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#1 IN DELHI



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10 Maoists shot dead by security forces in Bijapur

Ritesh Mishra
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RAIPUR: Ten Maoists were killed in a fierce gunbattle with security forces of both the CRPF and the Chhattisgarh Police in Bijapur district on Tuesday morning, taking the number of insurgents killed thus far this year to 47, up from 22 in all of 2023, and indicating a significant surge in aggression — from both state forces and the Maoists.

This is the second significant encounter in the district in a week after six Maoists were killed on March 27.

Senior police officers said search and sanitisation operations at the encounter spot continued late into the night; while none of the dead rebels have thus far been identified, that process will start once security personnel are safely back in their camps. Two CRPF personnel were hurt. One, Rajendra Kumar, was injured in an IED blast as security forces returned and another, Sandeep Kumar, sustained a bullet injury.

The deaths are the biggest blow for the Maoists in Chhattisgarh after July 2019 when seven insurgents were killed in an operation near the Odisha

Second operation in a week

What happened?
Tuesday, 6am: The encounter was carried out in the forests of Kendra and Karcholi. Officers said they got intel about a gathering of Maoist cadre and deployed personnel from multiple agencies for the op.

Why this operation assumes significance

The deaths are the biggest blow for the Maoists in Chhattisgarh after July 2019 when seven insurgents were killed in an operation near the Odisha border in Bastar district's Nagarnar area.



Tuesday's is the 2nd major encounter in the district in a week after six Maoists were killed on March 27

10 Maoists killed on Wednesday 47 Maoists killed this year



border in Bastar district's Nagarnar area. Government records also show that cadre of the banned CPI (Maoist) have killed 19 civilians since January 2024, with 42 civilians killed in the 12 months of 2023.

Senior police officers said that the encounter began at 6am on the forests of Kendra and Karcholi, 45 kilometres from the Bijapur district headquarters, and 10 kilometres from the block headquarters of

Gangaloor — even a few years ago considered a citadel of the Maoists.

Officers said that they received intelligence of a gathering of Maoist cadre on Monday, and in the cover of the darkness, personnel from multiple agencies — the Chhattisgarh Police's District Reserve Guard and Special Task Force, the Central Reserve Police Force and its elite guerilla unit

Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (COBRA) were deployed from the Gangaloor, Cherpal, Basaguda, Palnar, Pusnar and Mudvendi camps in

continued on 5

SC grants bail to AAP's Sanjay Singh; ED raises no objection

Utkarsh Anand
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NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Tuesday released Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) parliamentary member Sanjay Singh on bail after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) decided not to oppose his plea in connection with the Delhi excise policy case — a development that could have some impact on the continued incarceration in the same case of former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, who has been in jail since February 2023, and chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, who was arrested by ED on March 21 this year.

The concession from ED came an hour after the court asked the agency why Singh should be kept behind bars after serving six months in jail, con-

sidering that there doesn't appear to be any concrete evidence against him, and no money has been recovered linking him to the alleged money laundering offence.

A bench of justices Sanjiv Khanna, Dipankar Datta and PB Varale ordered Singh's release subject to the terms and conditions to be set down by the trial court concerned. Singh, represented through senior counsel Abhishek Manu Singhvi, volunteered that he would not make any political statement or other comments about his role in the excise case.

"In view of the statement made by ED, we direct Sanjay Singh will be released on bail on terms and conditions to be imposed by the trial court. We clarify the concession given continued on 5

Court relief after 6 months

SC HIGHLIGHTS LACK OF EVIDENCE
The court asked ED why Singh should be kept behind bars after serving six months in jail, considering the lack of concrete evidence against him, and no money being recovered

"In view of the statement made by ED, we direct Sanjay Singh will be released on bail on terms to be imposed by the trial court. We clarify the concession given will not be treated as a precedent," the bench said.

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST SANJAY SINGH
Dinesh Arora, an approver in the case, has said he delivered ₹2 crore to the MP's associate.

What he submitted in court

The MP's counsel cited discrepancies in Arora's statements, and said there was neither any corroboration of ₹2 crore nor the recovery of this money

AAP LEADERS MEET SUNITA KEJRIWAL, SAY HER HUSBAND SHOULDN'T RESIGN

Alok KN Mishra
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NEW DELHI: Ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) lawmakers on Tuesday met jailed chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's wife, Sunita Kejriwal, and backed his continuation as Delhi's top elected official and running the government from Tihar Jail, people aware of the matter said.

"All the MLAs requested her to give their message to the CM that Arvind Kejriwal was, is, and will be the chief minister of Delhi," state minister and senior AAP leader Saurabh Bharadwaj said.

CM can't sign files, say jail authorities

Prawesh Lama
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Tihar jail brass has directed prison personnel to disallow Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal from holding political meetings or receiving files and official documents from his family during their biweekly meetings, said people aware of the matter, a day after the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief became the most high-profile inmate in the country's largest prison.

The instructions come as officials of Tihar's jail number 2, where Kejriwal is lodged, have been told to follow the prison

manual diligently, especially the rules governing the number of phone calls and visits by family members, said the people.

"Kejriwal will have to approach a local court for any facility the jail manual does not allow. The prison brass reappraised the prison superintendent and deputy superintendents in charge of jail 2 of this," said a prison officer.

To be sure, officials aware of Kejriwal's first 30-odd hours in prison said the chief minister has not made any requests so far and that he spent most of the day around his cell. He also spoke to his wife over video conference on Tuesday.

BJP SAYS 'FICTION' AS ATISHI CLAIMS IT'S APPROACHING AAP LEADERS TO JOIN

NEW DELHI: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Delhi minister Atishi on Tuesday alleged that she had been approached to join the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) or face arrest soon, at a time when several party leaders, including Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal are in jail. "I have been told I should elevate my political career by joining the BJP, or ED will arrest me in a month's time," Atishi said. The BJP refuted the allegation, with leader Harish Khurana calling it "fiction".



{ MISLEADING ADVERTISEMENTS } ON HEALTH CURES

SC raps Ramdev, pulls up govt for looking other way

Abraham Thomas
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NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Tuesday told Yoga exponent Ramdev to be prepared for the consequences of promoting Patanjali products as health cures, dismissing his oral apology as mere "lip service" and holding him complicit for flouting court orders that required the company not to issue any misleading advertisements.

The court hinted that there was more trouble in store for Ramdev, finding him guilty of perjury as his application for exemption from personal appearance, filed on March 30, contained a wrong fact.



Ramdev leaves the Supreme Court on Tuesday.

DGCA STEPS IN AS VISTARA STAFFING CRISIS CONTINUES

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI: Aviation watchdog DGCA has asked Vistara to submit a daily report on flight cancellations and delays as the airline cancelled over 50 flights for the second day on Tuesday amid non-availability of pilots. The civil aviation ministry is also monitoring the situation, officials said.

MEA HITS BACK AT CHINA RENAMING ARUNACHAL AREAS

NEW DELHI: India on Tuesday rubbished China's move to rename locations in Arunachal Pradesh as part of efforts to assert its claim on the northeastern state, saying such "senseless" actions will not change the reality of the region being an integral part of the country.

"We firmly reject such attempts," external affairs ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

LET'S MAKE IT A YR OF NO CLASHES: XI TO BIDEN IN CALL

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping discussed Taiwan, AI and security issues, in a call on Tuesday, their first one-on-one communication since meeting in California last year. Xi told Biden that the two countries should adhere to the bottom line of "no clash, no confrontation" as one of the principles for this year.

WE WANTED BJP TO NOT MEDDLE IN SIKH RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS: SUKHBIR

Gurpreet Singh Nibber and Ravinder Vasudeva
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MOHALI: The Shriomani Akali Dal "wanted them (the BJP) to stop meddling in Sikh religious affairs", party chief Sukhbir Singh Badal told HT in an interview ahead of the elections. "You can't interfere in anybody's religious affairs... The nation belongs to every citizen. Today, minorities are feeling insecure," he said as he listed the reasons for a breakdown of the talks.

ELECTIONS, BY PINCODE

Ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, HT kicks off a special series that looks at some key constituencies across India which encapsulate the issues that will shape the outcome of the polls.



{ BLEAK SCENARIO }

36% students from latest batch at IIT Bombay fail to get placed

Niraj Pandit
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MUMBAI: Every year, students from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) look forward to the placement season — December and post-February — with an eye on big-ticket jobs. However, in IIT-Bombay this year, 712 of around 2,000 students registered for the 2024 placements — about 36% — are yet to secure jobs. The placement season will officially end by May.

This was revealed in data on IIT placements shared by the institute's alumnus and founder of Global IIT Alumni Support Group Dheeraj Singh, who has also been mentoring students over two years.

THE PROPORTION OF STUDENTS WHO WERE WITHOUT PLACEMENTS WENT UP 2.8 PERCENTAGE POINTS FROM THE PREVIOUS SESSION

This year, when 35.8% students remained without placement, saw an increase of 2.8 percentage points over the corresponding figure last session. Of the 2,209 registered students in IIT Bombay in 2023, 1,485 were placed, which means 32.8% remained unplaced last session as well, raising concerns over the relatively low number

of students recruited via campus placements.

An officials from IIT-Bombay's placement cell said it was a struggle "to invite companies to the campus compared to last year due to the global economic meltdown".

"Most companies were unable to accept salary packages pre-decided by the institute. It took many rounds of negotiations before they agreed to come over," he said. A large chunk of the 380 companies that arrived to shop for talent were from the domestic market. Traditionally, international players are known to outnumber Indian companies.

"For the first time, registered students from the computer sci-

continued on 5

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NUMBER THEORY

How climate crisis is linked to your clock

By Abhishek Jha

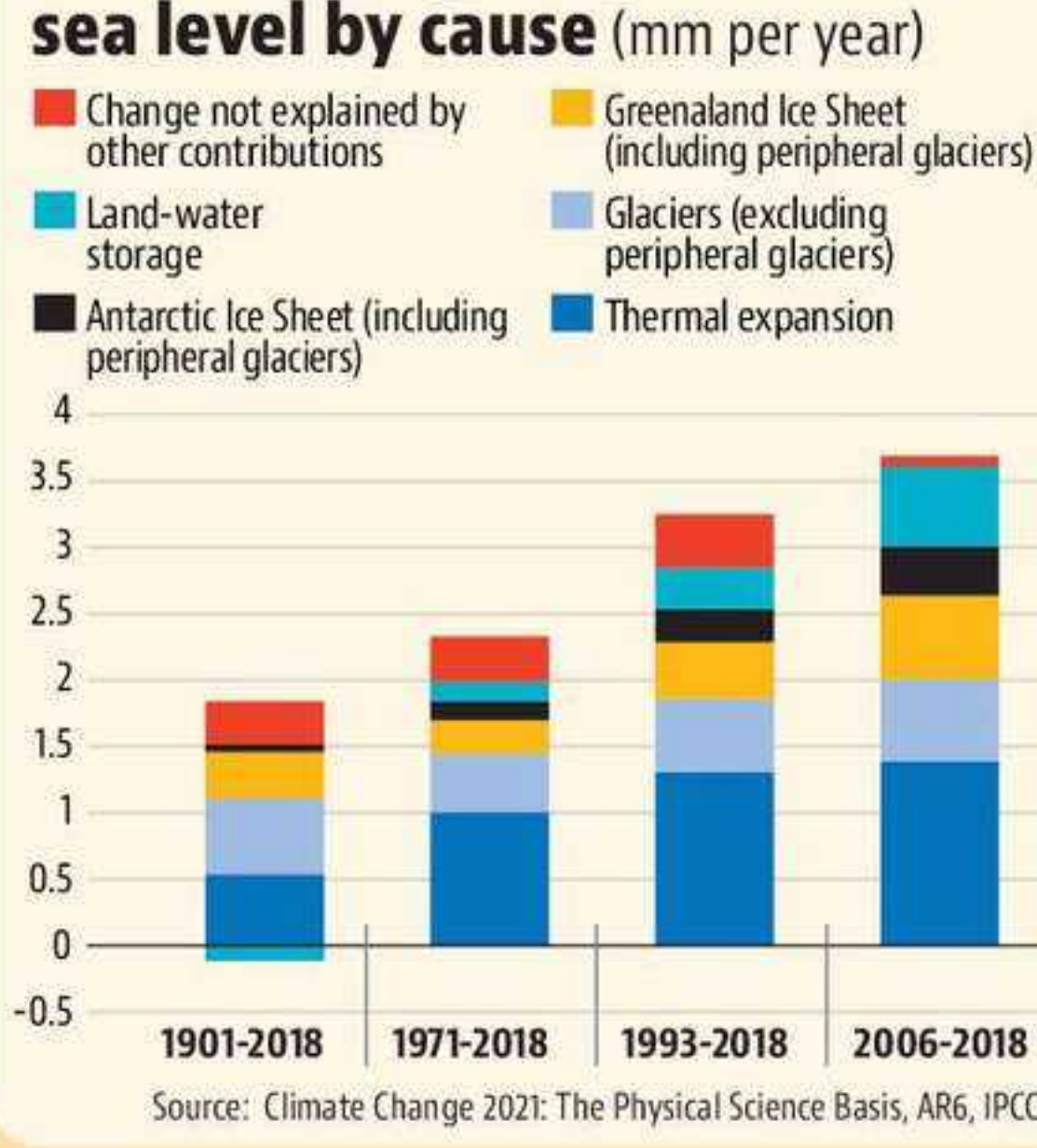
The world will have to make many adjustments to live with the adverse effects of the climate crisis; one of them could be how frequently we adjust our clocks.

Bizarre as it sounds, scientists now have conclusive proof of this theory. It is best explained by the analogy of gymnasts spreading their legs to slow down their speed while getting out of a spin. The science is as follows. Rising temperatures are leading to a faster melting of polar ice which is spreading earth's mass away from the poles to the centre. This is now having an effect on earth's rotation speed. This will delay a scheduled adjustment to our digital clocks by three years – from 2026 to 2029 – compared to the scenario where there was no acceleration in polar ice melting. These findings were published by Duncan Carr Agnew, a geophysicist at the University of California, San Diego, in Nature last week. Here are three charts that explain this in detail.

1 The melting of ice is not only increasing sea level, it is also accelerating it

The sixth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) shows this clearly. For the 1901-2018 period, the rate of sea level rise was 1.73mm per year. In comparison, this rate was 2.33mm per year in 1971-2018, 3.25mm per year in 1993-2018, and 3.69mm per year in 2006-2018. The consistent growth in the rate of sea level rise shows that sea level rise has accelerated. This acceleration has happened because rapid global warming is not only expanding the water present in seas, but is also melting some of earth's permanent ice and adding more water to the seas. This melting also has special relevance for the rate at which earth spins on its axis. Polar ice keeps a part of earth's mass fixed at the poles – close to the axis on which earth spins. As this ice melts and joins the seas in lower latitudes, part of earth's mass is transferred away from the axis. According to the Nature paper, the rate of this transfer is now significant enough to decelerate earth's rotation consequentially.

Rate of change in global mean sea level by cause (mm per year)

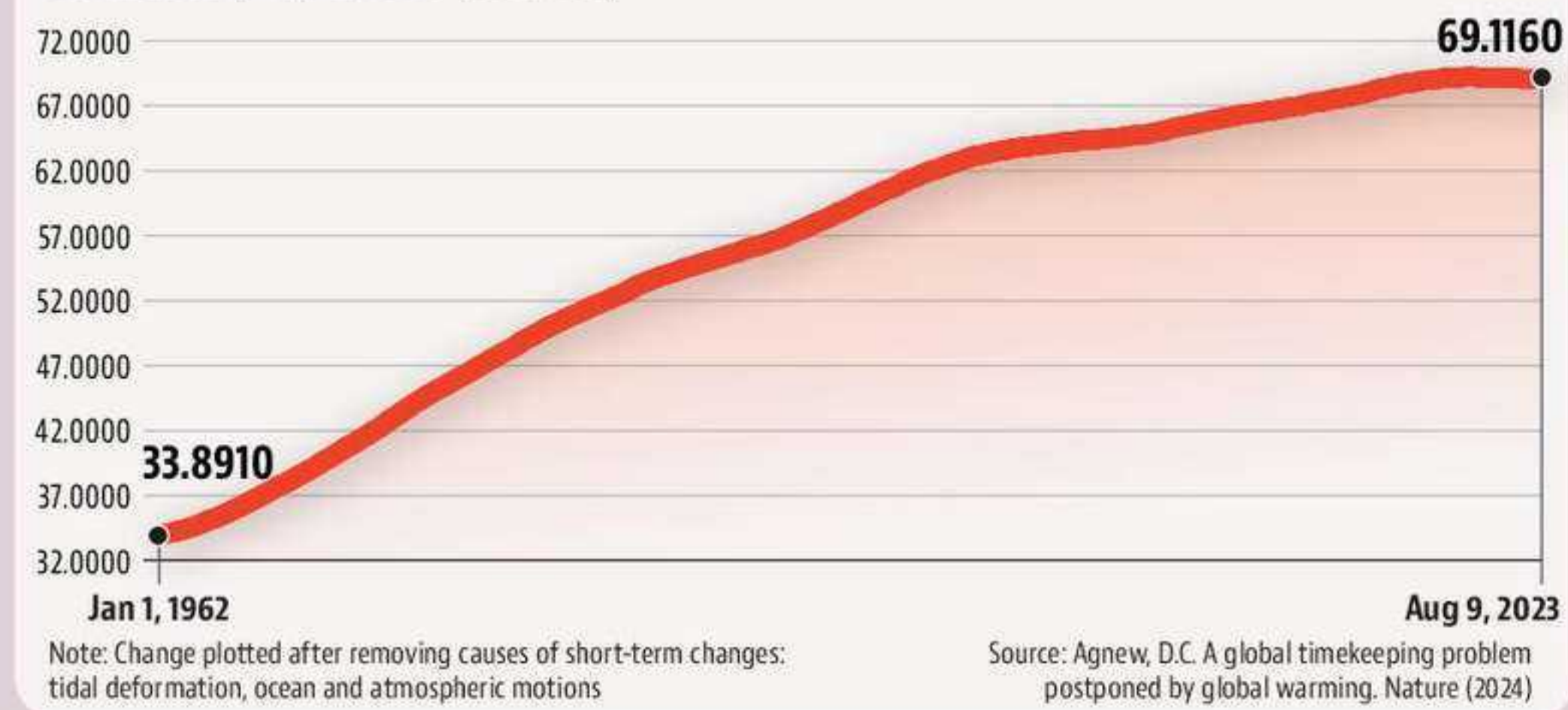


2 For most of 20th century, this did not affect earth's spin rate substantially

One way of looking at how polar ice melting is affecting earth's rotational speed is by tracking changes in the length of a day on earth. This is because a day, as understood by earth's one full rotation relative to the stars, will become shorter if it spins faster and longer if it spins slower. Because such changes are very small, they could not be measured earlier. In fact, the unit of time itself was tied to earth's rotation relative to the stars up to 1955. This problem was solved in 1955 when a "physical second" was defined using caesium atoms. By January 1, 1958, this physical second and the second measured through earth's rotation could be defined to agree with each other. They have diverged since then. During the period analysed in the Nature article, the earth's rotation was first decelerating and resulted in days becoming longer. This needed a second to be

added almost every year to the atomic clock-based day or the Universal Coordinated Time (UTC) – 23 times between 1972 and 1999 – to keep it aligned with the rotation-based day. The need for these "leap seconds" has decreased since (only four additions were needed since 1999), suggesting that earth's rotation speed is now accelerating. However, up to the 20th century, the acceleration in earth's rotation was mostly because of a factor we have little control over: the motions of earth's liquid core. When earth's core started slowing – to maintain the rotational version of Newton's third law of motion – earth's surface (crust and mantle together called surface here for simplicity) sped up. This decreased the need for adding up leap seconds. This can also be seen in the accompanying chart: changes in the rotation-based length of day have become flatter.

