife conservation. India has a complicated history of hunter-conservationists and one could argue that the paradox inher-

ent in that phrase raises a variety of ethical questions. Nevertheless, as we follow Romulus's early adventures, it's possible to trace a clear trajectory that leads from shooting and stuffing specimens to protecting and preserving wild animals and wild places.

Readers are cautioned that the book contains plenty of tobacco, sex, alcohol, adult themes and drugs. Though he doesn't promote their use, Rom is open and candid about his first-hand experiences with marijuana, LSD, peyote and other mind-bending ingestibles.

Popular music from the fifties and sixties provides an accompanying soundtrack, from the sultry lyricism of Nat King Cole's *Nature Boy* and Joan Baez's *Silver Dagger* to the pounding rhythms and wailing guitar riffs of Bill Haley and the Comet's classic *Rock Around the Clock* and Frank Zappa's album *Freak Out*. There is even a QR code that readers can follow to access this playlist, with a gallery of photographs to supplement the glossy inserts in the book.

Written in an easy-going, conversational tone, with a fast-paced medley of personal experiences, *Snakes, Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll* is a vivid tell-all memoir that offers an intimate, irreverent self-portrait of one of India's most eminent naturalists and conservationists.

Stephen Alter is a writer and most recently authored *The Cobra's Gaze: Exploring India's Wild Heritage*

## Where walls have stories

Architect Anisha Shekhar Mukherji examines why the Red Fort still captures the popular imagination

Adrija Roychowdhury

**T**HERE WAS once a Red Fort, brimming with Mughal grandeur, a city by itself, meticulously planned and maintained by the emperor Shah Jahan. What remains today is a mere residue of the once glamorous imperial enterprise. And yet, the Red Fort is just as relevant in the India of today as it was in the India of the Mughals. Conservation architect Anisha Shekhar Mukherji's second edition of *The Red Fort of Shahjahanabad: An Architectural History* traces the transition of the fort from its zenith under Shah Jahan to its present condition, and tries to unpack the complex reasons behind the fort's undying significance in the socio-political landscape of Delhi and India.

The book begins with a pertinent question: "Whose fort is it anyway?" Indeed, the Red Fort was built by the Mughals in the 1600s, and large parts of it were demolished by the British after 1857. But it was reclaimed by the government of Independent India after 1947 when Jawaharlal Nehru chose the fort for the annual celebration of Independence Day. Today, politics of conservation and tourism have resulted in a strict distance being maintained between the fort and the people. Mukherji argues that it is high time we change our attitude towards heritage conservation and allow citizens a robust say in the matter instead of "seeking ratification of our past from elsewhere in the world."

Over the course of the next nine chapters, Mukherji provides rich details about the history of the fort — why Delhi was chosen as its seat, the motivations for its architectural planning, how the city inside it lived and persisted, its imperial motifs, the assault and destruction of the fort, the problems in the way it has been conserved, and, finally, what accounts for the sustenance of its grandeur. In the process, she urges the reader to think beyond the aesthetics of the arches and pillars in the fort and reflect closely upon the people and the politics of the time.

For instance, what prompted Shah Jahan to make use of the concept of pavilions as palaces more extensively than any other Mughal ruler? He, in fact, patronised the development of imperial mosques as single-storey pavilions. This, as Mukherji argues, was not simply an aesthetic choice but well-rooted in the emperor's political vision. Similarly, as the emperor replaced Akbar's Din-i-ilahi religion with Sunni ascendency in everyday affairs of the state, the choice and form of architecture patronised by him was quickly reflexive of this shift.

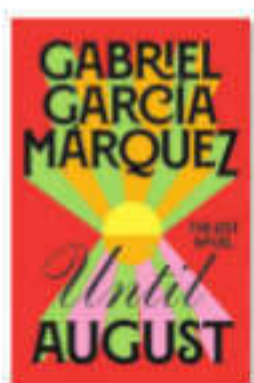
The highlight of Mukherji's writing is her ability to successfully blend technical details on architecture with lucid, nuanced history writing. She weaves in important information on issues around conservation and the condition of the fort as it exists today and provides interesting anecdotes, making the Fort come alive both in its past and in its present. Although she points out the scarcity of historical sources available to fully understand the 400-plus years of the Fort's history, she makes a praiseworthy effort of joining the dots from available textual and visual material to paint a vibrant picture of court rituals, everyday imperial affairs, the life of the commoners and more.