Observed cumulative change in length of day since January 1, 1958 (seconds)

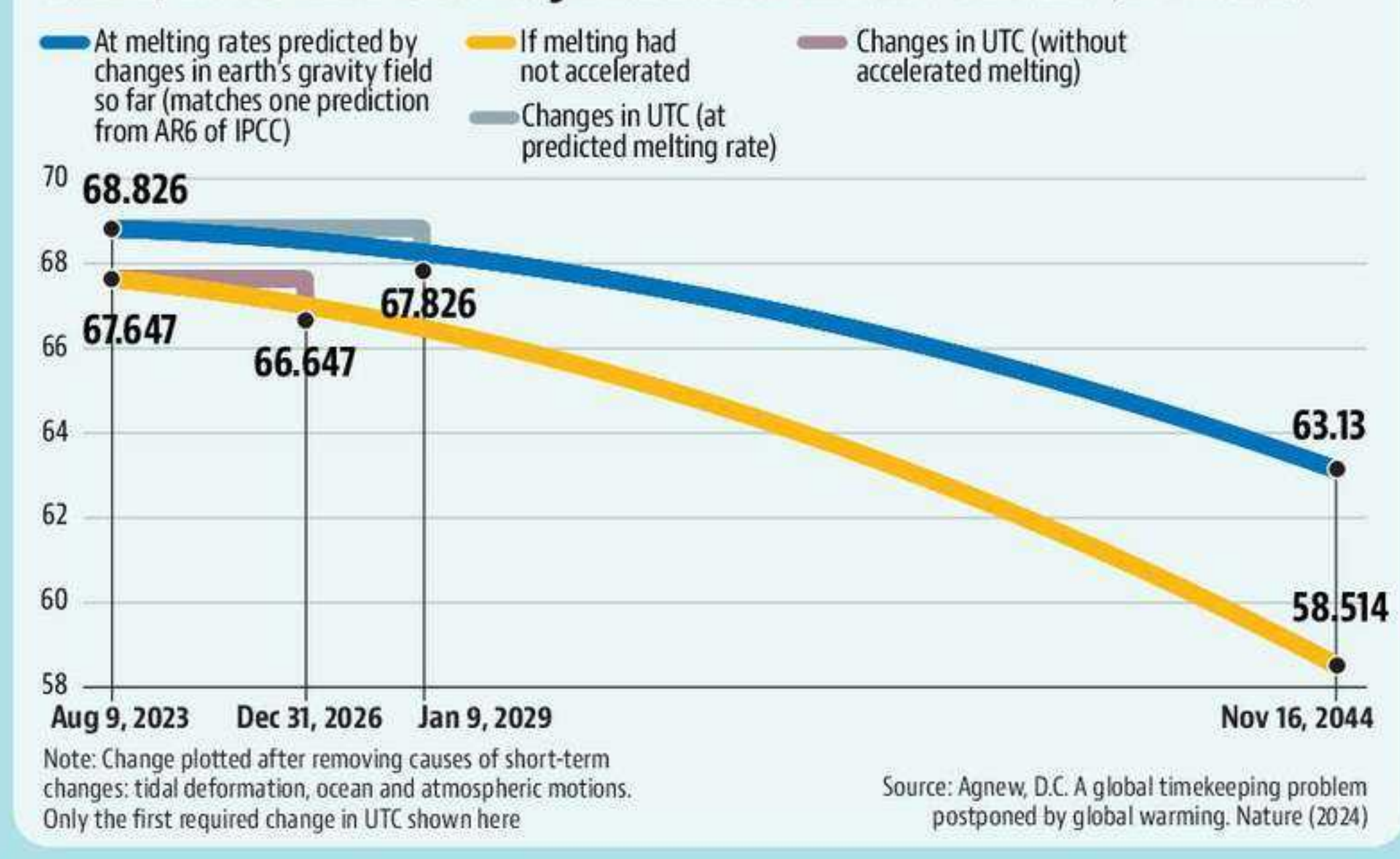


3 But now polar ice melting is likely to delay clock adjustments by three years

While core's motion is the main culprit in most of the time period analysed, Agnew's finding is that another factor is now becoming consequential: the melting of polar ice. Using measurements of earth's magnetic field, Agnew subtracted the impact of all long-term factors that affect earth's rotation: like land continuing to shift since the burden of ice-age melted away and the present-day re-arrangement of mass from polar ice melting. This helped him find the rate at which

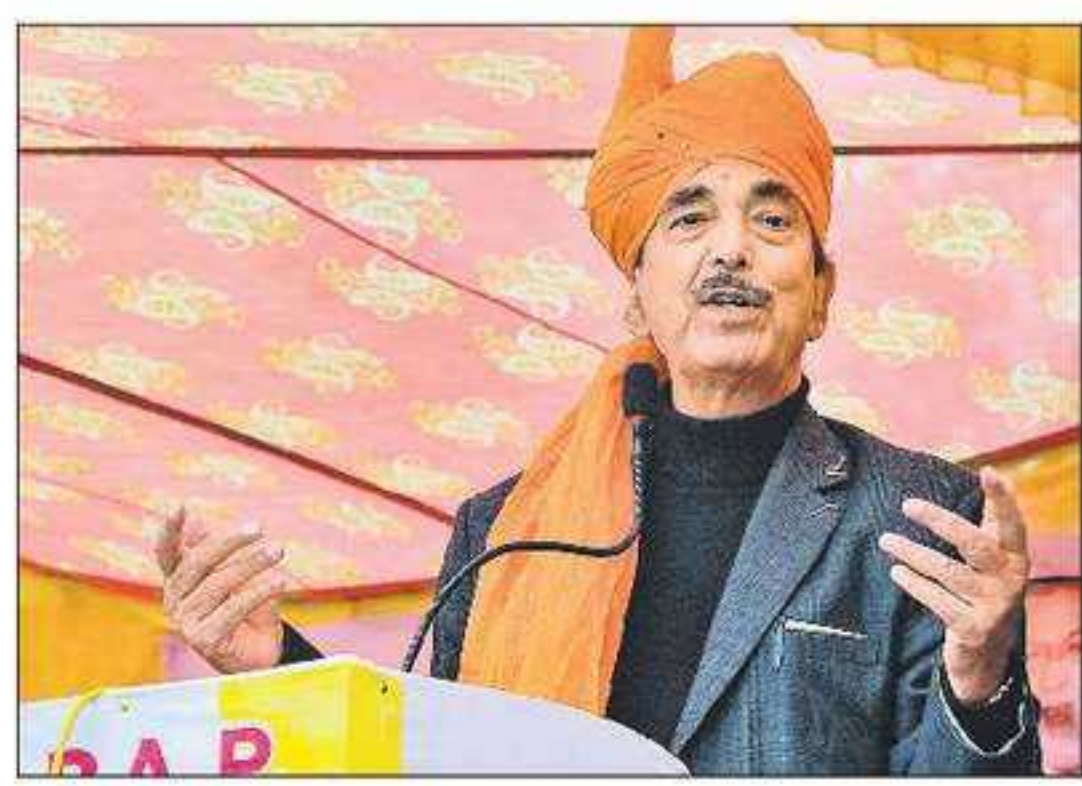
the length of day would increase without the rate of polar ice melting increasing. This showed that the acceleration of earth's surface would require a negative leap second in 2026. On the other hand, actually observed changes show that such a negative leap second will be required only in 2029. This means that polar ice melting is reducing the rate at which earth's rotation is accelerating. In other words, polar ice melting is now decelerating earth's rotation.

Predicted cumulative change in length of day since Jan 1, 1958 and UTC adjustments in the future (in seconds)



{ MY INDIA } LOK SABHA POLLS

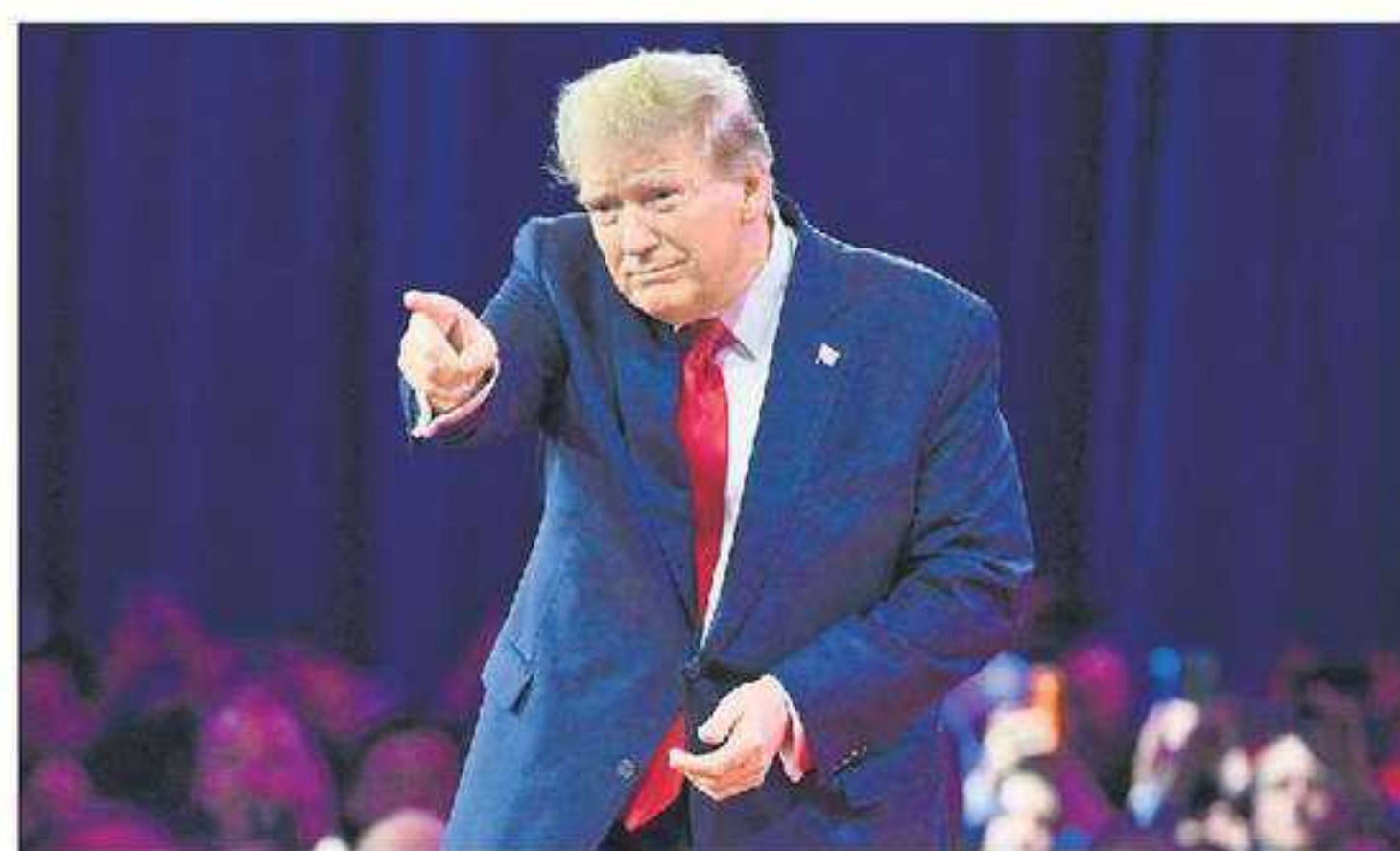
Azad to contest from Anantnag-Rajouri



Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Ghulam Nabi Azad will contest the Lok Sabha elections from Anantnag-Rajouri constituency, the Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) said on Tuesday. Azad formed the party after ending his five-decade-long association with the Congress in 2022, with the party, and floated his own political outfit. "Today the core committee of DPAP met and we have decided that (party president) Ghulam Nabi Azad will contest the Anantnag-Rajouri seat," DPAP leader Taj Mohiuddin told reporters.

{ WORLD } AVERTS ASSET SEIZURE

Donald Trump posts bond of \$175mn in civil fraud case



Donald Trump followed through on his vow to pay a \$175 million bond to put a massive civil fraud verdict on hold while he appeals it, assuring New York state won't start seizing the former president's assets, at least for now. The bond, posted on Monday with a Manhattan appeals court, prevents enforcement of a \$454 million penalty levied by a judge against the real estate mogul in February for lying about his assets for years to get better loan terms. Trump, who is campaigning to return to the White House in the November election, is still on the hook for the full amount – plus millions in interest – if his appeal fails.

{ BUSINESS } SOARS TO 59.1

Manufacturing PMI touches 16-year high



Manufacturing activity in India, as measured by the seasonally-adjusted HSBC-Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), soared to a 16-year high of 59.1 on account of higher production and sales in March, according to a statement from S&P Global. The Manufacturing PMI for February was 56.9. The March reading was slightly lower than the 59.2 that was estimated in the HSBC Flash PMI on 21 March 2024. A PMI value above 50 implies an expansion in manufacturing activity. The index has now been in the expansion zone for 33 straight months.

{ CANDIDATES TOURNAMENT } WINNER FACES WORLD CHAMP

For a shot at the ultimate gambit

Dates: April 4 to 22; Venue: Toronto, Canada

A SKEWED BATTLE

Rated 2803, World No 2 Fabiano Caruana is the top player in the Open category, followed closely by World No 3 and the Fischer Random Chess champion Hikaru Nakamura. The two have the best shot at cracking the notoriously gruelling tournament. Meanwhile, two-time Candidates winner Ian Nepomniachtchi will hope to avenge his loss to Liren at the world championship last year and Magnus Carlsen the year before.

Player	From	ELO	How they qualified
Fabiano Caruana	USA	2804	3rd in World Cup
Hikaru Nakamura	USA	2789	2nd in Grand Swiss
Alireza Firouzja	France	2760	Best by rating
Ian Nepomniachtchi	Fide player	2758	2023 World C'ship runner-up
R Pragganandhaa	India	2747	2nd in World Cup
Vidit Gujrathi	India	2747	Won Grand Swiss
D Gukesh	India	2747	2023 FIDE Circuit winner
Nijat Abasov	Azerbaijan	2632	4th in World Cup

What's at stake?

The winner of the eight-player event in the Open category will challenge China's Ding Liren in the World Chess Championship match later this year. The winner of the women's event will earn the right to face Ju Wenjun of China.

Format and time control

The competition will be held in a double round-robin format: there are 14 rounds with all players facing each other twice. Time-control: 120 mins for the first 40 moves, 30 mins for the rest and a 30-sec increment per move from the 41st move. Players get a point for a win and half for a draw.

The GOAT sits out

Carlsen ruled himself out of the world championship cycle in 2022, citing a lack of motivation after winning the title five times. He qualified for the Candidates this year as well after winning the FIDE World Cup, but withdrew, with his spot going to Abasov, who finished second.

A hefty Indian presence

For the first time ever, there are five Indian players participating in the high-profile tournament across the Open and women's sections. R Pragganandhaa, Vidit Gujrathi and D Gukesh feature in the Open category while Koneru Humpy and R Vaishali are part of the field in the women's tournament. Among the Indian players taking part, Pragganandhaa is the highest-rated player with an ELO of

{ KATCHATHEEVU } DISPUTE RESOLVED, NOW REKINDLED

What's behind the island controversy?

Sutirtho Patranobis
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NEW DELHI: The annual feast for the devout at St Antony's church on the Sri Lankan island of Katchatheevu, located in the choppy waters of Palk Strait, was revived in March 2010 after nearly three decades.

The century-old church bells had remained silent since the 1980s because of the civil war between Tamil rebels and the Sri Lankan government. A group of fishermen from India, Tamil devotees from the northern part of Sri Lanka, local government officials and Lankan navy officers were among those who attended the celebration on the barren piece of land, located 18km off Dhanyakudi, near Rameshwaram, that year.

The festival, celebrated under the watchful eyes of the Sri Lankan navy, has continued on the 285-acre island every year since then. This year, however, Indian fishermen boycotted it in protest against the arrest of members of their community by Sri Lankan authorities.

The boycott did not really make more than local news though; Indian fishermen have frequently got into trouble in Sri Lankan waters for apparently fishing in foreign seas and using bottom-trawling boats. Just over a month later, however, a political controversy is raging in India over the small island, used for drying fishing nets and for fishermen to rest, pray and gossip, after Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted that the Congress "calously gave away" Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka in the 1970s.

External affairs minister S Jaishankar waded in at a press conference, saying the issue had been "hidden too long from the gaze of the public".

Former Tamil Nadu chief ministers J Jayalalithaa and M Karunanidhi had brought up the issue of the island's ownership with New Delhi earlier.

The rights of Indian fishermen are often linked to the island and its surrounding waters as it has been argued that by "ceding" it to Sri Lanka, the Indian government curtailed the livelihood rights of its own people in the southern state.

The background

The small island was administered by the British in the colonial era. Historically, the Raja of Ramnad or present-day Ramanathapuram in Tamil Nadu is said to have owned the island, which later became part of the Madras Presidency.

By the 1920s, both Sri Lanka and India wanted it exclusively for fishing and the dispute remained unsettled for decades after that. Both countries became independent in the 1940s and the dispute dragged on.

The dispute was formally raised by (Sri Lankan) Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake on his official visit to India in December 1968 who discussed it with the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and formally stated his position that there was no question as such of sovereignty over Katchatheevu (Katchatheevu) inasmuch it was part of Sri Lanka's territory. This became a major issue with India in view of its own claims to it supported by that of the Rajah of Ramnad,



Indian fishers boycotted the annual feast at St Antony's Church this year to protest the arrest of members of the community by Sri Lankan authorities.

the news website, Sri Lanka Guardian, said in a report published on Tuesday.

New Delhi and Colombo worked towards settling the dispute – once and for all – over the next six years.

While the external affairs ministry led the talks from India's side, naval hydrographers played a key role in working towards a resolution.

The resolution

Following talks held between June 26 and 28, 1974, the prime ministers of India and Sri Lanka, Indira Gandhi and Sirimavo Bandaranaike, signed an agreement to demarcate the boundary between the two countries in the waters from Palk Strait to Adam's Bridge.

A joint statement issued on June 28, 1974, stated that a boundary had been defined "in conformity with the historical evidence, legal international

principles and precedents."

It also pointed out that "this boundary falls one mile off the west coast of the uninhabited" Katchatheevu. Article 4 of the Agreement stipulated that each State shall have sovereignty and exclusive jurisdiction and control over the waters, the Islands, the Continental Shelf and the sub soil on its side of the Maritime boundary in the Palk Strait and Palk Bay and Katchatheevu Island was determined as falling within Sri Lankan waters.

The following article added that "Indian fishermen and pilgrims would enjoy access to the island as before and would not be required by Sri Lanka to obtain travel documents or visas for these purposes".

The 1974 agreement was followed by a second one in 1976: The Agreement between India and Sri Lanka on the Maritime Boundary Between The Two Countries In The Gulf Of Mannar And The Bay of Bengal And Related Matters of 1976.

The perspective

"The issue had long dragged on

from before the independence of the two countries: Whether the Katchatheevu island belonged to India or Sri Lanka? Dragged on for several decades and was negotiated at various levels," Ashok K Kantha, who was India's high commissioner to Sri Lanka between 2009 and 2013, said.

He added: "The 1974 agreement addressed the maritime boundary dispute between India and Sri Lanka and paved the way for better understanding. It addressed all the existing ambiguities... There was no ceding (of the island). The question did not arise because the maritime boundary was not demarcated.

Since the two agreements were signed, successive governments have continued to respect them

"Atal Bihari Vajpayee had spoken against the agreement in 1974. But later, during his prime ministership, his government continued with it," a retired diplomat, who did not wish to be named, said, adding that it is a settled matter and cannot be resurrected.

"The island was given to Sri Lanka on the basis of a bilateral agreement in 1974. To retrieve it now, we have to go to war," then attorney general Mukul Rohatgi told the Supreme Court, on August 27, 2014, ahead of hearing petitions on retrieving the island.

There's always give and take in border negotiations, former envoy Kantha said.

In fact, in a separate 1976 agreement with Sri Lanka, India got exclusive rights over Wadge Bank, a much bigger area, located near Cape Comorin.

In the case of the 1974 agreement, the "balance of evidence" favoured Sri Lanka, the retired diplomat quoted above said.

Kejriwal in Tihar, Day 1: Files, meetings not allowed for CM

Prawesh Lama
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The brass of Tihar jail has directed prison personnel to disallow Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal from holding political meetings or receiving files and official documents from his family during their biweekly meetings, said people aware of the matter on Tuesday, a day after the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief became the most high-profile inmate in the country's largest prison.

The instructions come as officials of Tihar's jail number 2, where Kejriwal is lodged, have been told to follow the prison manual diligently, especially the rules governing the number of phone calls and visits by family members, said the people cited above.

"Kejriwal will have to approach the local court for any facility that the jail manual does not allow. The prison brass reappraised the prison superintendent and deputy superintendents in charge of jail 2 of this on Tuesday," said a prison officer.

These restrictions are expected to hamstring Kejriwal's ability to exercise politi-

CM's day in prison

- The superintendent and deputy superintendent have been directed not to allow Kejriwal to hold any political meetings or receive any files
- Kejriwal spent most of the day in the area around his cell.
- He took books from the library and was spotted speaking to other prisoners.
- He was escorted by unarmed guards whenever he stepped out in the day.
- During the day, the jail's doctors also visited his cell and checked his vitals.

- The doctors have been instructed to inform the top officials about his health condition twice a day.
- For security reasons, Kejriwal's stay in the cell is also being monitored from a CCTV camera in his cell.
- Kejriwal used the first of his two allowed family visits on Tuesday by speaking to his wife over video conference from the jail's computer room for about 25 minutes



cal and administrative powers, given that he will have to approach the court for a greenlight to meet political leaders and bureaucrats or to sign files.

The AAP has insisted that Kejriwal will continue as Delhi's chief minister.

To be sure, officials aware of Kejriwal's first 30-odd hours in prison said the chief minister has not made any requests so far and that he spent most

of the day around his cell. He also used the first of his two sanctioned weekly family visits on Tuesday when he spoke to his wife over video conference for about 25 minutes.

"The call was made from the jail's computer room. They spoke for about 25 minutes. He was escorted to the computer room by unarmed guards," said the officer cited above.

"He is not in isolation and interacted with the other prisoners around him. He took books from the library and was spotted speaking to other prisoners. Because of security reasons, he was escorted by unarmed guards whenever he stepped out during the day," added the officer.

Jail doctors also examined Kejriwal, said the officers, adding that medical officials have also been instructed to

update top prison officials about the chief minister's health twice a day.

Kejriwal's stay in the cell is also being monitored from a CCTV camera installed in his cell. The footage is monitored from the jail superintendent's office and by other top officers at the prison headquarters in New Delhi.

Kejriwal was brought to jail number 2 of Tihar on Monday evening after a special court sent him to judicial custody till April 15. The chief minister has been lodged in a single cell and is protected by unarmed prison guards.

Jail number 2 also houses underworld gangster Chhota Rajan and Delhi gangster Neeraj Bawana, but they are confined to a building called the high-risk cell and do not get to meet or interact with other prisoners.

A local court on Monday allowed Kejriwal home-cooked food, blood sugar monitors, his own bedsheets and a mattress. The chief minister was also allowed to keep toffees, glucose and diabetes medicines after he informed the court that he suffers from hyperglycemia (high blood glucose levels).



AAP MLAs after meeting Sunita Kejriwal at the CM's House in Civil Lines on Tuesday. SANJEEV VERMA/HT

MLAs meet CM's wife; say he must not resign

Alok K N Mishra
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NEW DELHI: Ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) lawmakers on Tuesday met jailed chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's wife, Sunita Kejriwal, and backed his continuation as Delhi's top elected official and running the government from Tihar Jail, people aware of the matter said.

"The MLAs told Sunita Kejriwal that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will exert pressure, they will give various arguments that Arvind Kejriwal must resign from the chief minister's (CM) post. They will run a campaign to compel him to resign...It is the BJP's policy to force the CM to resign. Now that Sunita Kejriwal is the only one who will be able to meet the CM Arvind Kejriwal and talk to him, she will be our only medium to take the party's

message to the CM and bring his message to the party," AAP leader Saurabh Bharadwaj said, addressing the media outside the CM's residence after the meeting was over. "All MLAs requested her to give their message to the CM that Arvind Kejriwal was, is, and will be the chief minister of Delhi," Bharadwaj said.

An AAP leader said 55 MLAs attended the meeting while three legislators — Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia, and Satyendra Jain — are in jail, and four others were out of Delhi. The AAP has 62 lawmakers in the 70-member assembly while the BJP has the remaining eight.

The meeting was convened after Sunita Kejriwal made her first-ever public address on Sunday at a show of strength and unity at Delhi's Ramliya Maidan of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance

(INDIA) weeks before the general elections. She called her husband "a lion" who will not be "behind bars" for long.

AAP officials said that after meeting the MLAs, Sunita Kejriwal separately met AAP councilors, who told her that Arvind Kejriwal should not resign from the post of the Delhi CM, and should continue to run the government from jail.

Meanwhile, Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva said a power struggle was going on within the AAP and no one trusted anyone. "In the court yesterday [Monday] Arvind Kejriwal exposed the names of [ministers] Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj in the excise scam. Sunita Kejriwal is trying to take over the party because she knows that Arvind Kejriwal has committed corruption and chances of him coming out of jail are nil," said Sachdeva.

DJB CONTRACTS CASE: ED ATTACHES PROPERTIES OF EX-OFFICIAL, OTHERS

HT Correspondent
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NEW DELHI: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday said that former Delhi Jal Board (DJB) chief engineer Jagdish Kumar Arora transferred ₹2 crore — paid as bribes to his colleagues in the water utility — to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) as election funds. ED is probing alleged irregularities in the awarding of DJB contracts. But AAP said that multiple probes have yet to reveal any wrongdoing by its leaders, and accused ED of defaming the party.

ED's probe into alleged irregularities in the awarding of DJB contracts is based on a case filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in July 2022, related to alleged corruption in the water utility.

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

ED's allegation came as the federal agency on Tuesday attached assets worth ₹8.8 crore of Jagdish Arora, his wife Alka Arora, sub-contractor and Integral Screw Industries proprietor Anil Kumar Aggarwal, and NKG Infrastructure Ltd. Jagdish Arora and Aggarwal were arrested by ED in January and are currently in judicial custody.

"Out of ₹24 crore payment received by DJB, only about ₹14 crore was spent towards the contract work and the remaining amount was siphoned off/spent for bribes. Jagdish Kumar Arora received a bribe of ₹3.19 crore out of which he transferred ₹2 crore to other Delhi Jal Board officials and Aam Aadmi Party as election fund," the ED statement said.

In response, the AAP alleged that ED was trying to defame the party.

Truth prevails: AAP on bail to Sanjay Singh

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NEW DELHI: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Tuesday welcomed the Supreme Court order granting bail to the party's Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh in a money laundering case pertaining to alleged irregularities in the Delhi excise policy 2021-22, calling the court's decision a "victory of truth" and a "big day

for democracy". The AAP, which has consistently accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led central government of using federal investigation agencies such as the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and CBI as for "vendetta politics" also said the alleged "conspiracy" hatched by the BJP against their party was "unravelling".

The official AAP account on X posted, "Truth prevails! The day is not far when the entire conspiracy of the BJP against the AAP will collapse."

"It has been two years since the investigation (in the excise case) began, but not even a single rupee of the proceeds of the crime has been recovered from any AAP leader," Delhi minister Atishi said. Atishi's cabinet colleague Saurabh Bharadwaj added, "This is a big day for democracy in the country and a

moment of happiness and hope."

The BJP hit back, saying that the AAP can no longer accuse federal agencies of vendetta politics. "Singh was granted bail after ED did not oppose the bail. That now means that the AAP cannot claim that any of the agencies, particularly ED or CBI, is indulging in any kind of vendetta politics," said BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla.

ED uses CM's statement in HC affidavit against his plea

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NEW DELHI: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday filed an affidavit in the Delhi high court, opposing chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's petition against his arrest and detention in relation to alleged irregularities in the excise policy case by using Kejriwal's statements to a trial court — that he had no objection to a further extension of his remand.

In its affidavit, the federal agency referred to orders dated March 28 and April 1 passed by a special judge handling Kejriwal's arrest, that recorded that the chief minister had no objection to the extension of his custody remand, thereby waiving his right to question his custody

On March 28, the special judge extended Kejriwal's ED custody by four days while recording in its order that he is willing to cooperate with the probe, and that "he has no objection if the custody remand is extended further". On April 1, when Kejriwal was sent to Tihar jail until April 15, the special judge order noted his lawyer's statement having no objection to ED's plea seeking his judicial

custody. "In light of the above submission made by the petitioner before the special court... the petitioner has waived his right to question his custody as on today and the petitioner cannot now be allowed to argue that his custody as on today is illegal... Present petition is liable to be dismissed on this ground alone," ED contended in its affidavit.

The affidavit will come up before the bench of justice Swarana Kanta Sharma on April 3.

Kejriwal, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener, was arrested by ED on March 21 in connection with a money laundering probe pertaining to alleged irregularities in the Delhi excise policy 2021-22. A day after his arrest, the chief minister was sent to ED custody for six days, and on March 23, he approached the high court, saying his arrest violated his fundamental rights.

However, the AAP convener was unable to get instant relief from the high court on March 27, as the bench only issued notice in his plea, emphasising the need for a response from ED to address the legal and valid issues raised.

Submitting its affidavit on Tuesday, ED reproduced the allegations contained in its two remand applications moved before the special judge on March 22 and March 28, wherein the agency called Kejriwal the "kingpin" and "key conspirator" in the alleged irregularities.

The agency urged the court to dismiss Kejriwal's plea, arguing that he was liable to be prosecuted for the offenses committed by the AAP, as he controlled the party's major activities and decision-making processes. The ED also emphasised its authority under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) to conduct further investigations, regardless of whether Kejriwal was named in the initial prosecution complaints.

Regarding Vijay Nair's involvement, who allegedly acted as a middleman on behalf of top AAP leaders, including Kejriwal, the affidavit stated that he played a role in securing bribes from various stakeholders in the Delhi liquor business. The affidavit claimed that Nair allegedly threatened stakeholders who did not comply with his demands, indicating his influence in the matter.

FOLLOW DECORUM IN COMMENTS ON OTHER COUNTRIES' AFFAIRS: JAISHANKAR

AHMEDABAD: External affairs minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday said that sovereign nations should refrain from making political statements about internal matters of other countries and maintain decorum in such matters.

Jaishankar was referring to the remarks made by Germany, the United States and the United Nations on the arrest of Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal in the Delhi excise policy case.

The German foreign minister's spokesperson had said they expect "that standards relating to independence of judiciary and basic democratic principles will also be applied in this case". The US State department spokesperson told Reuters that the US is closely following reports of Kejriwal's arrest.

India had summoned the German deputy chief of mission, and US deputy ambassador to register its protest against the remarks. Jaishankar said that India has unequivocally communicated its strong objections to foreign diplomats regarding their interference. "We sincerely urge all countries that by all means you have your views...but no country has the right to comment on another country's politics especially in situations like this," he said.

HT correspondent
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Delhi minister Atishi on Tuesday accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of approaching her through a close aide to coax her into joining their party -- a charge dismissed by the BJP as "fiction".

"I have been told that I should elevate my political career by joining the BJP, otherwise the Enforcement Directorate (ED) will arrest me in a month's time. The person told me that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP have made up their minds to crush the AAP and all its leaders. First, they put the entire top political leadership of AAP, including Manish Sisodia, Satyendar Jain, Sanjay Singh, and Arvind Kejriwal, in jail. Now, the BJP wants to arrest four more AAP leaders before the Lok Sabha elections. ED will raid our homes and homes of relatives and family members, and soon send summons for arrest. They will arrest me, Saurabh Bharadwaj, Durgesh Pathak, and Raghav Chadha," Atishi said at a press conference at AAP headquarters on Tuesday.

Atishi, however, did not disclose the name of the person who made her the alleged offer. ED arrested chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on March 21 in connection with the alleged excise policy irregularities, with the AAP claiming that the case is a political conspiracy aimed at crushing the party. The Rouse



Atishi at a press conference on Tuesday. ARVIND YADAV/HT

Avenue Court on Monday sent Kejriwal to judicial custody till April 15.

The BJP claimed that ED has unearthed the role of AAP leaders in the alleged excise policy scam and that they are trying to play the victim card to mislead people.

"The BJP hoped that the AAP would disintegrate after Arvind Kejriwal was arrested because the entire senior leadership is behind bars. After Sunday's rally by the INDIA bloc, the BJP believes that arresting the top four leaders of AAP was not enough. I have been told that ED raids will be conducted at my house. We will be sent summons and arrested," said Atishi.

In a separate press conference, Delhi minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said that the successful INDIA bloc rally at Ramliya Maidan on March 31 is giving sleepless nights to the BJP.

"Even after arresting all our big leaders, the AAP is standing strong. The people of the country will teach a lesson to the BJP in

the upcoming Lok Sabha elections," Bharadwaj said.

Responding to the AAP, the BJP said that the AAP leaders are aware that they will also face action in the excise policy case.

"Atishi has played the same old tune...she should tell the name of the person (who made the offer). Arvind Kejriwal has provided evidence against them by saying that Vijay Nair, who is the key accused, reported to Atishi and Saurabh. After Kejriwal exposed their names before ED, they are aware that they will also face the probe. Atishi knows that she has been trapped by Kejriwal," BJP leader Manjinder Singh Sirsa said.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said Atishi and Bharadwaj should present evidence of the allegations they have made otherwise they should be prepared to face legal action.

Delhi BJP secretary Harish Khurana said Atishi's claims were new "manohar kahaani", which she was using to divert public attention from the arrest of AAP leaders.

No lens on other leaders: ED
ED on Tuesday said it has no material "as of now" to summon or investigate Delhi ministers Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj in the excise policy 2021-22, people familiar with the developments said.

"We have no such plans or material as of now to investigate or arrest them," said an officer, who didn't want to be named.

{ DELHI EXCISE CASE } RAJYA SABHA MP NOT A FLIGHT RISK, SAY OFFICERS

Bail to Sanjay Singh won't adversely impact probe: ED

Neeraj Chauhan and Prawesh Lama
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NEW DELHI: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Sanjay Singh's release from Tihar jail after being granted bail by the Supreme Court will not adversely impact the agency's case during the trial, officers in the Enforcement Directorate (ED) claimed on Tuesday, explaining the rationale behind not opposing his bail on Tuesday.

The circumstances surrounding Rajya Sabha MP Singh were different from those related to the other top leaders arrested in the case -- Arvind Kejriwal, who was the head of government when the 2021-22 excise policy was created, and Manish Sisodia, who was the excise minister --

the officers added. Since the agency felt Singh is "not a flight risk" a "last minute decision" was taken to not oppose his bail, these officers said on the condition of anonymity.

To be sure, the decision was taken after the top court pointed out that no money was recovered from Singh, and wanted answers from ED on the alleged proceeds of crime. The granting of bail has been hailed by the AAP as a "moral and legal victory", and one that will unravel a case that the party claims is false.

On December 2 last year, the federal anti-money laundering probe agency claimed in a charge sheet that Singh received kickbacks worth Rs 2 crore (in two installments of Rs 1 crore each) through his aide Sarvesh



Sanjay Singh's wife Anita (second from left) on Tuesday. VIPIN KUMAR/HT

Mishra, who was also named in the charge sheet. The allegations were made on the basis on a statement by Dinesh Arora, an accused who later turned approver.

"We had been opposing Sanjay Singh's bail till now as he

received ₹2 crore bribes in the excise policy. It is true that the money has not been recovered [from him] but that doesn't mean he is not involved," said one of the officers cited above.

Asserting that severity of offence differs in charges against

Singh when compared to Kejriwal and Sisodia, this officer said: "Since Singh was not directly involved in the policy formulation and implementation and was not part of the Delhi government, we feel it will not impact our case at the trial stage."

A second officer said that the decision to not oppose the bail was taken at the last minute. "We felt that Singh is not a flight risk, and since he is not part of Delhi government, there are no chances of him influencing the witnesses unlike Kejriwal or Sisodia, who were directly involved in the policy," the second officer said.

In a statement on Tuesday, the AAP said the ED was lying. "Supreme Court said no money trail was found, no money was found. ED could not provide even a single evidence in the

Supreme Court. The ED is working at the behest of the BJP which wants to topple the Delhi government at any cost. The BJP wants to stop Kejriwal from campaigning in the Lok Sabha elections," the AAP said.

ED officials said that their investigation in the excise policy probe has been upheld by courts while rejecting the bail of several other accused persons on multiple occasions.

"We are confident that evidence we have gathered against all the accused in the case will stand scrutiny of the court," said the first officer.

On whether it will continue opposing Kejriwal and Sisodia's bail in courts, the second officer said: "Yes. They are directly involved. Kejriwal being the CM was in the know of things, as was the minister Manish Sisodia."

No use keeping me in custody: Sisodia
NEW DELHI: AAP leader Manish Sisodia, arrested in the Delhi excise policy case in February last year, on Tuesday told a Delhi court hearing his bail petition that no purpose will be served by keeping him in jail any further. He told the court that the probe against him in ED's case was already complete and there was no possibility of him hampering the probe or destroying evidence. PTI

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Sealed tender in hard copy (two bid system) is invited for hiring agency for online processing of pre & post Examination works of CET-B.Ed.-2024 for the year 2024 admission to be conducted at the Bihar State Level. Tender Notice in detail and Tender Document giving scope of the work and other details can be downloaded from the University website (www.lnmu.ac.in) upto 07.04.2024 by 4:00 PM.
- By order of the Vice-Chancellor
Prof. Ashok Kumar Mehta
State Nodal Officer
CET-B.Ed.-2024

Six injured after man drives car into kachori shop on N Delhi's Rajpur Rd

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NEW DELHI: A 36-year-old man driving a luxury car lost control and drove into an eatery at Civil Lines in north Delhi, police officers aware of the matter said on Tuesday, adding that six people were injured in the incident.

Police said the incident occurred on Saturday afternoon at the Fateh Chand Kachori Shop on Rajpur Road, adding that the six victims — all customers who declined to be identified by the media — received minor injuries and were discharged after treatment.

A video of the incident was captured on a CCTV camera installed inside the eatery, which shows at least five customers being served by a worker standing behind the counter, when a white Mercedes car drives straight into the shop.

Deputy commissioner of police (north) Manoj Kumar Meena identified the accused



Screengrabs of CCTV footage from moments before the incident and (right) after the Mercedes car ploughed into the kachori shop. HT



as Parag Maini, a resident of Noida Sector 79. DCP Meena said that Maini, an advocate by profession, was arrested from the spot and subsequently made bail as the Indian Penal Code sections levelled in the case were bailable.

Giving details of the case, Meena said the police control room received a call around 3pm on Saturday about the incident, following which a police team from the Civil

Lines police station reached the spot.

"He (Maini) said he was coming to the eatery to eat kachoris with his wife in his automatic car, and while parking, he accidentally pressed the accelerator instead of the brake," the DCP said.

During the inquiry, a local hospital informed police about a person who was admitted after receiving injuries in a road accident. Subsequently,

information about more injured people was received from another private hospital. The police team visited both hospitals and met the victims and collected their medico-legal certificates.

Meena said that a case under section 279 (rash driving) and 337 (causing hurt by act endangering life) of the Indian Penal Code was registered and the accused was arrested.

"As per the preliminary

medical examination, the driver was not under the influence of alcohol. However, a blood sample has been preserved for analysis," Meena said, adding that a further probe is underway.

HT reached out to Fateh Chand Kachori Shop, but did not get any response to requests for comment.

HT made calls and dropped a message to Maini, but did not get any response from him.

PWD plans new elevated corridor in Punjabi Bagh

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NEW DELHI: Even as the work on the much-delayed Punjabi Bagh flyover is on, the Public Works Department (PWD) has begun developing another "connecting flyover" that is expected to reduce the traffic load on the Punjabi Bagh intersection, officials associated with the project have said.

PWD plans to build a 2.2-km flyover connecting the existing Zakhira and Karampura flyovers to provide an alternate elevated route to access Rohtak Road from central and west Delhi, officials said. Meanwhile, the development work on the Punjabi Bagh flyover continues to progress at a snail's pace, impacting traffic movement on the west Delhi section of the Ring Road.

A senior PWD official said the four-lane flyover will come up along the Najafgarh Road (Shivaji Marg), and added that a consultant has been appointed to finalise the detailed project report.

"Connecting loops will be built on either end to connect Karampura and Zakhira flyovers to the new flyover. The consultant has been appointed to conduct the traffic volume survey and submit the detailed project report. The feasibility study will assess the traffic volume over 24 hours period and throughout a week as well as the economic and environmental benefits of the project," the official added.

A Delhi government spokesperson did not comment on the project.

The loops, the official said, will enable commuters to Shivaji Marg to Rohtak Road or Old Rohtak Road. "With the construction of the new flyover, residents of DLF Colony, Moti Nagar, Karampura, Narang Colony, Chander Nagar, Janakpuri, Ramesh Nagar, Uttam Nagar and nearby areas will get relief from traffic jams," the official said.

He explained that the new flyover will help decongest the area between Anand Parbat to Karampura flyover and Moti Nagar by allowing motorists to



Decongesting West Delhi

Flyover connecting Zakhira and Karampura flyovers

2.2 km Length
Structure: Four lane flyover

Will decongest: main Punjabi Bagh intersection, Anand Parvat, DLF Colony, Moti Nagar, Karampura, Narang Colony, Chander Nagar, Janakpuri, Ramesh Nagar, Uttam Nagar, faster commuter between central and west Delhi to Rohtak road

Bypass: three traffic light intersections
Status: consultant appointed

bypass the three red light signals and a roundabout along the 3-km-long stretch between Zakhira and Karampura flyover on Shivaji Marg.

"The elevated corridor will come up along an industrial area on one side and a residential pocket on the other. Also, there are several banquet halls located along the road which are a major reason for traffic congestion on the stretch," official added.

Anil Kumar, a resident of Ramesh Nagar who regularly travels via Najafgarh Road, said that the road stretch near Karampura is especially chaotic due to the presence of a large number of banquet halls. "The road becomes congested in the evening and it takes a couple of hours to reach home specially when multiple marriage function are being held on the banquet locations on the main road. Traffic police needs to deploy more personnel along this route to curb illegal parking. A flyover will help ease daily commute," he said.

Tajinder Singh, another commuter who travels between from Zakhira to Dwarka Mor, said the Najafgarh Road has become a hub of encroachment,

r-rickshaws, and lacks traffic planning.

When asked if the two projects will be executed simultaneously causing more chaos in the area, a second PWD official said the two projects will not be implemented simultaneously. The Shivaji Marg work will be initiated after the completion of the Moti Nagar project, he said.

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on March 13 inaugurated the three-lane Moti Nagar flyover in West Delhi section of Ring Road, doubling the existing one-way flyover at the location.

The flyover is the part of West Delhi elevated corridor development and connectivity plan for the influence zone of the Ring Road corridor between Punjabi Bagh Flyover and Raja Garden which was launched in September 2022. It was expected to be completed by December 8, 2023. However, the commuters on this stretch will only get partial relief as the second section of the flyover at Punjabi Bagh Club Road is still a work in progress and it is now expected to be completed by July, officials say. PWD had opened the Moti Nagar section of the flyover in March.

LICENCE OF GGM RESTAURANT THAT SERVED DRY ICE CANCELLED

GURUGRAM: The food and supply department on Monday cancelled the licence of Laforesta Café in Sapphire Mall in Gurugram's Sector 90 after it failed to respond to a show cause notice issued to them on March 6, people familiar with the matter said. The department sealed the restaurant and issued it the notice after its staff allegedly served dry ice instead of mouth freshener to five diners, leading to their hospitalisation.

Following the incident, the food and supply department has taken food samples from 162 restaurants across the city to conduct quality tests.

The incident occurred on March 2 when a group of six friends gathered to celebrate the birthday of one of them at the café.

Car on Meerut e-way rams into light pole, passenger with head out of window dies

HT Correspondent
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GHAZIABAD: A 60-year-old woman, who stuck her head out of the window of a moving car after she began feeling the effects of motion sickness, died after the vehicle crashed into a light pole on the median of the Delhi-Meerut expressway on Monday evening, traffic police officers aware of the incident said on Tuesday.