Although, structurally and narratively, Mukherji has retained much of what she wrote in the 2003 first edition, she has added information on the nature of the Red Fort's present state and its surroundings. While the Fort's location has remained the same, Delhi has grown exponentially in the last 20 years, both in terms of the scale of urbanisation as well as population and traffic, making it increasingly difficult for people to access and engage with the fort. Further, the Fort is now under the tutelage of a private organisation. All of these factors have been woven into the second edition to provide an updated interpretation of the Lal Qila.



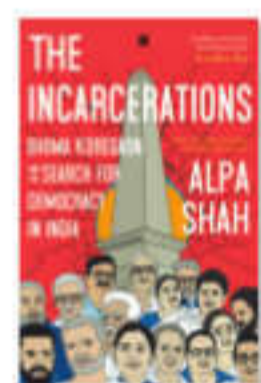
**THE RED FORT OF SHAHJAHANABAD: AN ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY**  
 BY ANISHA SHEKHAR MUKHERJI  
 Westland  
 372 pages  
 ₹1,299

## SHELF LIFE



**UNTIL AUGUST** (₹ 799, Penguin) by Gabriel Garcia Marquez is the master's latest work, posthumously released and garnering mixed reviews. It oscillates between being a gift from a seemingly unbound author and a cash-grab

by the family that went against his wishes to not publish it. We are lucky to have one more yarn from Gabo: about a happily married woman who travels to a Caribbean island every year in search of a lover.

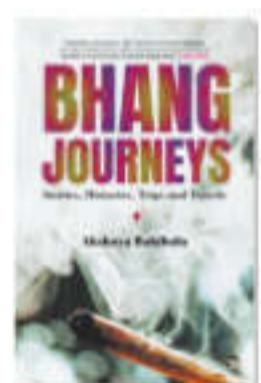


**THE INCARCERATIONS** (₹ 699, HarperCollins) by Alpa Shah is an authoritative account of the Bhima Koregaon case where 16 people were imprisoned without trial, with one of them, activist Stan Swamy, dying in custody

in 2018 after suffering from Parkinson's, COVID and multiple age-related diseases. In a press note, Shah said, "(This book) shines a global light on the brutality of authoritarianism."



**THE PENGUIN Book of Bengali Short Stories** (₹ 1250, Penguin), edited by Arunava Sinha, is a compilation of short fiction when the form was still developing during the British Raj. It covers land wars, famine, the caste system, religious conflict, patriarchy, Partition and the (Bangladesh) liberation war and characters as an ageing local footballer, a middle-class union rep and a lawyer who stumbles upon a philosopher's stone.



**BHANG JOURNEYS** (₹ 299, Speaking Tiger) by Akshaya Bahibala is a fun account of what marijuana and cannabis can do for and to you — personally, professionally, and whatever is in between. Told in the style of travelogue, the work recounts true stories of many people from Odisha who are struggling with addiction, disease, trade and regulation, with Bahibala's journey described as "both a celebration and a warning."

## The Memory of Forgotten Things

Amitava Kumar's new book explores what it means to be open to possibilities in an attention-deficit world

Paromita Chakrabarti

IN 2020, as the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic spiralled into a catastrophe, in an essay that was published in *The Indian Express*, writer Amitava Kumar wrote of grief and the erosion of compassion, of loss and the anatomy of a tragedy, both personal and universal. "This pandemic hasn't generated grief alone. We have experienced, by turns and often together, melancholy, outrage, fear, and last but not least, anger at the bad faith of our rulers everywhere. In India, where some of our products rely more on a robust practice of adulteration, and everything is 50-50 or *aadha-aadha*, we get *aadha* grief, *aadha* gaslighting. *Aadha* pain, *aadha* manufactured outrage. *Aadha* genuine fear, *aadha* cultivated ignorance. There is nothing pure or sacred, not even sorrow... The contagion has produced a new world, no doubt, but everything

appears to be only a repetition of all that was there before."