The police identified the deceased as Nanhi Khatoon, who was in a Hyundai Creta car that was being driven by her son Mohammad Aminuddin, 32. Officers said the two were travelling from Aligarh to their residence in Pratap Vihar in Ghaziabad at around 5.30pm, when the incident occurred on



The Hyundai Creta car involved in the incident. HT

the Meerut to Delhi carriage-way of the expressway.

"Khatoon was in the left rear seat. As the car was crossing the Lal Kuan area, Khatoon felt nauseous and rolled down the

window and stuck her head out of the window to throw up. Distracted by the sudden noise, Aminuddin turned his head to look back at his mother and lost control of the car, which

skidded on to the divider and rammmed a light pole on the median," Ankit Kumar, station house officer of the Wave City police station, said.

Virendra Singh, additional deputy commissioner of police (traffic), said the traffic police also conducted a site inspection.

"The car driver lost control and it hit the roadside divider as a result of which the woman, whose head was out of the window, died as her head hit the pole," the ADCP said in a statement on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, assistant commissioner of police (Wave City) Poonam Mishra said that Khatoon's family "has given in writing that the incident was an accident and do not wish to proceed further".

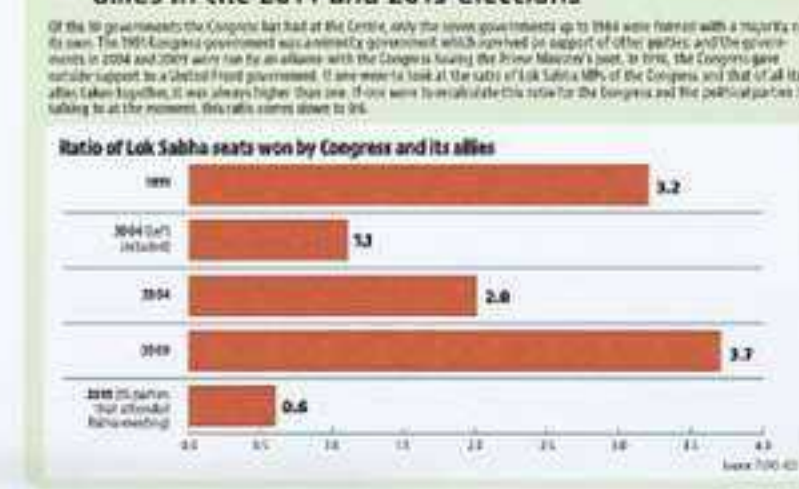
FACTS WITHOUT FILTER, NEWS WITHOUT BIAS

NUMBER THEORY

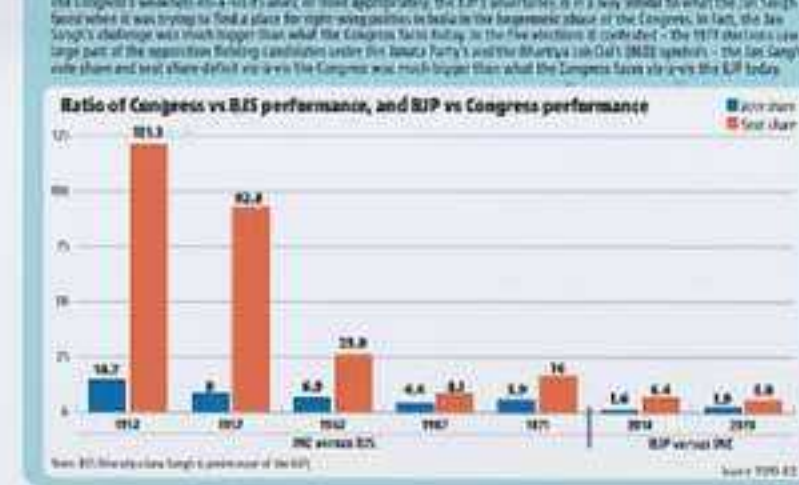
Poll math: Is Cong where Jan Sangh was in '60s-'70s?

By Rohan Datta
India's electoral competition is witnessing a triangular alliance with the three poles being the BJP-led NDA, an opposition grouping with the Congress at the biggest party, and a league of regional parties in the space of Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Punjab. To be sure, an alliance of the Congress and regional parties is not new. But when differentiation the current coalition in the fact that the Congress vote strength has significantly declined. As a result, Congress is being pushed to ally with a host of ideologically different groups, including the opposition, a scenario that has been predicted to do so in alliance with the BJP and/or the opposition in the past. This time, the Congress was the Government party in Indian politics. Here are three charts which explain this in detail.

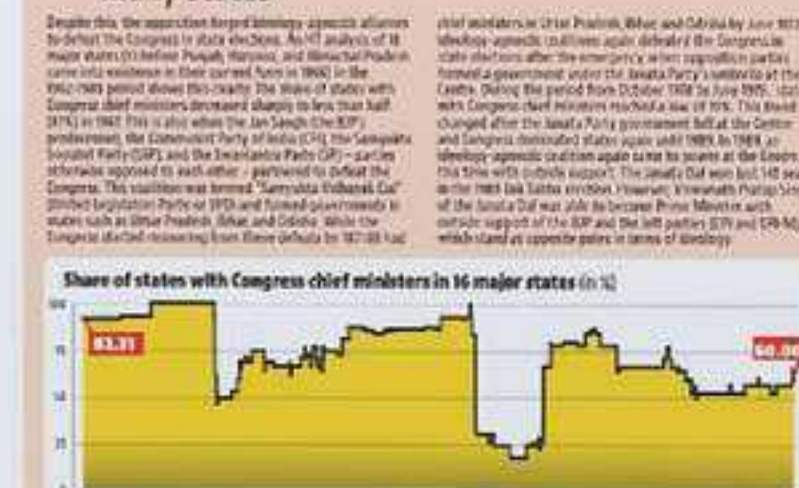
1 The Congress was much smaller than its prospective allies in the 2014 and 2019 elections



2 The Jan Sangh was in an even weaker situation in its initial years...



3 ... but ideology-agnostic opposition alliances managed to keep the Congress out of power in many states



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MCD logs dip in property tax collection, taxpayers in FY24

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NEW DELHI: The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has registered a dip in property tax revenue collection as well as the number of taxpayers in 2023-24 even as the other sectors, including parking, advertisement and trade licences, recorded an uptick with the financial year culminating on Sunday, senior municipal officials said.

The property tax department tentatively collected around ₹2,137 crore till March 31 with 1,258,000 tax payers filing returns, according to one of the officials cited above. Municipal data shows that the civic body collected around ₹2,417 crore from 1,329,641 taxpayers in the preceding year 2022-23. Earlier in December, the municipal commissioner's budget proposed a collection target of ₹4,300 crore from property taxes for 2023-24.

The corporation has recorded a decrease of over ₹250 crore in the tax collection with a net dip of around 70,000 taxpayers. "Last year, MCD offered an amnesty scheme (Samridhhi scheme) due to which the revenue collection jumped by 20% and more than 1.3 lakh taxpayers registered under this scheme alone. This led to an all-time high property tax collection. In absence of such a scheme this year, the number has dipped," a second senior official said, asking not to be named.

Property tax collection remains one the key revenue streams for the Capital's municipi-

Revenue collection made by civic body

Financial year 2022-23 2023-24

PROPERTY TAX COLLECTION



OTHER REVENUE SOURCES

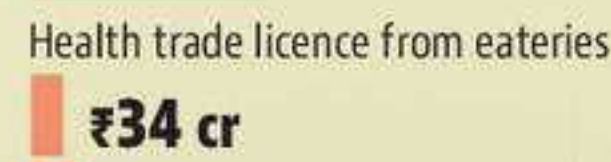
Advertisements



Remunerative projects (parking, mobile towers, etc)



Health trade licence from eateries



TAXPAYERS



pality, which also earns from trade licence fee, advertisement charges, parking, mobile towers, fines, and some other streams.

This year, the advertisement department has reported a net collection of ₹304.5 crore—35% jump from collection of ₹225.7 crore collected last year.

"This is the highest ever col-

lection from advertisement sector on record. It was yielding between ₹160-₹190 crore between 2016 and 2020. It dipped to ₹84.8 crore in 2020-21 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The recovery started in 2021-22 with ₹137 crore, which rose to ₹225.7 crore last year, and breached ₹300-crore mark for

the first time this year," a third municipal official said while attributing the jump to crackdown on illegal advertisements, surrogate advertisements and regulations of self-signages.

Similarly, the remunerative projects (RP) cell that oversees sectors, including parking, mobile towers and charging stations, reported a revenue collection of ₹253.9 crore — a 19% jump from ₹213.27 crore collected last year.

The public health department, which earns revenue from health trade licences issued to eateries, restaurants and hotels, reported an increase of licence fee from ₹34 crore last year to ₹50 crore this year.

Leader of opposition from BJP and former mayor Raja Iqbal Singh said that the corruption of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) led to a decrease of about ₹300 crore in the property tax collection of MCD this year as compared to last year. "The number of taxpayers has also decreased. Since the AAP came to power, they have not come up with any amnesty scheme for the citizens, while on the other hand, the administration has tried to intimidate the citizens by sending them property tax notices. Money which should have gone to the corporation's treasury from property tax was kept in the pockets of AAP leaders and house tax inspectors, due to which MCD had to suffer a loss of revenue," he added.

HT reached out to the mayor and the mayor's office, but did not get any response to requests for comments.

Fire breaks out at house in Sadar Bazar, 2 girls killed

HT Correspondent
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NEW DELHI: A fire broke out on the first floor of a residential building in north Delhi's Sadar Bazar on Tuesday afternoon, fire officials and police officers aware of the matter said, adding that two girls — sisters who had locked themselves in a bathroom, ostensibly to escape the blaze — died of asphyxiation.

Deputy commissioner of police (north) Manoj Kumar Meena said the deceased were identified as Anaya, 12, and Gulashna, 14, residents of Chamelian Road. Police said the sisters' father Haji Saalim Shabbu is a businessman who was in Lucknow at the time of the incident, while their mother and two younger brothers — the police did not share their names — were on a different floor of the house at the time of the blaze, and were successfully rescued.

Meena said the police control room received a call about the fire at 2.30pm. "Police teams from the Sadar Bazar police station reached the spot," he said.

Delhi Fire Service director Atul Garg said four fire tenders were pressed into service. "It is suspected that there was a short circuit in the air conditioner at a recreational room on the first floor that led to the fire," he said.

A fire official who took part in rescue operations said that the building is centrally air condi-



The fire broke out on the first floor of the house. VIPIN KUMAR/HT PHOTO

tioned. "The fire is suspected to have spread because a mini theatre was installed with sound-proof foam and other inflammable materials," the official said, on condition of anonymity.

"The girls were on the first floor of the building and the house help were on the ground floor. When the fire broke out on the first floor, the girls couldn't escape and the help couldn't go upstairs as the staircase was filled with smoke," the officer said, also requesting anonymity.

"It is suspected that the girls entered the bathroom and shut the door to escape the flames. They were found unconscious in the bathroom," the officer said, adding that they were rushed to a hospital close by where they

were declared brought dead.

Meanwhile, Khalid Qureshi, a neighbour, claimed that the fire tenders arrived at the spot after over an hour. "When the fire helpline 101 was called, no one picked up. Someone went to the nearest fire station, and one fire tender arrived, but without gas masks and barely any water. Finally, after an hour and a half, fire tenders arrived," he said.

Garg, however, dismissed the allegations. "The first call was received at the fire control room at 2.07pm, after which one fire tender was pressed into service. At 2.23pm, officials present at the spot asked the control room to send more fire tenders, after which three more were sent by 2.31pm," Garg said.

NDMC PROPERTY TAX COLLECTION CROSSES ₹1,000CR FOR FY 2023-24

NEW DELHI: The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), which oversees the Lutyens' Delhi region, has for the first time reported a property tax collection of more than ₹1,000 crore.

NDMC's property tax department recently undertook a sealing drive in Connaught Place over the non-payment of property taxes.

NDMC oversees the region covering key government buildings, offices, historic areas and Lutyens' bungalow zone. It hosts some of the most upscale and expensive residential and commercial areas of the country.

With just 16,500 taxpaying properties, the council mops up almost half of the property tax collected by MCD. The 1,483 sq km of Delhi's geographical area comprises of three urban local bodies — the largest of them being MCD which covers 1,397 sq km area. NDMC covers 42.7 sq km.

The council reported a property tax collection of ₹1,025.6 crore for 2023-24 — an increase from ₹931.2 crore collected last year.

The department set a target of ₹1,150 crore collection and an aggressive campaign was run to target long-time defaulters.

The council collected property tax of ₹931 crore in 2022-23, ₹950.7 crore in 2021-22 and ₹690.78 crore in the pandemic-hit 2020-21. HTc

Tinted glass rule violations on rise, most challans from W Delhi: Police

HT Correspondent
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NEW DELHI: The Delhi Traffic Police on Tuesday said that there has been a significant increase in the number of vehicles which have been challaned over the use of tinted windows over the past year, with data revealing that the maximum number of violations have occurred in west Delhi.

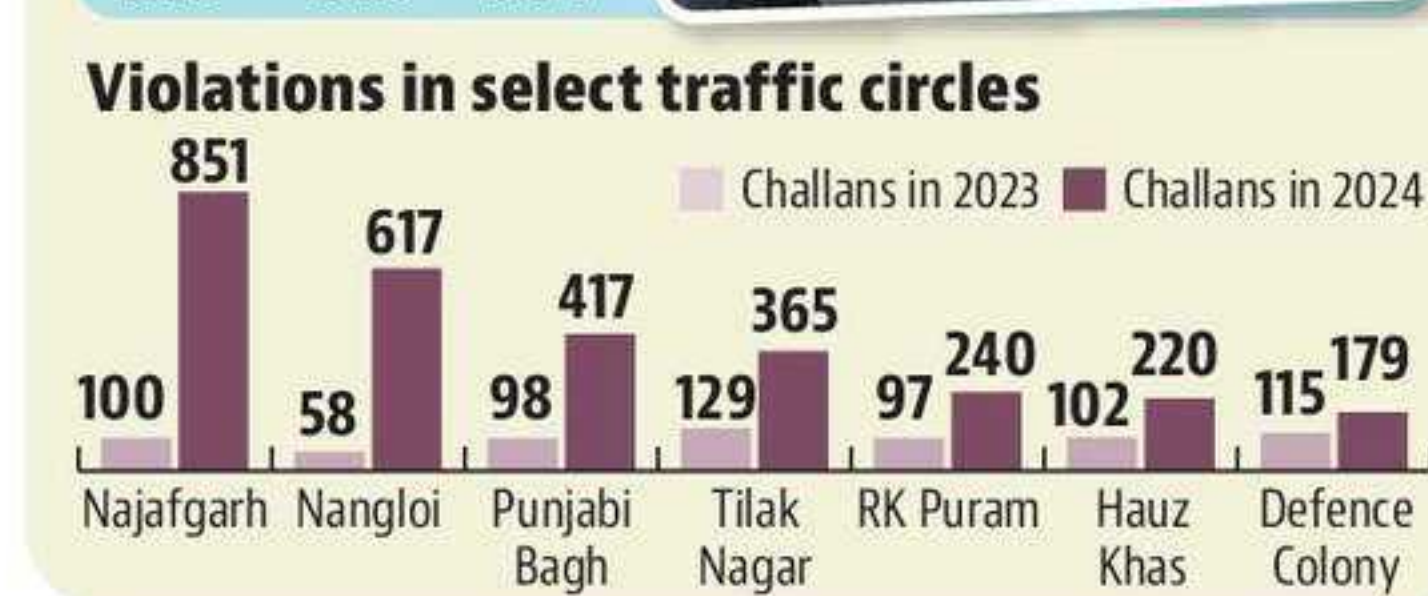
The Supreme Court, in a 2012 judgment, banned the use of black film and tinted windows in all vehicles, following several reports of crimes against women inside such vehicles.

In a statement on Tuesday, the traffic police said that they are "actively" checking vehicular traffic across the city, and have spotted several violations of the ban on tinted windows, with the traffic circles of Najafgarh, Nangloi, and Tilak Nagar — all in west Delhi — recording the maximum offenders.

"Tinted windows or films affect clear visibility, which compromises road safety for occupants of the vehicle and other commuters. Further, the safety of women has always been a top issue for Delhi Police,

Back in black

Tinted glass violations in Delhi traffic police circles (Jan 1 to Mar 15)



given the history of cases in which four-wheelers with tinted glasses were used," the statement said.

The police further added that despite regulations and regular checking, a "trend" of tinted window violations has emerged. As per data released by the

police, more than 7,567 cars were challaned for using tinted windows in cars from January 1 to March 15 this year, and were fined between ₹100 and ₹300. In 2023, during the same period, the number of violators was 3,029, while the figure for the same period in 2022 was 1,083.

In 2024, the maximum number of violators were in the Najafgarh traffic circle — 851 — which was a significant surge from the 100 violators fined for the same period in 2023. Other traffic circles that had a significant number of violations in 2024 were Nangloi (617), Punjabi Bagh (417), Tilak Nagar (365), Dwarka (350), RK Puram (240), Badarpur (226), and Hauz Khas (220).

A traffic police officer aware of the development said that a car's windows must be transparent for road safety.

"People who stopped using tinted windows (due to the Supreme Court ban) are now trying to come up with dark films and other coating on windows," the officer said, on condition of anonymity.

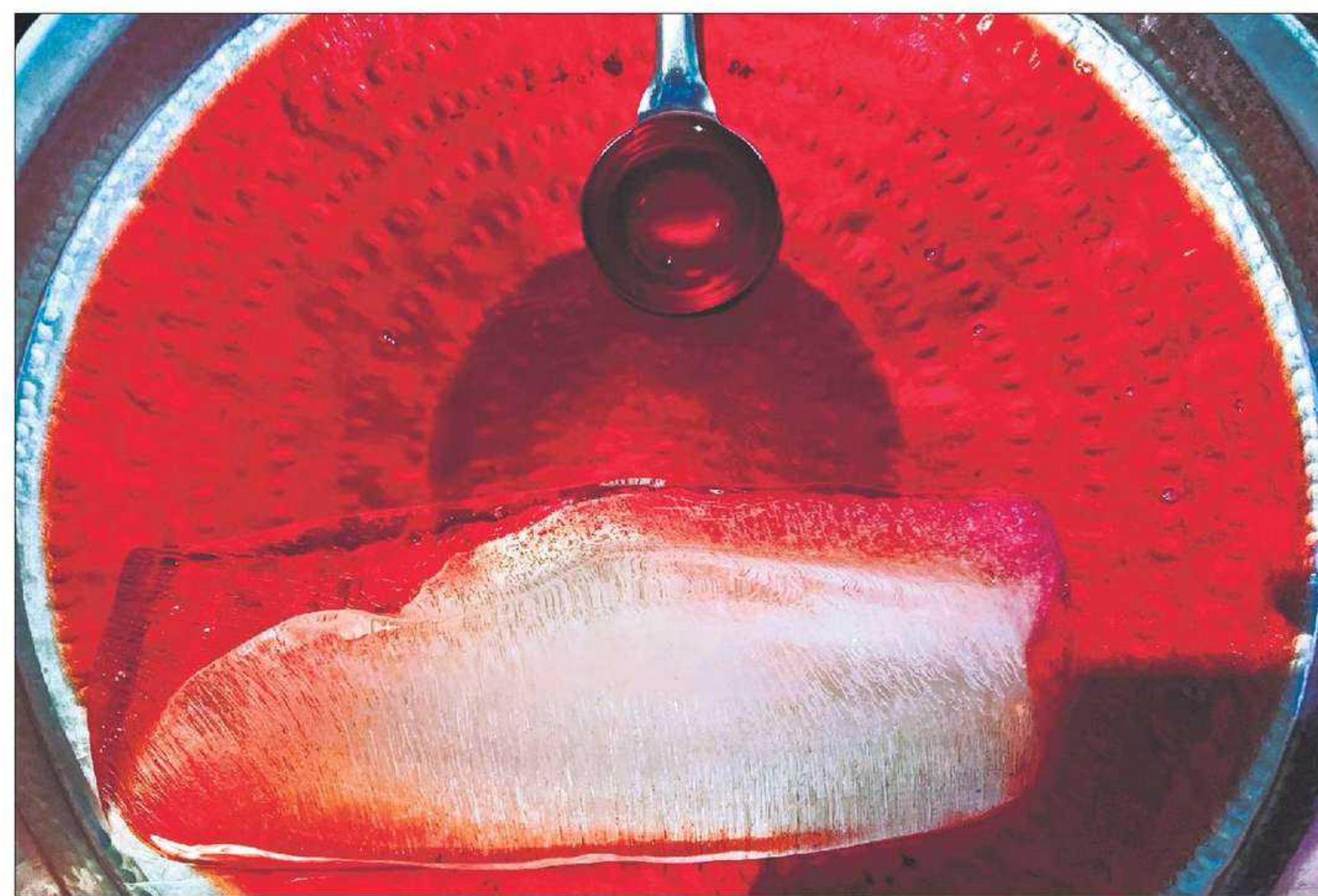
"Most of the violators are young adults, and they make excuses that they were not aware of the rule, or that they are allergic to the sun. We have also found violators shooting reels or creating nuisance in such cars. It becomes difficult to spot the person inside. People also use dark or light films to cover the windows. That is not allowed," the officer added.