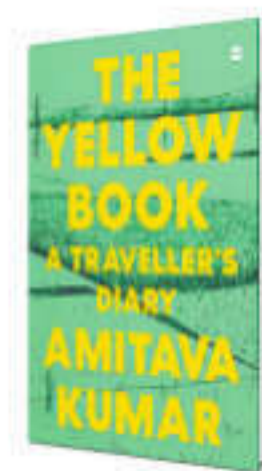
Reading *The Yellow Book: A Traveller's Diary*, that shares a contiguous time frame, brings back memories of that essay and reaffirms how Kumar is at his finest when he is a record-keeper of the quotidian. "How to stop time?" he asks at the beginning of this hybrid book — an amalgamation of journal entries, sketches, photographs, craft know-hows and reflections, recorded between the lifting of the lockdown after the first wave of the pandemic and December 2022. In this time, he travels from the US to London to conduct a study tour with a group of American students amid the Omicron wave; a year later, he returns "home", to Patna to his father and sisters, but also to Jadopur, the village in Bihar from where his father had begun his journey. Interspersed in between these vignettes are professorial advice to his students on life and writing, at the heart of



**THE TIME KEEPER**  
 Writer Amitava Kumar

which is the grandiose question: "How to stop time?"

The answer to this though is far less complicated than one might imagine. "You must keep a journal," Kumar advises, "...make marks in your journal all the time", "return to what you once enjoyed", "Be alert to the passing seasons" for "time cannot be stopped, of course, but it can be lived more fully." If these sound a bit trite, Kumar can be forgiven for the cliches. In a world obsessed with the screen and the self, these are crucial DIY post-its — to look out, look beyond and to take note.



**THE YELLOW BOOK: A TRAVELLER'S DIARY**  
 BY AMITAVA KUMAR  
 HarperCollins  
 216 pages  
 ₹699

For Kumar, this note-taking seems to be a regenerative experience. As in *The Blue Book: A Writer's Journal* (2022), here, too, he observes keenly, almost obsessively, the passage of time and events. But what lends them urgency is his ability to contextualise them historically, culturally and emotionally. In one of the most urgent essays in the collection, "Enemy of the People," he writes of the transcendental power of language and literature in offering resistance to authoritarianism, of the idea of Salman Rushdie — with his obduracy in the face of opposition, his constant challenges to the status quo and his inim-

itable use of the English language — as what Edward Said had called an "intifada of the imagination." In the aftermath of the grievous attack on Rushdie in August 2022, Kumar writes, "When I was twenty-four, the same age as his assailant, Rushdie was magically imagining my life and making it real. Or so it felt. I was a new immigrant in the United States, and in essay after essay, later collected in *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie offered me a language to recognise myself as an individual in the West. He had always asked: How does newness enter the world? It was a migrant's question."

These offer glimpses not just into the scholarship of the writer but also the life of the writer for whom reading had breathed into reality an intellectual landscape full of possibilities. In an open letter to Rushdie's attacker Hadi Matar, that had first appeared in *The Indian Express* and parts of which appear in the essay, Kumar writes, "Like the man you tried to kill, I, too, am a writer. As my life has been given over to reading and writing books, I hold on to the belief that if we read widely and deeply, we will encounter people and places unlike ourselves. This sense of difference, its pleasures and challenges, will perhaps steer us away from intolerance. Many people in this country (the US), including Malcolm X, discovered reading in prison — and were transformed. I hope that you too will find a similar liberation in learning."

Kumar peppers cues for this liberation throughout *The Yellow Book*. There are les-

sons on voice and honesty, on the importance of observation and of reading constantly, incessantly. In these passages, Kumar, professor of English at Vassar College, assumes the grandiloquent voice of the distinguished academic, dazzling readers (and students) with his easy proximity to and camaraderie with literary heavyweights, whose wisdom they may benefit from simply by being attentive to the page.