Delhiwale

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Mayank Austen Soofi



In cold red

On the history of an iconic Walled City sherbet

PUBLIC INTEREST

Delhi's monuments are usually made of red sandstone. An exception is a red sherbet, its origins tightly entwined with the dense tapestry of Purani Dilli's rich history. Say salaam-namaste to Rooh Afza, the Persian for "soul enhancer". After a customary wintertime hibernation, the sherbet is again popping up across the Walled City. Here's a brief but definitive record of its past.

In 1906, Hakeem Hafiz Abdul Majeed, a pharmacist who trained in Unani medicine during a stint at the legendary Hindustani Dawakhana clinic in Old Delhi's Ballimaran, set up his own clinic in Hauz Qazi, close to his house in Katra Sheikh Ranjha. Investing ₹100 into the venture, he named it Hamdard, "partner in pain".

A year later, the aforementioned founder, who would die very young, introduced his first offering of medicines. One of those was a potion to heal summertime ailments such as heat stroke, dehydration and diarrhoea. It was prepared from the extracts of spinach, watermelon, endive, khas-khas grass, coriander seed, damask rose, etc. Perhaps because the syrupy dawa was fragrant with the

bouquet of appetising herbs and flowers, and tasted sweet due to its high sugar content, it quickly picked up a reputation of being an anytime thirst quencher.

The sherbet's tall, heavy, long-stemmed bottles would be filled and corked manually in a Walled City factory. Designed by artist Mirza Noor Ahmad, the coloured labels, introduced in 1910, would be printed at Bolton Press in Bombay (now Mumbai).

Following Partition in 1947, the founder's elder son chose to remain an Indian and didn't budge from Delhi. His younger son moved to the newly created Pakistan, where he started making the same sherbet in Karachi. After East Pakistan became Bangladesh in 1971, the property there fell into local ownership. The world today has three independent Rooh Afzas—headquartered in Delhi (Middle Circle, Connaught Place), Karachi and Dhaka respectively. The sherbets share no links with each other except for their common ancestor.

Meanwhile, this afternoon in Rooh Afza's jan-ambhoomi, a cart vendor is parked outside the Jama Masjid. The cold solution in his metal vessel is filled with chunky blocks of ice-factory baraf. On receiving an order, the man dips his ladle into the vessel, lifting up its bowl the next moment. A silver coin glistens in the iconic red sherbet. It is the summertime sun's reflection.



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{ FROM PAGE 1 }

SANJAY SINGH

today will not be treated as a precedent," said the bench in the order, recording the statement of additional solicitor general (ASG) SV Raju, who appeared for the agency.

To be sure, in criminal cases, each accused is treated on the merit of the evidence against them. The order noted that ED's concession in the case was made before the agency began arguments. "We clarify that we have not commented on the merits of the case," it added.

Still, the release will be a boost for the AAP, which has been bereft of senior leadership since Kejriwal's arrest. Singh is one of the tallest leaders of the party, is an aggressive public orator, and has relationships across parties.

The court, earlier in the proceedings, also hinted to the agency that if it decided in favour of Singh, it will have to record its observations under Section 45 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act that he was prima facie not guilty and that will have ramifications on the trial. The Supreme Court is also set to review its 2022 judgment in Vijay Madanlal Choudhary v Union of India, which upheld the constitutional validity of several stringent provisions of PMLA, including those related to power to issue summons, make arrests, search and seizure and the stringent conditions of bail.

The Supreme Court in August 2022 agreed to review its earlier judgment, adding the reconsideration would be confined to two crucial aspects — denies the accused access to a copy of the Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) and shifts the onus of proving innocence from the prosecution to the accused.

In March 2023, the top court agreed to examine the validity of Sections 50 and 63 of the PMLA and sought the government's reply. Section 50 empowers ED to summon an accused and record a statement that is admissible as evidence. Section 63 provides for punishment for giving false testimony.

These cases are now expected to be heard by a special three-judge bench in July.

Arrested six months ago ED arrested Rajya Sabha MP Singh on October 4 last year in relation to the controversial 2021-22 excise policy, which has since been withdrawn. His arrest was based on a statement made by Dinesh Arora, who claimed to have delivered a sum of ₹2 crore to Sarvesh Mishra,

an alleged associate of the MP. These funds were delivered at Singh's official residence, Arora said in his statement recorded by the trial court, and the receipt of this was confirmed by Singh when they next met. Arora turned an approver in the case, seeking pardon.

ED had filed supplementary complaints against Singh and other co-accused on December 2 and December 19 following which the trial court rejected grant of regular bail to Singh on December 22.

Singh's petition in the top court challenged the February 7 order of the Delhi high court, rejecting his bail plea by relying on the statement of Arora. In the petition, Singh questioned the veracity of the claim made by approver Arora suggesting that he had given six different statements during investigation and was unreliable.

On Tuesday, Singhvi cited the discrepancies in Arora's statements, adding there was neither any corroboration of the payment of ₹2 crore nor the recovery of this money. The senior counsel questioned the necessity of Singh's arrest based on a belated statement by Arora to implicate him sans any corroborative piece of evidence.

Finding substance in Singhvi's submissions, the bench turned to ASG Raju, questioning the agency on the necessity of continuing the incarceration of the AAP leader, who has already spent six months behind bars.

"He has been in for six months. Do you have any instructions whether you require him anymore? Please, keep in mind if we are with him, we will have to record under Section 45 (of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act) our satisfaction that he is prima facie not guilty and that will have its own ramifications on the trial," the bench told the ASG before the bench was to rise for a lunch break at 1pm.

It said that the fact of the matter is that Arora did not implicate Singh in his initial statements, adding statements of an accomplice will have to be finally tested during the trial by way of cross-examination of witnesses. "There has been no recovery either and that's another fact of the matter... You have kept him in custody for six months. Take instructions whether he has to be kept in further custody," it told Raju.

When the hearing resumed at 2pm, the ASG said that although the agency has an arguable case,

it will not come in the way of the grant of bail to Singh. Raju, however, said that he is not willing to make any concession in so far as Singh's challenge to the legality of his arrest is concerned.

Responding, the bench said that ED's willingness to let him out on bail is good enough for now. "It does not matter if you are not conceding on the matter of arrest. To him, it's a matter of liberty and agreeing on bail is good enough," it remarked. The court then proceeded to order Singh's release on bail.

Sanjay Singh, arrested six months ago in connection with the controversial Delhi excise policy case, has been under scrutiny for his alleged involvement in the scandal that has embroiled several high-profile names, including Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia — both presently incarcerated in the Capital's Tihar jail in the same case. Another AAP lawmaker Satyendar Jain is also lodged in Tihar jail over charges of money laundering in a different case.

The case, which pertains to accusations of corruption, money laundering, and irregularities in the formulation and implementation of the excise policy, has seen the ED taking a stringent stance against the accused.

Kejriwal was arrested on March 21 by ED, hours after the Delhi high court denied his request for interim protection from arrest — a startling turn of events that left the Capital's politics in turmoil and pushed to new heights the ongoing conflict between the Union government and the AAP. The party has insisted that Kejriwal will continue as CM and he has issued two orders from jail, sparking condemnation from the BJP.

ED has accused the CM of being the "kingpin and key conspirator" of the Delhi excise policy scam who acted in cahoots with ministers of his cabinet and other Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders, while seeking to implicate AAP as the beneficiary of the alleged crime in the form of a "company".

Kejriwal was on Monday sent to Tihar jail following his 10-day custodial interrogation, during which, the agency claimed, the probe focussed on the role of Vijay Nair, a key figure in the case who allegedly played a significant role in facilitating allegedly illicit activities and connections within the liquor industry.

IIT BOMBAY

ence and engineering branch, which are most in demand, have not seen 100% placement among those registered," the officer added.

According to data shared by Singh, which is available with the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), 1,485 students were placed, of 2,209 registered.

"The institute is focused on big packages to maintain the high mark of average salary packages. However, it is not focusing on the salary bagged by an average student — this has created a system where despite getting offer letters, most students reject them later and choose other ways to seek employment," said a professor from the institute.

Pointing to the focus on "propaganda of placements", the professor underscored an error created by the placement cell this academic year. When only 22 IIT-Bombay students received more than ₹1 crore in Phase-I of placements held in December, the institute announced that 85 candidates were offered over ₹1 crore. Later, it issued a note correcting the oversight.

"A majority of students are expressing concern about rising stress levels, especially post-pandemic, regarding job placements. They are declining campus offers that are not on a par with offers received by students from private colleges for similar positions," the professor elaborated.

Singh pointed to the need to create a support system for unplaced students who have high levels of anxiety and stress staring at the bleak job scenario. He said, the institute "hardly has any placement support for approximately 700-750 students left unplaced in phase two". "This is a disheartening state of affairs in IIT-Bombay, which is ranked the third engineering college in India (as per NIRF). The administration should inform unplaced students how they are going to help them find a job," said Singh.

A final-year student, who was part of the placement drive, spoke about the anxiety he experienced during the interview. "I prepared hard but was unable to tackle real-time pressure and failed to get a job. Some company representatives informed us they cut down hirings by 50% compared to last year," said the student.

Despite several attempts by HT to get a response on the matter, IIT-Bombay officials remained unavailable for a comment.

SPOTLIGHT ELECTIONS 2024

Ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, HT looks at some key constituencies across India which encapsulate the issues shaping the elections

In Maoist citadel, green shoots of democracy

Ritesh Mishra
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KANKER (CHHATTISGARH): It is 10 am in late March, the sun beginning to sear the skin. In a tattered vest, 31-year-old Jageshwar Korram whistles loudly as he washes his clothes at a government handpump. Around him are scattered homes, far apart as they often are in the forests of Bastar, and evidence of calm domesticity. A few metres away from Korram, children titter as they play hide and seek, weaving past a woman who has set off on her Atlas bicycle for the closest bazaar.

Korram is content. But this contentment comes not from development or any real sense of upward mobility — the village of Mohla has 25 tribal and six Other Backward Classes (OBC) families, nearly all of them still living off the subsistence their small land holdings provide for them. In Mohla, calm domesticity is hard earned. Even the luxury of electoral choice, one of the most fundamental tenets of Indian democracy, did not exist 15 years ago.

ence, Kerala is 38,863 square kilometres. These seven districts — Kanker, Kondagaon, Narayanpur, Bastar, Dantewada, Sukma and Bijapur — are all categorised as LWE affected. But over the years, even as violence has continued incessantly, areas under Maoist control have shrunk, now predominantly in the three south Bastar districts of Dantewada, Sukma and Bijapur, or Abujhmad, 4,000 square kilometres of land yet unmappped by the government, literally translated from Gondi as the “mountains of the unknown”. In some of these, the first three months of the year have seen a climax of sorts, with the state launching a concerted push into once Maoist-dominated areas in the interiors, and the cornered insurgents fighting hard. The human toll tells the story — in three months, 47 Maoists, six security personnel, and 16 civilians have lost their lives in the action.

But Kanker is a different story. Closest to Chhattisgarh’s capital Raipur and only around 140 kilometres away, it is one of the districts from where the violence has gradually dissipated — the result of a combination of creeping markets, road infrastructure, and a paramilitary push.

State government officials say that 70% of Kanker, barring the parts that fall under Abujhmad, are “Maoist-free”.

“Ten years ago, this whole area (which Mohla falls under) of Pakhanjur, Partapur, Koylibeda and Bande were Maoist strongholds but things have changed because of the opening of camps and roads,” said Lakshman Kewat, station house officer of Pakhanjur police station.

Sunderraj P, inspector general of police, Bastar range, said



Villagers in Mohala gear up to vote in their first Lok Sabha polls.

HT PHOTO

ELECTION PINCODE
KANKER
494 334

Receding Maoists
For close to four decades, Bastar in southern Chhattisgarh has become one of the primary arenas of a deadly battle between government security agencies and the banned Left Wing Extremist (LWE) outfit CPI(Maoists) — once called India’s gravest internal security challenge by then prime minister Manmohan Singh in 2006.

Yet, even as it has grown to be synonymous with violence, the term Bastar is often misleading. Bastar is, at once, a village, a district, and, most importantly, a range that comprises seven different districts spanning 39,117 square kilometres, bigger than several Indian states. For refer-

that even in the last two years, the advance of the security forces continued apace. “We have established critical camps in Bastar, including Chilparas, Pandidobir, Kadmeta and Katgaon in Kanker district. These camps, which are game changers, were established in erstwhile Maoist strongholds, and this was done facing considerable risks, including the threat of IEDs, ambushes and UBGL (under barrel grenade launcher) attacks. The fight against LWE has reached its final and decisive phase,” he said.

For Lalit Kumar Patel, this receding of Maoism reflects Mohla’s lived reality.

“Even 10 years ago, nobody dared enter Mohla. But things are different now,” Patel, a villager, said.

One of those changes is immediate. “We had never thought that there would be enough normalcy that the entire village would get to vote for the Lok Sabha elections.”

threatening to kill more. Within days, the village emptied. “We all moved to the small town of Pakhanjur, 20 km away,” Korram said. Even in the years before that, nobody had dared to vote for fear of the Maoists.

But slowly, from their makeshift huts on the outskirts of Pakhanjur, the villagers watched as the situation began to ease. The same year as the Mohla massacre, the first Border Security Force (BSF) camp opened in Partapur, 16 kilomet-

Constituency watch

SEAT: KANKER (RESERVED FOR SCHEDULED TRIBES)

ELECTORS: 1,558,952

TURNOUT IN 2019: 74.4%

INCUMBENT: MOHAN MANDAVI

PARTY: BJP

Advancing democracy
As his hands beat the dirt out of the clothes under the gentle flow of the hand pump, Korram called out to his four-year-old son, one of the children playing under his watchful eye. There was a time when Korram was young, that he believed neither he nor his children (if he had any) would return to the village.

In 2010, armed Maoists had descended on Mohla, and executed three people on suspicion of being police informers,

threatening to kill more. Within days, the village emptied. “We all moved to the small town of Pakhanjur, 20 km away,” Korram said. Even in the years before that, nobody had dared to vote for fear of the Maoists.

But slowly, from their makeshift huts on the outskirts of Pakhanjur, the villagers watched as the situation began to ease. The same year as the Mohla massacre, the first Border Security Force (BSF) camp opened in Partapur, 16 kilomet-

tribes away. In 2017, another camp was established, less than a kilometre from Mohla. By late 2019, the government had cajoled the villagers to return home. The homes they left behind were mud and thatch, and had not survived the nine-year hiatus. “Every single one of the 30 families had to rebuild. But after the establishment of the camp, the influence of the Maoists has become negligible. The first time we voted was in the assembly elections last year. Now we will vote in the Lok Sabha elections,” said Sumila Komre (41), returning from the forests after collecting mahua.

Much has changed in the five years since the villagers have returned. There is now electricity, and a stable mobile phone network. And among the residents, much like anywhere else, political conversations are about which government will bring the village the most development. “Now, we want the Nal-Jal Yojana and roads inside the village. The path from the main Pakhanjur-Koylibeda road is unpaved and becomes difficult to traverse in the rainy season. Our vote will be for development,” said Manik Ram Komre.

Komre is testament to Mohla’s aspiration, and upward mobility. He is 19 years old and readying for a Bachelor of Commerce degree in the district headquarters at Kanker. “I think (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi is a great leader,” Ram smiled. Standing next to him, under a tamarind tree, Sankai Gawande scoffed dismissively. He shook his phone violently and said, “What has Modi done for us? All he does is appear on mobile phones and television screens. I have yet to decide who to vote for.” But Gawande knows that even the conversation he is in the middle of, the luxury of choice, is battle earned. “Now at least we can talk about it, and can vote. Fifteen years ago, nobody voted for anyone. Those were difficult days. Now there is no interference and no fear,” he said.

Tribal politics
Experts believe that elections in Bastar have always been a reliable barometer for the strength of the Maoists in the region. Every election is fraught with danger; littered with examples of attacks. In April 2019, on the last day of campaigning, BJP MP Bhima Mandavi was killed after an IED targeted his convoy; four others died with him. But overall, experts say, there is increasing evidence of a reduction in Maoist influence and the spread of election processes.

“Despite the usual call of election boycott by the CPI(Maoist), more and more people, and more and more regions are voting. Some of these, like in 2023, were even in the so-called base areas of the Maoists where their janatana sarkar operates. All attempts to disrupt elections are being thwarted by the security forces and recently, only stray violence has been reported,” said former special director general of police RK Vij.

Experts also said that over the past six months, the progress made by security forces in developing new camps have aimed a psychological blow at the Maoists.

“For instance, the establishment of a security camp in Puvarti, the native village of Maoist operative Hidma, who has controlled most operations in south Bastar for the past decade, is one such blow. These new camps, including in Kanker district, have certainly restricted the movement of large military formations by the Maoists,” Vij added.

In Kanker, this opening up of new avenues also means navigating methods of political communication not associated with Bastar. The BJP’s Kanker Lok Sabha candidate, former Antargarh MLA Bhojraj Nag, said party workers were now campaigning in several areas they had never set foot in before. “But in sensitive areas, we are dependent on social media platforms and videos because people have access to mobile

phones now. There are door to door workers, but in interior places, we try to spread our message through digital technology.” In terms of the immediate electoral politics, Kanker is one of the two Lok Sabha seats in Bastar, and is currently held by the BJP. In 2019, while the BJP won the seat with a narrow 6,914 vote margin, they have moved to mitigate any anti-incumbency by removing sitting Member of Parliament Mohan Mandavi, replacing him with Nag.

Last week, the Congress announced that Viresh Thakur, who contested in 2019, would battle for the seat again.

“Our election campaign is focused on Modi ki guarantee (PM Modi’s promises), and the development schemes launched by our government that are now both at the state and the central level. The programmes have made a huge difference to people’s lives and we are confident we are winning with a huge margin,” Nag said.

Thakur said the Congress has framed their campaign as a fight for the “country’s soul”. “We will contest the elections for the very future of our country and are taking Rahul Gandhi’s guarantees to the people. People have benefitted from the five years that (Congress’s) Bhupesh Baghel was in power and we are confident people will vote for us,” Thakur said.

In last year’s assembly polls, the Congress, under Baghel, lost to the BJP.

The sparring means little to Korram. His vote is in four weeks and he is already planning for the day. As his son squirms in his arms, Korram beams widely.

“We will all reach the polling booth early. Every vote is important. Maybe I will take my son. Someday, he will vote too,” he said. “Who knew this day would be possible.”

This is the first in a series of election reports from the field that look at national and local issues through an electoral lens.

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I. EKTA D/O Ravikant (UID: xxx0846) R/o 40, 3rd Floor, Pocket-3, Sector-21, Rohini, Sultanzpuri C-Block, North West, Delhi-110086, declare that I would be known as Ekta Ravikant so I have added my father’s name followed by my first name.

CHANGE OF NAME

I. DINESH Negi S/o Sh. Padam Singh Negi R/o F-1/40, Sec-16, Rohini, Delhi have changed my minor son’s name from Shivan Negi to Shivay Negi for all future purposes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I. RANJAN Chandra, S/o Bhupendra Kumar Abooth, R/o A-52, 3rd Floor, G. D. Colony, Mayur Vihar Phase 3, Delhi-96, have changed my minor daughter name from Ashwina Ranjan to Akshayina Ranjan Singh for all future Purposes

CHANGE OF NAME

I. KIRAN Devi W/o Manoj Kumar R/o Qtr 79C, CPWD Colony, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi-57 declare that my Name is wrongly written as Kiran in my husband service record. My actual & correct name is Kiran Devi for all future purposes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I. SAMIKSHA Jain W/o Sh. Ankit Jain, R/o A5-1002, Cleo County, Sector 122, Noida, Gautam Budh Nagar-201307, Uttar Pradesh have changed my name from Samiksha Mehrotra to Samiksha Jain for all future purposes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I. ASHMEET Kaur D/o Gurmeet Singh Juneja, R/o E-146 A, Greater Kailash-1, New-Delhi 110046, declare that my father name is wrongly mentioned as Gurmeet Singh in my Educational documents but his actual & correct name is Gurmeet Singh Juneja. Gurmeet Singh and Gurmeet Singh Juneja are one and the same person.

CHANGE OF NAME

I. CHANDER Vati W/o Late Sh. Ishwar Chand R/o H.No. 1A/87, Near Fawara Singh Chowk, NIT Faridabad, Haryana -121001 have changed my name from Permila Rani to Chandar Vati for all future purposes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I. DINESH Singh S/o Sh. Padam Singh Negi R/o F-1/40, Sec-16, Rohini, Delhi have changed my name from Dinesh Singh to Dinesh Negi for all future purposes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I. OM Prakash S/o Balbir Singh R/o H.No. 28, Shivaji Gali, Pandit Park, Krishna Nagar, Delhi 110051, Have changed my name As Om Prakash Nimya / Nimia for all purposes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I. ZAMON Zeb Usmani R/o A19, First Floor, Gali No. 4, Johari Farm, Noor Nagar Extn, Jamia Nagar New Delhi 110025 have changed my minor son’s name from Hasanat Zamon to Hasanat Usmani .

CHANGE OF NAME

I. LAPARNA Goyal W/o Sh. Lalit Mohan Goyal R/o House No. 170, 2nd Floor, Block-A, Sector-8, Dwarka, Delhi-110075 state that Aparna Goyal & Aparna Gupta is one and the same person but I will be known Aparna Gupta for all future purposes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I. POOJA Kumari D/o- Ram Kishor Choudhary W/o- Rahul, R/o- WZ-679/A-4, Padam Basti, Nangal Raya, New Delhi- 110046, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Pooja Singh

CHANGE OF NAME

I. YAMINI W/o Mr. Sahaj Khurana R/o 1-30/26, Third Floor, Rajpout Garden, New Delhi-110027, have changed my name to Yamini Malik Khurana for all purposes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I. CHANDAR Prakash Tokas s/o Balbir Tokas have lost 1) Demand cum allotment letter 2) Recommendation letter 3) copy of bank challan 4) Mutation letter 5) DDA possession letter 6) Site possession letter of plot no. 23, (208.35 mtrs), block B, sector -8, Bagdola (Dwarka), New Delhi. Finder contact: 9910612752.

CHANGE OF NAME

I. HAVE Lost My Original Property Documents of Property No. 12124 Gali No. 3, Idgah Road Motia Khan, New Delhi - 110055 finder please inform to Vinod Kumar S/o. Sannu Lal on mentioned above address

CHANGE OF NAME

I. MAHAK W/o. No.16018033W Hav Manoj Kumar, R/o- Vill- Shalpur, PO- Nurbad, Naraingarh, Ambala, Haryana-134203, have changed my name from Mahak to Mahak Rani, vide affidavit dated 02/04/2024 before Notary Public Delhi.

PUBLIC NOTICES

LAXMI EDUCATION DWELLERS PVT. LTD.
Regd. Office at H.No.108, 100 Feet Road, chawla colony, Faridabad 121004 HARYANA

PUBLIC NOTICE
Whereas, Laxmi Education Dwellers Pvt. Ltd., primary school (St. Andrews World School) site 01 (1.082 acre), located at Group Housing Colony of SE Automation Pvt. Ltd. in collaboration with Oris Infrastructure Pvt. Ltd. Area measuring 29,068 Acres (License No. 39 of 2009 dated 24.07.2009 & License No. 99 of 2011 dated 17.11.2011) Sector- 85, Gurugram. Existing building plan of the said plot was approved vide memo no. ZP-556-Vol-III/PA/DKI/2023/11580, dated 26-04-2023 and Occupation Certificate Received vide memo no. ZP-556-W/PA/DKI/2023/2073, dated 18-01-2024 granted by Director Town & Country Planning, Haryana, Chandigarh. Now, Laxmi Education Dwellers Pvt. Ltd., has requested Town and Country Planning Haryana HSVP to upgrade this Primary School Site to Senior Secondary School Site. There is no change in the plot area or approved building plan of any kind. Whereas the office of Director Town and Country Planning, Haryana, Chandigarh has required seeking of objections/suggestions against the request mentioned above via Memo No. ZP-556-W/PA/DKI/2024/9259, Dated 13-03-2024. Details of the same are available on our website www.sawsgurugram.com for references. Details are also available at the site address mentioned primary school (St. Andrews World School) site 01 as well as the office of Senior Town Planner, Sector 14, Gurugram, Haryana-122001 Any person related to this matter having any objection/suggestion may take clarification from the owner at its Registered Office or Site Office at primary school (St. Andrews World School), Sector-85, Gurugram, opposite Oris Aster Court or may file his/her objections at the office of Senior Town Planner, Sec 14, Gurugram, Haryana - 122001 within 30 days of publication of this notice, failing which it shall be assumed that there are no objections to the proposal.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that I, Pradeep Sood, son of Late Shri Ravinder Nath Sood, Director of M/s VEE GEE Industrial Enterprises Pvt. Ltd. that the original documents of our property Industrial Plot No.90 Sector-24 Faridabad were lost on date 15-02-2024. 01. Original allotment letter which was in the name of Shri S.P Gupta and V.P Gupta. 02. Transfer letter which was in the name of M/s Kamal Rubber Industries, 03. Re-allotment letter, 04. Occupation Certificate and 05. Possession Certificate were in the name of M/s VEE GEE Industrial Enterprises. These original documents were lost on 15-02-2024. Whose FIR was lodged. If anyone finds them, please contact on the address or mobile given below.
Address Plot No-90, Sector-24 Faridabad (Mobile No. 9910846667)

AUCTION NOTICES

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH HOSTEL
5, Nyaya Marg, Chanakyaपुर, New Delhi -110021
Unserviceable/condemned items will be auctioned on 08/04/2024 at 2:00 PM.
For details please contact International Youth Hostel, 5, Nyaya Marg, Chanakyaपुर, Ph. 011-24101246, 26116285

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STAY HOME STAY SAFE

Will step up action against the corrupt during 3rd term: Modi

HT Correspondent
letters@hindustantimes.com

DEHRADUN/RUDRAPUR: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday launched a scathing attack on members of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), particularly the Congress, stressing that action against the corrupt will be intensified in the third term of the BJP government.

Modi echoed comments he had made last week on Sunday — days after several Opposition leaders attacked the government for allegedly using federal agencies to target the BJP's political rivals amid a spate of cases and arrests by the Enforcement Directorate and the Central Bureau of Investigation.

Modi attacked Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for his remark suggesting there would be a "conflagration" in the country if the BJP gets a third term. He also told the crowd that there are two groups contesting the 2024 elections. "One side is us, honest and transparent. On the other side, corrupt and dynastic people have gathered. They are insulting and threatening Modi. We are saying, 'remove corruption'. They are saying, 'save the corrupt'. But people in the country have given a call, and I listen to this call. Modi is not afraid of their insults and threats. Action will continue against the corrupt. In the third term, action will be intensified. Corruption



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being felicitated by chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami in Rudrapur on Tuesday. PTI

affects people, and I won't allow that. This is Modi's guarantee."

Modi said the INDIA bloc had shown its anti-democratic face ahead of the elections. "They are saying if the country chooses the Modi government for the third term, the country will be set on fire. Do you agree with this? Will you allow this? Is this the language of democracy? Clear them one by one, don't let them stay in the field. The Congress is now provoking people. It is pushing the country into instability and anarchy. Those who want to break this country, shouldn't they be punished?"

During the INDIA bloc's rally at Ramila Maidan in Delhi on Sunday, Gandhi said: "If the BJP wins these match-fixed elections, and changes the Constitution, the whole country will be on fire. Remember this."

Modi said that had Congress not sown weakness in the system,

nobody would have dared to encroach upon India's territory along its borders. "In the ocean near Tamil Nadu, there is an island which was given to Sri Lanka by Congress. If Indian fishermen go near it, they are arrested. Can Congress ensure the protection of the country? Congress had stopped the development of border villages. BJP treated them as first villages and ensured their fast development. Had Congress remained, ex-servicemen would not have got One Rank, One scheme," he said.

After the public meeting, Modi also held a roadshow in Rudrapur. Hitting back, state Congress vice-president Suryakant Dhasmana said Modi is levelling "baseless allegations against INDIA bloc, especially Congress, to divert the attention from key issues". "Today, the people of Uttarakhand wanted to hear the truth from him, not misleading statements."

'Nation needs a strong and decisive BJP govt'

HT Correspondent
letters@hindustantimes.com

JAIPUR: A stable and decisive BJP government at the Centre is needed more than ever to protect the country from the "dangerous intentions" of the opposition parties, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday, as he kicked off his Lok Sabha poll campaign in Rajasthan.

Addressing a rally at Kotputli, which is part of Jaipur Rural Lok Sabha constituency, Modi said he was not born to have fun but to work hard for the welfare of the country.

"Congress people have started showing their dangerous intentions. This election is very important to save the country's future and to make the lives of future generations prosperous," Modi said. "The country now more than ever needs a strong and decisive BJP government."

Modi also sought votes for BJP candidate Rao Rajendra Singh from Jaipur Rural seat.

Speaking on the country's development, Modi said a lot happened in the last 10 years and that it was just a "trailer", a lot still has to be done. He asserted that the third term of the BJP-led government will be about taking

HT Correspondent
letters@hindustantimes.com

What led to the breakdown of your talks with the BJP?

First of all, we wanted them to stop meddling in Sikh religious affairs. The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), an elected body of the Sikhs, has been divided, something even the British could not do but the Centre did by amending an Act in Parliament. In Maharashtra, there is an Act to govern the management of Takht Nanded Sahib. There used to be four Sikh MPs nominated to run the gurdwara administration along with nominees from the SGPC, Singh Sabha, Chief Khalsa Diwan and local Sikhs, which has now been changed to 12 members nominated by the state government.

You can't interfere in anybody's religious affairs. The nation belongs to every citizen, irrespective of religion. Today, minorities are feeling insecure.

The second issue was the release of Sikh detainees who have completed their sentence. These convicts are not seeking pardon. They want the government to act according to the law without discrimination. Even (former prime minister) Rajiv Gandhi's killers were released. People from Punjab are over-staying in jails despite having completed their terms. We also

"historic decisions".

The PM said the upcoming polls are crucial for the country. "It is an election to achieve the vision of a developed and prosperous India, a self-reliant India, an election to make farmers prosperous, to bring water to every home. But Congress and its INDI Alliance are contesting the election not for the country but for their selfish interest," Modi said. "This is the first election where dynastic parties are doing rallies to save their families... where all corrupt are doing rallies together to prevent action against them."

Congress spokesperson Archana Sharma said: "The Opposition has not come together because they are afraid of BJP. They have come together to save democracy, which is being killed by the BJP."

'BJP does not have any base in Punjab'

MOHALI: Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal talks to Gurpreet Singh Nibber and Ravinder Vasudeva about the breakdown of the party's alliance talks with the Bharatiya Janata Party, and his plans for the Lok Sabha elections, in an interview. Edited excerpts:



Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal talks to Gurpreet Singh Nibber and Ravinder Vasudeva about the breakdown of the party's alliance talks with the Bharatiya Janata Party, and his plans for the Lok Sabha elections, in an interview. Edited excerpts:

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Why did the BJP not agree to preconditions for a tie-up?

I can't answer that. It is for them to answer. National parties pitch one community against the other as they look at vote bank politics. In the past five years in Parliament, you will find only Harsimrat Kaur (of the SAD) raised her voice for farmers despite the fact that the AAP and the Congress have more members from Punjab.

But you have been all praise for the PM on his historic decisions.

The PM said the upcoming polls are crucial for the country. "It is an election to achieve the vision of a developed and prosperous India, a self-reliant India, an election to make farmers prosperous, to bring water to every home. But Congress and its INDI Alliance are contesting the election not for the country but for their selfish interest," Modi said. "This is the first election where dynastic parties are doing rallies to save their families... where all corrupt are doing rallies together to prevent action against them."

Congress spokesperson Archana Sharma said: "The Opposition has not come together because they are afraid of BJP. They have come together to save democracy, which is being killed by the BJP."

pro-Sikh gestures.

Opening the Kartarpur corridor and striking off names of Sikhs from the blacklist were good, but the mini parliament of Sikhs (SGPC) has been broken. If you want to play a role in managing gurdwaras, field your candidates. Let Sikhs decide who manages their shrines. The BJP should make the Sikh community feel that we are with you. The Sikhs are easy to placate.

The BJP has been trying to expand its base in Punjab by inducting Sikh faces.

It will not work. They don't have any base in Punjab. Let the results come and you'll see the BJP's performance.

Historically, the Akali Dal has been a champion of federalism. But BJP stands for a strong Centre. What does it mean for regional parties?

When Narendra Modi was Gujarat chief minister, he was the biggest votary for federalism and more power to states. As chief minister, he knew that if states don't have a say, they can't function. But the GST (goods and services tax) regime has changed everything. It has become the biggest weapon of the Centre to take state finances in its hands. Why should the state GST go to the Centre first and come back after three months?



Siddaramaiah

ENOUGH, WON'T CONTEST POLLS ANYMORE: SIDDA

MYSURU: Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday said he has decided not to contest polls anymore, as he won't have the health and enthusiasm needed to work after four years with advancing age.

During the 2023 assembly polls itself, he had declared that it will be his last election, but he will continue to remain in politics. "People in Varuna want me to contest once again for assembly polls from there, but I have decided not to contest elections anymore. Now I'm 77 years old, still I have four years term (assembly tenure). I will be an 81-82 year-old by then. I won't have health, and I will not be able to work happily. Can I work with enthusiasm? Enough," Siddaramaiah said.

Speaking to reporters in Mysuru, the chief minister said, "By 2028 (when assembly elections are due in Karnataka), I will be 82-years-old, and I will complete 50 years in politics. In 1978, I became the taluk board member." "When told he doesn't look old, he said, "I may not look old, but who can experience aging, you or me?"

Sharmila, DU prof among 17 candidates fielded by Cong

HT Correspondent
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: YS Sharmila, the Congress party's Andhra Pradesh chief and sister of chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, the head of rival YSRCP, has been fielded from Kadapa constituency, a seat her father, the late YS Rajasekhara Reddy, (YSR) won four times. Her name was among the 17 announced on Tuesday, taking the total number of candidates thus far announced by the party to 232.

Sharmila, who joined the Congress on January 4 and became the Pradesh Congress Committee chief, faces an uphill task in a state where the Congress failed to win any Lok Sabha seats in 2019. In 2014, the party won just two of 25.

"Sharmila fighting from Kadapa is also a bid to reclaim Rajasekhara Reddy's legacy," said a senior Congress leader.

Of the 17 candidates, five are from Andhra Pradesh, three from Bihar, eight from Odisha and one from West Bengal.

The party also announced the candidature of Delhi University's Motilal Nehru College professor Munish Tamang from Darjeeling. Tamang is a professor in the English department and was in the opposite camp of Bimal Gurung, whose Gorkha Janmukti Morcha was a pivotal force in Darjeeling for a long time; he joined the Congress recently.

Breakdown of LS poll list

<p>ANDHRA PRADESH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MM PALLAM RAJU Kakinada GIDUGU RUDRA RAJU Rajahmundry JD SEELAM Bapatla PG RAMPULLAIAH YADAV Kurnool YS SHARMILA REDDY Kadapa 	<p>BIHAR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MOHAMMAD JAWED Kishanganj TARIO ANWAR Katihar AJEET SHARMA Bhagalpur 	<p>WEST BENGAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MUNISH TAMANG Darjeeling
<p>ODISHA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SANJAY BHOI Bargarh JANARDAN DEHURY Sundergarh MANOJ MISHRA Bolangir DRAUPADI MAJHI Kalahandi BHUBAL MAJHI Nabarangpur 	<p>AMIR CHAND NAYAK Kandhamal</p> <p>RASHMI RANJAN PATNAIK Berhampur</p> <p>SAPTAGIRI SANKAR ULAKA Koraput</p>	

The Congress's Central Election Committee (CEC) also cleared the candidature of former Union minister MM Pallam Raju from Kakinada and Gidugu Rudra Raju from Rajahmundry. Rudra Raju was the Andhra unit chief before Sharmila and is considered a loyalist of late Rajasekhara Reddy. Former Union minister, JD Seelam, has been fielded from the reserved seats of Bapatla in the state while PG Rampaiah Yadav is the party candidate from Kurnool.

In Bihar, the Congress repeated former Union minister Tariq Anwar from Katihar. Anwar was fielded from the same seat in 2019 as well. The party also fielded sitting MP Md. Jawaid from Kishanganj, Bihar, and gave the Bhagalpur Lok Sabha seat to Ajeet Sharma, a sitting MLA. In Odisha, the Congress has fielded Draupadi Majhi from Kalahandi, a region that was once among the most poverty-stricken areas in the state. "The choice is interesting as the party decided to field a new face instead of Bhakta Charan Das, a three-time MP from Kalahandi," said a senior leader.

YOGI HITS OUT AT CONGRESS, SP OVER DYNASTIC POLITICS

HT Correspondent
letters@hindustantimes.com

PILIBHIT/BUDAUN/BAREILLY: Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday hit out at Opposition parties for allegedly indulging in dynastic politics.

"This election is all about family first versus nation first and mafia rule versus law and order. Whether it is the Samajwadi Party or the Congress, their party presidents can only be someone from a particular family," he said.

"However, in the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), someone from an ordinary, poor family, like Prime Minister Narendra Modi, can become the prime minister and dedicate his entire life to the country and treat its citizens as his family," he added.

Adityanath made the remarks as he addressed a series of rallies in the three Lok Sabha constituencies of Pilibhit, Bareilly and Badaun.

He also said that the state has seen a decline in criminal activities and has now become a "safe space for daughters and respect leaders". Hitting back, a senior SP leader, who did not wish to be named, said: "All political parties, including the BJP, has family members in politics. It's not a corruption or scam like the BJP's electoral bonds scam is. The BJP excels in diversion politics."

'Shah wants me to back out; won't change mind'

Press Trust of India
letters@hindustantimes.com

SHIVAMOGGA: Senior BJP leader KS Eshwarappa on Tuesday said Union home minister Amit Shah called on him and asked him to withdraw his candidature from the Shivamogga Lok Sabha constituency but he stood firm on his decision to contest.

Miffed over his son K E Kant-hesh being denied the ticket to contest from neighbouring Haveri, the former deputy chief minister had announced he would enter the fray in Shivamogga, where the BJP has again fielded party veteran B S Yediyurappa's son and MP BY Raghavendra.

Eshwarappa, who had also served as the party's state unit chief, had alleged that Yediyurappa, a member of the party's Parliamentary Board and central election committee, promised a ticket to his son but betrayed him.

He said Shah, who was on a visit to campaign for the Lok Sabha elections in Karnataka, called him up and asked him to withdraw his candidature but he did not agree.

"This morning, Shah called me. He told me that you are such a senior leader and contesting the election, which is surprising. He asked me why I am contesting," he told reporters here.

"Shah asked me not to contest the election and withdraw the nomination papers. He said all the demands will be addressed in the coming days. Three months back, I had gone to Delhi and I explained to him (the prevailing situation in the party) but there were no changes in the situation," the 75-year-old rebel BJP leader said.

According to him, Shah asked him to meet him in Delhi on April 3. Eshwarappa said he agreed but requested him not to press him to withdraw his decision. "I told him (Shah) that I am contesting because I am deeply hurt..."



Union minister Amit Shah and BJP leader KS Eshwarappa in Delhi on January 11.

He told me that you are such a senior leader and contesting the election, which is surprising. He asked me why I am contesting," he told reporters here.

"Shah asked me not to contest the election and withdraw the nomination papers. He said all the demands will be addressed in the coming days. Three months back, I had gone to Delhi and I explained to him (the prevailing situation in the party) but there were no changes in the situation," the 75-year-old rebel BJP leader said.

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Modi to address digital NaMo rally of UP cadre today

LUCKNOW: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday will address a digital NaMo rally through the NaMo app at all 22,648 booths of 10 Lok Sabha seats going to the polls in Uttar Pradesh. In a press release issued on Tuesday, Bharatiya Janata Party state general secretary Sanjay Rai said Modi will connect through the NaMo app with the workers of 22,648 booths of Sambhal, Badaun, Bareilly, Aonla, Etah, Hathras, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Firozabad and Mainpuri Lok Sabha seats on Wednesday at 1pm.

DMK moves HC over EVMS ahead of Lok Sabha polls

CHENNAI: Ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, ruling DMK in Tamil Nadu has filed a writ petition in the Madras high court regarding the electronic voting machines. In its petition, the DMK has alleged that in the electronic voting machine, a "printer between the Balloting Unit and the Control Unit, tampers with the integrity of the data that is fed to the Control Unit". The MK Stalin-led party said that such a connection was in direct contravention of the rules laid down in the Representation of People 1951 Act, adding that neither the 1961 Rules allow the printer to be in direct connection with the control unit.

poll diary

HOW LEFT IS USING CONG EXITS IN KERALA

There have been more than 40 exits from the Congress party this election season, so far. Since 2014, 266 MLAs have left the Congress. Even INDIA partners have taken advantage of the exits from the party with the ruling Left in Kerala highlighting how AK Antony's son Anil and K Karunakaran's daughter Padmaja Venugopal, have also resigned from the party — a move that was previously unimaginable. Their message: "If you want to vote against the Bharatiya Janata Party, why waste your vote on someone who may end up with the saffron party?" The Left believes that there is a trust deficit with the grand old party that can prove beneficial to them.

BJP WORKING FOR ANDHRA FOOHOLD

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will roll out an aggressive campaign in Andhra Pradesh to position itself as a serious contender in the state to alleviate concerns of tensions between the party and the ruling YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), which it counts as a "friendly party". The BJP is hopeful of winning a couple of Lok Sabha seats owing to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's popularity and increasing its vote share and tally in the assembly elections, riding on the support of its allies, the Telugu Desam Party and the Jana Sena. A two-day coordination meeting will be held in the state on April 4 and 5 as well.

BADAUN LAWMAKER REDUCED TO TEARS?

The Bharatiya Janata Party's Badaun MP, Sanghmitra Maurya, who has not been offered a ticket for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, was caught on camera bursting into tears on the dais while participating at Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath's Prabhudharam Sammelan, before the CM arrived at the event. Maurya later told news agency PTI that the state's secondary education minister Gulabo Devi, who was sitting beside her, had narrated a touching story from the Ramayana which brought her to tears. Union minister of state BL Verma, who consoled Maurya, claimed she was not crying.

Azad to contest from Anantnag-Rajouri seat

HT Correspondent
letters@hindustantimes.com

SRINAGAR: Veteran leader and former Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) chief minister Ghulam Nabi Azad will contest the upcoming Lok Sabha elections from the newly redrawn Anantnag-Rajouri constituency, the Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) announced on Tuesday.