A journal is necessarily a *mise-en-scène* unified by the writer's curatorial vision. Kumar is at his most authentic when he is looking inwards, mapping his own emotional attachments and interrogating their complications through interactions with memory and personal history. One of the most touching essays in the collection, "Host Country/ Lost Country", is an intimate account of the writer's relationship with his father as the latter's health begins to fail during the pandemic. It is an unvarnished register of filial longing for the ties that anchor us and whose loss leaves us unmoored. "When my father was gone, a large part of my past would disappear, like one of those videos you see of landslides, an entire cliff with a winding road and cars disappearing into the swirling river. It wasn't land or property that I was thinking about... It was the people who had made my past who would soon be gone," Kumar writes.

It is impossible to stop time, but by holding on to these memories, it is possible, Kumar seems to say, to remember what it meant to live through them.



# At 28, this techie survives four brain strokes

‘Every day, I see at least two patients with strokes, who are under 40,’ says Dr Praveen Gupta, principal director and unit head, neurology, Fortis, Gurugram



### IDENTIFY A BRAIN STROKE

- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding speech
- Dizziness, loss of balance
- Numbness in face, arms, legs or one side of the body
- Vision problems
- Sudden severe headaches

cited about and he decided to move there permanently. But on January 31 this year, Akshay had an episode of vertigo. Tests showed minor strokes and he was given blood thinner injections for four days.

“But on February 2, I felt anxious, dizzy and thought my head would explode. The brain scans showed two developing clots and I resumed blood thinner injections for six days. Ten days later, I had a blackout at a mall. The doctor put me on anticoagulants and increased the dosage of other medication. Then, on March 9, I slipped while trying to get off a train in my hometown. My right hand and leg went numb as I lay in hospital for five days with vertigo,” says Akshay, who decided to consult Dr Gupta in Gurugram.

He found the real problem — Akshay was now becoming resistant to medication. “In such cases, we have to keep rotating and changing the medication. Normally, when strokes happen in young patients, there are issues with the heart, such as a hole, blood clots and deformed arteries. Fortunately, Akshay doesn’t have all of this and he can recover. But a stroke patient can have secondary strokes if the triggers like blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, diet and exercise are not addressed aggressively,” he adds.

Now Akshay is on double blood thinners which will prevent clotting by two mechanisms. He is also on mild hypertension medicines, statins and Clonazepam to relax his brain and help him sleep better.

“However, now I have a more holistic approach to my health as medication can only prevent a crisis but a lifestyle change can stop me from getting to the edge in the first place. I have a lot of green vegetables, avoid high cholesterol diets and exercise for 30 minutes daily. I do not smoke and I sleep adequately,” says Akshay, who is learning to prioritise himself over his problems.



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“Every day, I see at least two patients with strokes, who are under 40. Their triggers are always the same — stress, overwork and anxiety topping the list, followed by obesity and sleep apnea. Recently, a 12-year-old patient of mine suffered a stroke,” he says, adding the case numbers have increased in the last two years.

Stress, Dr Gupta explains, causes the heart to work harder and increases heart rate, blood pressure, sugar and fat levels in the blood. It stimulates the body to produce more stress hormones, all of which result in inflammation, damage and tear to the lining of blood vessels and clot formation as platelets rush to cluster together. A dislodged clot can travel to the brain and cause a stroke.

“Akshay’s anxiety levels were so high that his body was in permanent crisis mode, resulting in sudden spikes in blood pressure and heart rate,” he adds. Even a slight increase in stress and anxiety levels may raise stroke risk, according to a study by the American Heart Association. Researchers followed more than 6,000 people over 22 years and found that those with the highest stress levels were 33 per cent more likely to have a stroke than those who felt less anxious or stressed.

Another reason behind brain strokes among the young population is homocysteine, an amino acid which clots the blood faster. “High levels of it have a correlation with moderate to high anxiety levels. You could be lacking certain B vitamins too,” says Dr Gupta.

### A HISTORY OF TRAUMA

So devastated was Akshay by his father’s death in May 2019 that he bottled up his emotions and left his hometown, taking up a teaching job in another city. But that distancing plunged him further into loneliness. “Everyone had someone to grieve with. I was all alone and my emotions were all over the place,” he says. Such was his need for companionship that he entered a relationship all

### FACT OF THE MATTER

The triggers for brain stroke are always the same — stress, overwork and anxiety topping the list followed by obesity and sleep apnea

too soon. That provided him some emotional relief. Which is why when he broke up with his partner, he crumbled all over again. This was the time when he showed classic symptoms of PTSD, having nightmares about his father and waking up all sweaty and breathless. “My heart pounded so hard that I consulted a cardiologist in August 2020. He put me on anxiety medication for two months. But then all hell broke loose. Apart from taking classes online, the lack of human contact meant I plummeted once again,” recalls Akshay.