The constituency, which spreads across the Pir Panjal range to include Rajouri and Poonch areas in Jammu region along with Anantnag in South Kashmir after the delimitation, will go to polls on May 7 in the third phase of the Lok Sabha elections. "Delighted to share that Chairman DPAP, Ghulam Nabi Azad, will be contesting from the Anantnag-Rajouri LS seat," the party posted on its official X handle. "This decision was finalised during our core committee meeting in Srinagar today (Tuesday)."

Azad (75), who formed the DPAP in September 2022 after ending his five-decade-long association with the Congress, will square off against Mian Altaf Ahmad of the National



Ghulam Nabi Azad

Conference (NC), who holds considerable influence in the Gujjar and Pahari population on either side of the Pir Panjal Range in Jammu & Kashmir. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), led by former chief minister Mehbooba Muft, are yet to declare their candidates from the Anantnag-Rajouri seat.

This will be Azad's first Lok Sabha battle after he lost from Udhampur constituency in 2014 to BJP's Jitendra Singh.

Azad was a member of the Rajya Sabha from 1990 till 2006 and again from 2009 until February 2021. He became the chief minister of erstwhile J&K state during the 2006-08. He was elected to the Lok Sabha twice — in 1980 and 1984 — from Washim constituency in Maharashtra.

BJP fields 112 candidates for Odisha polls

Debabrata Mohanty
letters@hindustantimes.com

BHUBANESWAR: The BJP and the Congress on Tuesday announced 112 and 47 candidates, respectively, for the forthcoming Odisha assembly elections with the former giving tickets to new faces in more than half the seats.

There are 147 assembly seats in the eastern state.

Besides, the Congress also announced candidates for eight of the 21 Lok Sabha seats, pitting a

EC transfers 2 IGs, 8 DMs, 12 SPs in 5 states

HT Correspondent
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Election Commission on Tuesday on Tuesday issued transfer orders for two inspector generals of police, eight district magistrates and 12 superintendents of police across five states, and said they will not be assigned any election duty till the completion of the Lok Sabha elections.

All the transferred officials were asked to hand over their charge to their immediate junior officers. The five state governments of Assam, Bihar, Jhark-

hand, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh have been directed to send a panel of names of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and Indian Police Service (IPS) officers to the commission, the poll body said.

Andhra Pradesh reported the maximum number of transfers — district magistrates of Krishna (P Raja Babu), Ananthpuram (M Gowthami) and Tirupati (Lakshmi Shah); superintendents of police of Prakasham (P Parmeshwar Reddy), Palnadu (Y Ravi Sankar Reddy), Chittoor (P Joshua), Ananthpuram (KKN Anburajan) and Nellore (K

Tirumaleswar Reddy); and inspector general of police of Guntur range (G Pala Raju).

In Odisha, two district magistrates — Cuttack (Vineet Bhadrwar) and Jagatsinghpur (Parul Patwari); four superintendents of police — Angul (Sudhanshu Sekhar Mishra), Berhampur (Dr Saravana Vivek M.), Khurda (Jugal Kishor Kumar Banoth) and Rourkela; Cuttack deputy commissioner of police (Dr Kanwar Vishal Singh) and inspector general, central (Ashish Kumar Singh) were transferred.

In Bihar, both the district magistrates and superintendents of police of Bhojpur (Raj Kumar and Pramod Kumar Yadav, respectively) and Nawada (Ashutosh Kumar Verma and Ambrish Rahul, respectively) were transferred.

District magistrate of Udalguri in Assam, Sadnek Singh, and superintendent of police of Deogarh in Jharkhand, Ajit Peter Dzungdung, were transferred.

The Jharkhand government was directed to fill vacant posts of superintendent of police (rural) Ranchi, director inspector general of Palamu and inspector general of Dumka, and to send a panel of officials.

SC rejects Ramdev's apology over ads, terms it 'lip service'

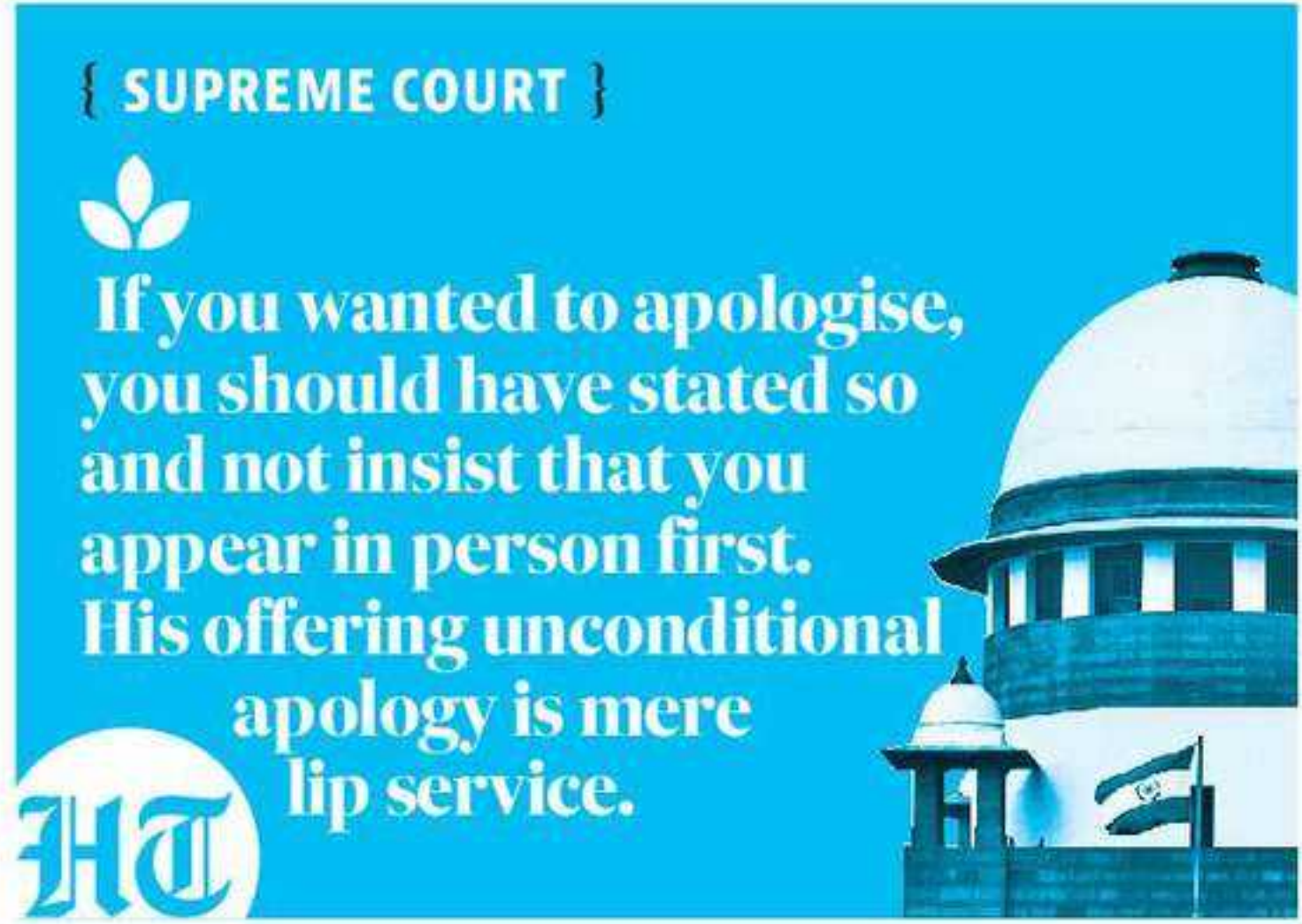
Abraham Thomas
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NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Tuesday told Baba Ramdev to be prepared for the consequences for promoting Patanjali products as health cures, dismissing his oral apology as mere "lip service" and holding him complicit for flouting court orders that required the company not to issue any misleading advertisements.

With the matter next listed on April 10, the bench of justices Hima Kohli and Anshuudhin Amanullah also questioned the Centre and the state licensing authority of Uttar Pradesh for closing their eyes to the violations committed by Patanjali Ayurved Limited, and accused both governments of being "complicit" and giving a "long rope" to the company by not registering criminal cases for wrongly advertising Coronil as a cure for Covid, and for subsequent advertisements issued in violation of the Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954.

The court hinted that there was more trouble in store for Ramdev, finding him guilty of perjury as his application for exemption from personal appearance, filed on March 30, contained a wrong fact. It said that a copy of ticket for his foreign travel was annexed with the application but the court found that the ticket could not be annexed as it was issued on March 31.

The bench also dismissed the apology offered by Patanjali's managing director Acharya Balakrishna, a co-contemnor with Ramdev, and directed both to remain present on the next date of hearing. Ramdev, who was present in court with Balakrishna, was not allowed to speak. The two were summoned on March 19 on a petition by Indian Medical Association (IMA) showing flagrant violation of orders passed by the court in November last year recording Patanjali's undertaking to abide by law. By subsequent orders of February 27 and March 19, the



court decided to call them in person after IMA produced a video clip of a press conference held by Ramdev and Patanjali advertisements in the national media flouting the undertaking.

"Take this contempt seriously. You had ample time to file your response," the bench said after senior advocate Balbir Singh, appearing for Ramdev, said that the response was ready but was not filed as the yoga guru wanted to come in person and offer unconditional apology.

The affidavit filed by Ramdev later in the day offered unconditional apology expressing "regret" over the advertisements and said that he is not "privy" to the day-to-day operations of Patanjali Ayurved. "The proposed contemnor is not holding any key managerial position in R-5 company (Patanjali). Moreover, he is not even a shareholder in the said corporate concern. As such, the contemnor is not privy to, or associated with the day-to-day operations of any of the respective departments of R-5 concern," it said. But the bench told Ramdev that "consequences will now follow".

"For you to go like a shot and hold a press conference in the teeth of the undertaking shows you are complicit, and you flouted our orders... You are bound by law like any other common man." Refusing to accept the oral apology on his behalf, the court held, "We are not convinced it is a genuine apology. If you wanted to apologize, you should have stated so and not insist that you appear in person first. His offering unconditional apology is mere lip service." It also pulled up Ramdev for comments against doctors and modern medicine. "The disparaging comments by the contemnors are most unfortunate. They are mocking at people (doctors) to whom people look up to... We are taking this seriously as people of your stature command respect in society. You have done a good job for Yoga. There is onerous responsibility expected from you than from the common public."

Senior advocate Singh told the court that Ramdev was "offering unconditional apology with folded hands and is ready to abide by whatever the court says". But the bench said: "The advertisements issued are promoting you as endorser of Patanjali products. You rush to the press a day after an undertaking is given to this court. Now to say you are sorry, we are taking it with a sack full of salt... The purpose of contempt is to make persons realise that majesty of court is above everything. But there are exceptions and you fall within that. We will not allow you to read a scrap of paper. We don't have any material to look into the intention of your heart. You may use any flowery language saying apology is unconditional but we can't give you benefit of doubt." For Balakrishna, senior advocate Vipin Sanghi submitted an unconditional

apology saying that there was lapse in issuing the advertisement. Rejecting the apology, the bench said, "Your action amounts to gross violation of an undertaking given to the highest court of this land. It cannot be taken lightly. Your apology is not persuading us to accept it."

The bench told Sanghi that the issue concerns global dimensions as well since Patanjali is an exporter whose products are consumed outside the country. "If science has made progress, what have you done to bring it to the notice of the ministry. If you have not approached the Centre to amend the 1954 law, how do you make a public statement that its archaic. This is adding insult to injury. All advertisements are issued in teeth of the Act which you have violated with impunity." It's reference was to Balakrishna's apology statement, which went on to criticise the 1954 law.

Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for Centre, told the court that as an officer of court, having heard the submissions, it would be essential that the court first see what the contemnors have to say.

The bench pointed out that besides the contempt, Ramdev was also guilty of perjury for stating a wrong fact in an application before the court. Referring to a document filed by Ramdev's lawyer on March 30 seeking exemption from personal appearance, justice Amanullah said, "His affidavit states that a copy of the ticket has been annexed and the annexed ticket has been issued the next day on March 31. The person who made this affidavit and the deponent (Ramdev) will also face perjury."

The court was referring to an application moved by Ramdev's lawyer Gautam Talukdar seeking permission to allow Ramdev to appear virtually due to a meeting with foreign investors at Dubai on April 2. Interestingly, in his affidavit of apology, Ramdev, who distanced himself from daily operations of Patanjali, stated that he was going to Dubai to bring investments for the company. It said, "The invest-

ment is quintessential for the further development of projects initiated by R-5 (Patanjali) and its concerns in the rural sector." The court also put Centre on the mat for not dealing with complaints against Patanjali. The bench told Mehta, "You gave a notice to the company (Patanjali) telling them not to advertise on Coronil as a cure for Covid-19. Later, a committee (interdisciplinary technical review committee for Covid-19) said that Coronil tablet may be considered as a supporting measure for Covid. What did you do to convey this to the public?"

It added: "For 2020-21, the production of Coronil continued. Nothing could have moved without the ministry being in the loop. You chose to keep your eyes shut." The Centre's affidavit claimed that in 2022, it forwarded complaints of misleading advertisements against Patanjali to the state licensing department of Uttar Pradesh for considering withdrawal of advertisement claiming cure of diabetes. Pointing to these facts, the bench said, "You have given them a long rope. We must dispel this impression that you (Centre) and state are complicit in this matter."

The court referred to an action-taken report prepared by the Uttar Pradesh state licensing authority, submitted to ministry of Ayush on March 12 this year, which let off Patanjali with a warning. "You (Centre) had to act against the state department and register an FIR within a week. Once an offence is committed under the 1954 Act, there is no compounding. The Act does not provide for the punishment of issuing warning," the bench said. Mehta said that he would file a comprehensive response stating the facts.

Ex-PM Manmohan Singh retires from RS after 33 yrs

Saubhadra Chatterji
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NEW DELHI: Former prime minister Manmohan Singh, the architect of India's economic liberalisation and the force behind the 2008 Indo-US nuclear agreement, will finish a remarkable political innings in the Rajya Sabha spanning 33 years on Wednesday.

Singh headed a government that transformed the social welfare framework with a bouquet of rights-based legislation and ushered in a slew of reforms including Direct Benefit Transfer and launched Aadhaar.

Singh, 91, was the third PM from the Rajya Sabha after Indira Gandhi (in her first term) and Inder Kumar Gujral.

On a personal level, India's only Sikh PM was known as an epitome of grace and politeness. When the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government was formed, defence minister Pranab Mukherjee had to force Singh to stop addressing him as "sir"—an old habit since Singh was the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor when Mukherjee was the Union finance minister.

Singh entered the Upper House in October 1991, four months after he became the finance minister in June 1991. He represented Assam for five terms in the Upper House and shifted to Rajasthan in 2019.

Proficient in Urdu and English, Singh remained one of the best parliamentary speakers in the recent past. "No power on earth can stop an idea whose time has come. I suggest to this august House that the emergence of India as a major economic power in the world happens to be one such idea," Singh said as he presented his first budget in 1991.

He didn't shy away from saying "I bow my head in shame" in the Upper House on the 1984 Anti-



Former PM Manmohan Singh being escorted after casting his vote for the presidential election, at Parliament House, in Delhi. HT FILE

Sikh massacre.

And when late Sushma Swaraj resorted to an Urdu shayari to question the PM, Singh—an ardent fan of poet Iqbal—floored everyone saying: "Maana ki teri deed ke kabil nahi hoon main, tu mera shauq dekh mera intzaar dekh (Agreed I am not worthy of your sight, behold my zeal and see how I wait)."

"We live in times that are largely shaped by you. The economic prosperity and stability that we enjoy today is built on the foundations laid by you along with our former PM, Bharat Ratna Shri PV Narasimha Rao. The current set of leaders who have reaped the benefits of your work are reluctant to credit you due to political biases," said Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge in a glowing tribute.

Hailing Singh as "a hero of the middle class," Kharge said, "The nation misses the quiet yet strong dignity that you brought to the office of the Prime Minister. Parliament will now miss your wisdom and experience. Your dignified, measured, soft spoken yet statesman like words are in contrast to the loud voices filled with lies that signify the current politics."

Old timers in the Rajya Sabha

shared many memories of Singh, who was a regular at the Parliament library to scan magazines for articles on economics. Once, he drank lassi at the milk department's stall outside the Central Hall and started digging in his pockets for money. The milkman repeatedly requested him to not pay, but a determined Singh gathered coins from different pockets and paid ₹6.

Singh's last intervention in Parliament was against demonetisation. He called it "an organised loot and legalised plunder."

Former Union minister P Chidambaram, who was the commerce minister when Singh was the finance minister, told HT, "Dr Manmohan Singh entered politics 33 years ago like a lamb. As he leaves the Rajya Sabha tomorrow, his work and his accomplishments will resonate for many years like the roar of a lion. It was one of the greatest privileges of my life that I had an opportunity to work with Dr Singh for many years."

Kapil Sibal, who was the education and law minister under Singh, said: "In 10 years as PM, he never called me to say that please do this or do that... He never interfered or foisted his opinion on me."

{ 'CASH-FOR-QUERY' ROW } AFTER FEMA

Now, ED files case under PMLA against Moitra

HT Correspondent
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NEW DELHI: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed a money laundering case against Trinamool Congress leader Mahua Moitra in connection with the "cash-for-query" case that led to her expulsion from the Lok Sabha in December, people familiar with the development said on Tuesday.

The fresh case will add to Moitra's legal troubles as she is already being investigated separately by ED under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) pertaining to certain undisclosed foreign transactions. She has skipped two ED summonses in the FEMA case.

"A case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) has been filed (against Moitra) based on the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)



Mahua Moitra

first information report (FIR) filed last month," an official said, declining to be named.

She is now likely to be summoned under the PMLA.

In its FIR filed on March 21, CBI booked Moitra along with businessman Darshan Hiranandani for criminal conspiracy and under the Prevention of Corruption Act. It is alleged that Moitra gave direct access of her official MP ID to Hiranandani to post questions on the Lok Sabha portal on her behalf. In addition, she received expensive gifts from the businessman.

18-YR-OLD HANGS TO DEATH DURING 'PRANK' ON VIDEO

Shruti Tomar

letters@hindustantimes.com

BHOPAL: An 18-year-old man died while trying to prank his friend by staging a suicide in Madhya Pradesh's Indore, police said on Tuesday.

The incident took place in Kundalipura area on Monday when the deceased, a Class II student, was on a video call with his friend.

"During the probe, we interrogated his friend with whom he was on a video call before he died. The deceased's friend said he was standing on a stool and trying to pull a prank, on April Fools Day, by tying a noose around his neck," additional deputy commissioner of police Rajesh Dandotiya said.

"The deceased lost balance and hanged from the fan. He tried to save himself, but failed," he added.

Police have registered a case of accidental death, Dandotiya said.

{ ON USING 'INDIA' ACRONYM }

HC gives govt, Oppn 'final chance' to submit responses

HT Correspondent
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NEW DELHI: The Delhi high court on Tuesday granted the "last and final" opportunity to the Centre and 26 Opposition parties to file their reply in a week in a petition seeking to prohibit the use of acronym INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance) by the Opposition bloc.

The court, however, refused to pre-empt the hearing and listed it for final hearing on April 10, the date already fixed.

"Since the matter is already

fixed on April 10, the application for early hearing is dismissed.

"The contesting respondents are granted final opportunity to file a counter affidavit within a week. It is clarified that the court will make an endeavour to hear and dispose of the petition on the next date of hearing," a bench led by acting chief justice Manmohan said, dismissing an application by businessman Girish Bharadwaj for early hearing.

The bench also comprising justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora granted final opportunity after taking note of Bharadwaj's

THE HC REFUSED TO ADVANCE THE HEARING AND LISTED IT FOR FINAL HEARING ON APRIL 10

submission that the response was not filed despite the Centre and Opposition parties being granted eight opportunities.

A group of 26 Opposition parties are part of the INDIA bloc, formed to take on the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in

the Lok Sabha elections.

With the polls scheduled for April-June, Bharadwaj in his application said the petition, pending since August 2023, was still at the stage of completion of pleadings. "That due to the malafide conduct of the respondents, the petitioner/applicant is being made to wait indefinitely... which indeed is causing grave and irreparable loss to the petitioner as the respondent political parties are using the name of the nation to gain political image," the application read.