By February 2021, he needed a psychiatrist, who recommended antidepressants and sleep medication. In April the same year, he contracted COVID-19. His D-dimer test, which indicates blood-clotting problems, was double than normal. This was the first red flag. “Some people with COVID-19 develop abnormal blood clots, including in the smallest blood vessels. And Akshay anyway had older triggers,” says Dr Gupta. The second red flag was September 2021 when Akshay had an episode of slurred speech, which his psychiatrist misdiagnosed as a panic attack. On October 9, 2021, Akshay had a blackout, his first stroke. But since he revived in a few seconds, he reck-

oned he had collapsed out of sheer exhaustion, not uncommon among those recovering from a bad bout of COVID. Just three days later, he had a major stroke. He felt dizzy, blacked out and lost sensation in his right limbs. “I was riding a bike that day and was saved in the nick of time. My friend rushed me to a neurologist and an MRI showed one clot,” says Akshay. He had had an MCA (middle cerebral artery) stroke. “This supplies a large part of the frontal, temporal and parietal lobes of the brain, which control many functions, including movement, sensation, coordination and language,” says Dr Gupta.

Akshay returned to his hometown and it took him a good two-and-a-half months to get the sensations back in his body. But he had to give up his teaching job as he could not speak fluently.

### RECURRENT STROKES

After recovery, Akshay took up a job as a content moderator in a social media company. For two years, nothing happened, his anxiety was under control and he was gradually weaned off medication. A company in Gurugram offered him a job that he was ex-

### LIFE POSITIVE



Looking at Akshay teaching meditation techniques to his peers, giving motivational talks and creating boundaries in his work life to spend quality time with his family, you wouldn’t guess that he has battled the worst trauma anybody could imagine. The 28-year-old from Madhya Pradesh has had four brain strokes already but lives each day with a bounce and is determined to fight an uncertain future. “I am not an escapist anymore. Now I know how to take care of my mental health and don’t tie myself with knots of anxiety,” says the techie, whose stroke was brought on by extreme stress.

Akshay could not process the emotional troughs of losing his father, breaking up with his partner and managing his loneliness during the Covid years. What began with panic attacks gradually pushed him towards hyper-anxiety, sleeplessness and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), something that studies have shown can raise your risk of brain strokes by 59 per cent.

Akshay is one of many young Indians who are experiencing brain strokes at an early age. A recent study in *Scientific Reports* said that the prevalence of stroke has increased by 50 per cent over the last 17 years in India. At present, one in four people are at a risk of getting a stroke in their lifetime. A new analysis from the Global Burden of Disease, Injuries and Risk Factors Study (GBD), 2021, flagged brain stroke alongside Alzheimer’s disease as responsible for increasing the number of those living with it or dying by 18 per cent in 30 years.

### HOW STRESS TRIGGERS BRAIN STROKES

Dr Praveen Gupta, principal director and unit head, neurology, Fortis, Gurugram, wasn’t surprised when Akshay consulted him.

## Holi after Holi! How about that?

As we wrap up Holi 2024, here’s an exciting idea for you. What if, this April, we could experience another festival similar to Holi all over again?

### ADVERTORIAL

when it comes to travelling. The paradox of shoes during travel is well-known; they’re crucial for comfort yet notorious for hogging suitcase space. So my golden rule before packing is prioritising comfort over appearance. The main thing to remember is that comfort is key. Even if your shoes look good, if they aren’t comfortable, they can negatively impact your trip.

Moreover, resist the temptation to pack brand-new shoes for your trip. If you buy new shoes right before a trip, there is a large possibility that you might suffer from a shoe bite. You cannot enjoy a trip if you are in pain due to a shoe bite and can’t walk. One thing that I often prioritise is comfort over fashion, especially when on a trip, as you tend to walk a lot.

This leads me to my third point.. Limit yourself to three pairs of shoes in your suitcase. Typically, you’ll need a pair of versatile runners or trainers for extensive walking, stylish sneakers for casual outings, and, if necessary, formal shoes for events. Don’t forget a pair of flip-flops or sandals, especially for beach destinations, as they are lightweight and space-efficient. Choose your shoes based on the trip’s activities and climate, ensuring they match your outfits to avoid fashion mishaps. By packing smart and minimal, you ensure mobility and comfort, leaving room in your luggage for other essentials or even an additional pair of shoes from your travels. So that’s my travel tip this week, shoes can definitely make or break your trip, so choose wisely! Until the next time, keep Celebrating Life!



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villages come alive as people, armed with water guns and buckets, douse each other in water, symbolising the eradication of the past year’s negatives and the welcoming of positive energy and prosperity.

Moving onto our main question then: Where in Thailand can you celebrate Songkran? So here is my list. First, as you may have already guessed, is Bangkok. The capital city transforms into a gigantic water fight zone, with major streets closed to traffic and turned into arenas for water-throwing. One advantage of celebrating Songkran in Bangkok is the fact that besides the water fights, Bangkok offers cultural events, traditional performances, and the opportunity to visit numerous temples for a more traditional celebration.

Then there’s Chiang Mai - which is renowned for having one of the biggest and most traditional Songkran celebrations in Thailand. If you are aware, Chiang Mai was built as a walled city surrounded by a moat, which you can still see the remains of today. This moat plays a central role in the celebrations, with people gathering around it to splash water and to enjoy the festivities, which can last up to six days.

If you plan to celebrate in Pattaya, then remember that Pattaya’s Songkran celebration, known as Wan Lai, takes place a week after the official dates, extending the festival period. The beach city turns into a lively party spot, with water fighting along the beachfront. Another place to celebrate Songkran is Phuket. With direct flight access from multiple cities in India, Phuket offers a mix of wild water fights, especially at Patong Beach, and traditional Buddhist ceremonies across the island’s many temples. The beach setting adds a tropical backdrop to the celebrations, with tourists and locals engaging in water fights on the streets and beach parties at night.

If you are after a more traditional



Neil Patil  
Founder, COO & CTO-Veena World  
neil@veenaworld.com

celebration, there’s Ayutthaya, which offers a unique twist to the Songkran celebration by incorporating elephants into the festivities. Elephants, decorated and prepared for the occasion, playfully spray water on passersby, offering a unique and memorable experience. This gives you a blend of fun and tradition, set against the backdrop of the ancient capital’s historical sites.

Each of these cities brings its own unique flavour to the Songkran

festival, offering a range of experiences from the ultimate water fights to more solemn, traditional ceremonies. All in all, whether we are talking about Songkran or Holi, what matters is that at the heart of both festivals lies a deep respect for familial and societal values. Both emphasise the importance of family and community, with rituals that strengthen individual ties.

In Holi, we have a day dedicated to familial love, while Songkran includes the practice of younger members pouring water over the hands of elders as a sign of respect and to seek blessings. In many ways, after multiple trips to Thailand, I believe that despite their distinct cultural backgrounds, Holi and Songkran mirror each other in celebrating life’s renewal, the importance of community, and our shared desire for joy and togetherness.

Whether you’re looking for a party atmosphere, cultural immersion, or a mix of both, Thailand’s Songkran festival definitely has something to

offer. So are you ready to partake in a water festival again? I want to, and so should you! Come, let’s Celebrate Life!

### Travel Tip of the Week

Now that we are in the mood to travel again, let me introduce you to a new feature in our articles starting today. We are calling it the ‘Travel Tip of the Week’. As you may be aware, we have two travel podcasts called 5 Minute Travel Tips and Travel Explore Celebrate Life, which you can listen to on Spotify, JioSaavn, Apple Podcasts or wherever you like listening to your podcasts. Drawing from my conversations with guests, tour managers, and partners, this section is all about one travel tip every week that aims to help you and your loved ones plan more enjoyable and efficient trips.

Today, I want to focus on a travel essential that often presents a dilemma: shoes. Shoes are something that we have a love-hate relationship with