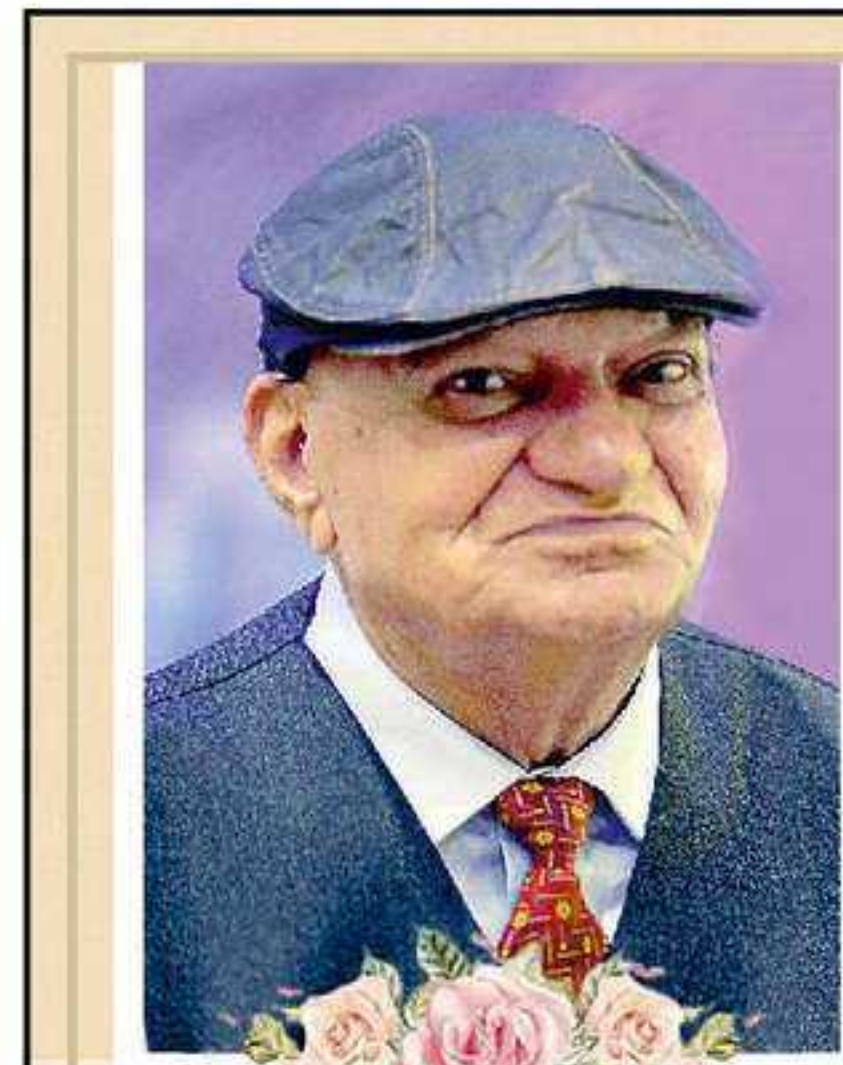
In his plea before the HC,

Bharadwaj said though he had sent a representation to the Election Commission (EC) on July 19 last year urging it to take necessary action against the use of acronym INDIA, the poll body "miserably failed" to take action.

"The plea is totally non maintainable," senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for the INDIA bloc submitted.

ECI in its reply last year had told the HC it cannot regulate political alliances as they are not recognised as regulated entities under the Representation of the People Act or the Constitution.

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निविदा सूचना का शुद्ध पत्र (Corrigendum)

विशेष शाखा पुलिस मुख्यालय की निविदा सूचना क्रमांक SB/Store/2024-25 (69), Bhopal, Dated 26-02-2024 द्वारा Binocular & 03 Other Items के क्रय हेतु ई-निविदा सूचना जारी की गई है। उपरोक्त आमंत्रित निविदा के माध्यम से क्रय किये जाने वाले उपकरणों में से उपकरण GPS Satellite Tracker के सम्य-संरणी में "आंशिक संशोधन" के संबंध में "शुद्ध पत्र" (Corrigendum) जारी किया गया है जो website <https://mptenders.gov.in/nicgpp/app> पर तथा विभाग की वेबसाइट www.mppolice.gov.in पर उपलब्ध है।

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PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

(SECTION 82 Cr.P.C.)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that the accused Guddu, S/o Ram Prakash, F/o C-446, Jahanpur Puri, Delhi, has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 232/2020, U/s 188/34 IPC, registered at P.S. Karol Bagh, Delhi, and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said accused Guddu, cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Guddu, has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of said warrant).

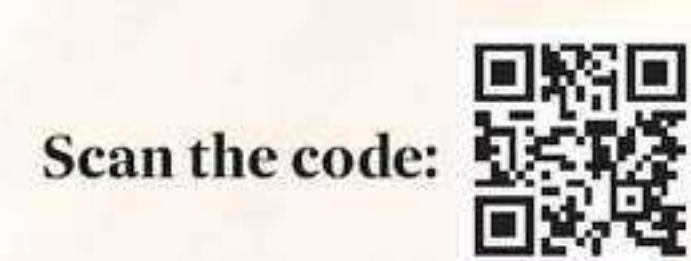
Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Guddu, of case FIR No. 232/2020, U/s 188/34 IPC, P.S. Karol Bagh, Delhi, is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 03.05.2024.

By order
Shipra Dhankar,
Metropolitan Magistrate (Central District),
Room no. 180, First Floor,
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DP/3831/CD/2024
(Court Matter)

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SC slams TN district collectors for not appearing before ED

Utkarsh Anand
letter@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: A fresh battle is unfolding between the Tamil Nadu government and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) with the Supreme Court having to intervene yet again. On Tuesday, the top court reproached some of the district collectors in Tamil Nadu for failing to appear before ED to join a probe in relation to alleged illegal sand mining in the state, noting that their "cavalier attitude" will land them in trouble.

Setting an April 25 date for the collectors to show up before the ED investigators, the top court made it clear that the officers' failure to join the probe will cost them dear, compelling the court to take strict action against them.

A bench of justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mithal was irked by the fact that despite the court's unequivocal order in February that the persons summoned under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) must appear before ED to cooperate with an ongoing investigation, five district collectors in the southern state chose not to appear before the agency. In the previous order, the bench dismissed the Tamil Nadu government's attempt to stop the agency from questioning its district collectors in connection with the alleged illegal sand mining and suspended a Madras high court order in this regard.

"Such cavalier attitude in our view cannot be typically tolerated when court had already passed orders restoring the summons. They were expected to comply. This shows that the officers don't have the respect for the court, or the law, much less the Constitution of India," the bench recorded in its order, turning down the state's submissions that the matter could perhaps wait till the review petition filed by the state govern-



The SC has asked the district collectors to appear before ED on April 25.

ment against the February order is decided.

The proceedings on Tuesday echoes previous confrontations between the MK Stalin-led Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam government and the federal agency, including legal and administrative skirmishes between the two over the arrest of ED officer Ankit Tiwari in a bribery case and Tamil Nadu minister Senthil Balaji in a money laundering case.

Representing the state, senior counsel Kapil Sibal and state's additional advocate general Amit Anand Tiwari on Tuesday contended that making district collectors appear in the midst of the general elections may have its own ramifications of the law-and-order situation in the state.

But the bench remained unimpressed. "We are not happy with the conduct of your officers. They have not complied (with the previous order)...they have not appeared. This kind of situation will land you in trouble...They should have appeared in person and helped the agency. This is not done. They should have respected the court's orders, appeared in person and then responded," it told the senior lawyers representing Tamil Nadu.

On being informed by Sibal that the Lok Sabha election is set to be held in the state on April 19, the bench said that they will have to appear on a date after the polling is over.

Sandeshkhali accused used shell firms to divert profits: ED

HT Correspondent
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KOLKATA: Arrested Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Sheikh Shahjahan used multiple shell companies to divert profits from fisheries that he and his men were running at Sandeshkhali in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district by grabbing farmland owned by local farmers, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) alleged before a Kolkata court on Monday.

ED and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had earlier said that they found extensive use of shell company accounts in the bribe-for-job scam in the state school department, the public distribution system (PDS) case and the cattle and coal smuggling cases. Several TMC ministers and leaders are suspects in these cases.

Sandeshkhali, the riverine island in North 24 Parganas, was on the boil last month over allegations of sexual atrocities on women and land grabbing by suspended Trinamool Congress



Sheikh Shahjahan

leader Shahjahan Sheikh and his aides. Shahjahan evaded arrest since January 5 when a mob, allegedly comprising his supporters,

attacked an ED team that had gone to search his premises in a money laundering case pertaining to the multi-crore ration distribution scam. He was arrested by the state police on February 29, on the order of the Calcutta high court.

Shahjahan, who was in judicial custody, was transferred to the ED's custody till April 13 by Kolkata's Bankshall court on Monday. While seeking his custody for questioning, ED's lawyers told the court that the federal agency has already traced more than ₹31 crore

that Shahjahan allegedly diverted from the fishery business.

"Companies claiming to be dealing in prawns were used by Shahjahan to divert the funds. The ED has already traced Rs 31.2 crore. The total amount involved is much bigger," said Arijit Chakraborty, a lawyer who represented the agency in court.

Shahjahan's lawyer, Zakir Hossain, told the media that he objected to the allegations ED raised demanding Shahjahan's arrest and remand under Preven-

tion of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). "I urged the court not to grant the ED's demand for custody because ED could not provide any documentary evidence that directly implicates my client under PMLA. But the court granted the remand," Hossain said.

Shahjahan stayed in hiding for 55 days following the January 5 attack on ED officials, who raided his home in connection with the alleged PDS scam in which former food minister Jyotipriya Mullick was arrested last year.

HT Education



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2 Maoists killed in encounter in MP's Balaghat distt
SHAHOL: Two Maoists, carrying a reward of ₹42 lakh each, were killed in an encounter with security forces in Madhya Pradesh's Balaghat district, said chief minister Mohan Yadav on Tuesday. "Our soldiers had an encounter with Maoists and managed to kill two of them. I congratulate the jawan," Yadav said

Kerala TTE 'pushed to death' by passenger on moving train
THRISSUR: A Travelling Ticket Examiner (TTE) was killed after allegedly being pushed by a passenger from a moving train in this central Kerala district on Tuesday, police said. The incident took place when the train was in Velappaya area under Thrissur Medical College police station limit on Tuesday evening, they said.

SC SLAPS ₹5 LAKH FINE ON HIMACHAL HOUSING BODY

HT Correspondent
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NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Tuesday imposed a penalty of ₹5 lakh on the Himachal Pradesh Housing and Urban Development Authority (HIMUDA) for acting in cahoots with a private company for the award of a tender for the construction of a commercial complex in Shimla.

A bench of justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mithal noted that the public body tried to hoodwink the high court by agreeing to award the contract to the same construction company despite a previous declaration by the state high court regarding gross irregularities in the tendering process.

"We have no hesitation in holding that the respondent no. 1 (HIMUDA) in collusion with the respondent no. 2 (Vasu Constructions), had taken the high court for a ride and misused the process of law for covering up the irregularities and illegalities committed in the tender process by the officers of the respondent no. 1, and for anyhow awarding the contract to the respondent no. 2 under the guise of the court's order," held the bench.

Setting aside the high court order of October 2022 that approved the award of the contract to Vasu Constructions, the top court underlined that since HIMUDA, despite being a 'State' within the meaning of Article 12 of the Constitution of India, acted mala fide and in collusion with the private firm took the high court for a ride, the public authority must be saddled with a heavy cost. "In that view of the matter, the impugned order passed by the high court is set aside. The appeal is allowed with cost of ₹5 lakh, to be deposited by HIMUDA with the SC Advocates-on-Record Association, within two weeks from today," said the court. "The authority may issue a fresh tender though," the court added.

In December 2018, HIMUDA had issued a letter of intent to Vasu Constructions for building a commercial complex in Shimla but the LOI had to be withdrawn after complaints of irregularities.

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Talks on to resolve border issues with China: Rajnath

HT Correspondent
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NEW DELHI: Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said that ongoing negotiations with China will continue for the peaceful resolution of outstanding issues along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh even as Indian troops stand firm along the country's northern borders.

"Disengagement and de-escalation are the way forward," he said, addressing the country's top generals at the biannual army commanders' conference.

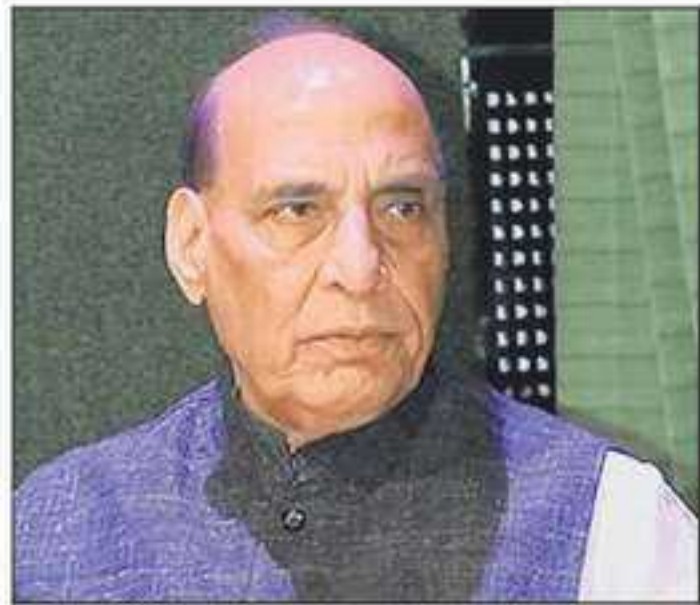
Singh recently celebrated Holi with soldiers deployed in Leh and Ladakh, India's "capital of valour and bravery," his description of the union territory drawing attention to the Indian Army's role in guarding the country's farthest frontiers where the Indian and Chinese militaries have been locked in a dragging standoff for almost four years.

Indian and Chinese military commanders concluded the 21st round of talks on February 19, 2024.

They agreed to continue the military dialogue and maintain peace, but there was no immediate breakthrough.

Despite four rounds of disengagement from Galwan Valley, Pangong Tso, Gogra (PP-17A) and Hot Springs (PP-15), the Indian and Chinese armies still have tens of thousands of troops each and advanced weaponry deployed in the Ladakh theatre. Problems at Depsang and Demchok are still on the negotiating table.

In March, Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated the Sela tunnel (built by BRO) in Arunachal Pradesh to the



Rajnath Singh

country, with the infrastructure upgrade putting in the fast lane military mobility and logistics support for deployed forces in the strategic Tawang sector, where Indian soldiers hold posts close to the contested border with China.

Referring to the situation along the western borders with Pakistan, Singh hailed the Indian Army's response to cross-border terrorism, while stressing that the proxy war by the adversary continues.

"I compliment the excellent synergy between the CAPF (Central Armed Police Forces) police and the army in tackling the menace of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir."

During the army commanders' conference, the top brass deliberated upon all aspects of the existing security scenario, situation along the borders and in the hinterland, and challenges for the present security apparatus, the army said in a statement.

"In addition, the conference also focused on issues pertaining to organisational restructuring, logistics, administration, human resource management, modernisation through indigenisation, induction of niche technologies and assessment of impact of the various existing global situations," it added.

Senseless actions won't change reality: MEA on China's Arunachal move

HT Correspondent
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NEW DELHI: India on Tuesday rubbished China's move to rename locations in Arunachal Pradesh as part of efforts to assert its claim on the north-eastern state, saying such "senseless" actions will not change the reality of the region being an integral part of the country.

China's ministry of civil affairs, responsible for naming of administrative divisions, recently released the fourth list of standardised geographical names for locations and features in Arunachal Pradesh, which Beijing claims as Zangnan or part of southern Tibet. India has consistently rejected such moves to rename places.

"China has persisted with its senseless attempts to rename places in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. We firmly reject such attempts," external affairs ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

"Assigning invented names will not alter the reality that Arunachal Pradesh is, has been, and will always be an integral and inalienable part of India."

External affairs minister S Jaishankar had bluntly rebuffed the Chinese move when he was asked about it by reporters on Monday.

"If today I change the name of your house, will it become mine? Arunachal Pradesh was,

is and will always be a state of India. Changing names does not have an effect," he said.

China has rechristened dozens of locations and geographical features in with Chinese and Tibetan names in recent years.

It has issued lists of such names in 2017, 2021 and 2023. China's ministry of civil affairs said the new names will be reflected on official maps later this year, according to reports in the Chinese state-run media.

The fourth list of names was issued by China on Saturday, weeks after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Arunachal Pradesh to inaugurate the Sela Tunnel, built at an altitude of 13,000 feet, as part of efforts to boost infrastructure along the Chinese frontier amid a military standoff in Ladakh sector of the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The tunnel will facilitate the speedier movement of troops in the strategic region.

The external affairs ministry had rejected China's baseless claims on Arunachal Pradesh following Modi's visit to the region and said such moves would not change the position on the ground.

The fourth list of names includes 12 residential areas, 12 mountains, four rivers, a lake, a mountain pass and a piece of land, and covers more parts of Arunachal Pradesh than the three previous lists issued in the past seven years.

FM ACCUSES DMK OF SPREADING 'LIES' AMID ISLAND ROW; STALIN HITS BACK AT CENTRE

Press Trust of India
letters@hindustantimes.com

VELLORE: Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday accused the ruling DMK in Tamil Nadu of spreading a false campaign on the Katchatheevu islet ceded to Sri Lanka by India in 1974, and for making "irresponsible" statements on the issue.

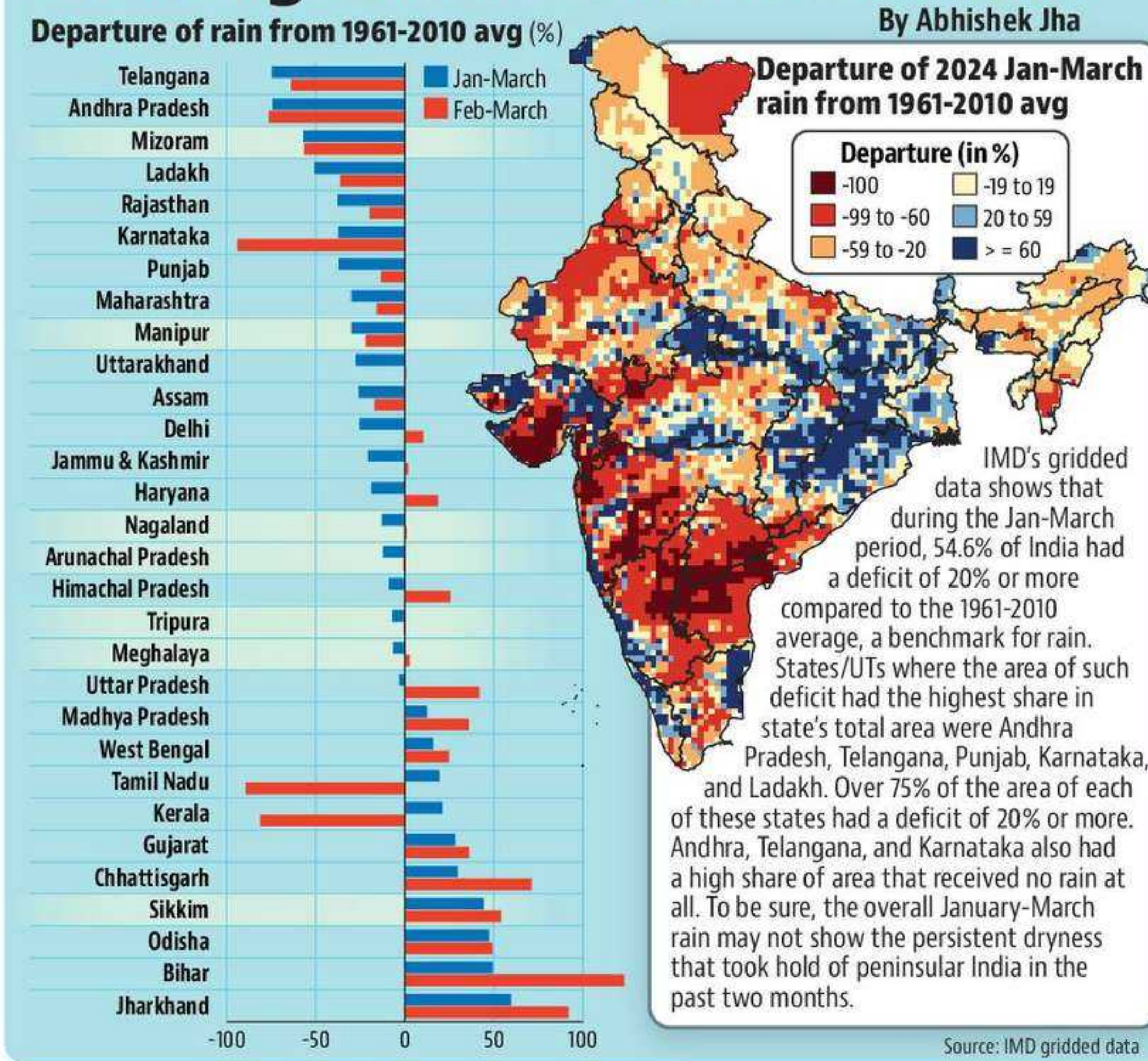
Late M Karunanidhi, who was DMK president and Tamil Nadu chief minister at the time, was aware of the then ruling Congress's move but did not object, she said. The Congress, which failed to come to power in Tamil Nadu after 1967, owes an explanation to the nation for the loss of the territory which former prime minister Indira Gandhi described as a "tiny mass of rock," she said.

"Let them set right the lies they have been saying for half a century," Sitharaman told reporters in Chennai.

Her remarks came as chief minister and DMK president MK Stalin said the BJP has done a "somer-sault" on the Katchatheevu issue since the Lok Sabha polls are round the corner. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi does not have the guts to neither condemn Sri Lanka over fishermen arrests nor oppose China on its claims over Arunachal Pradesh. When that is the case, how can he talk about Katchatheevu?" he asked.

Speaking at an election rally, Stalin hit out at Modi for staging a "drama" and coming up with "stories" on the Katchatheevu issue and dubbed the disclosures before the Centre on the matter under RTI as "wrong information." "Since the elections are around the corner, they have changed the information as per their wish. Why this somersault? Has PM Modi, during his 10-year tenure, who is now talking on Katchatheevu, has ever condemned Sri Lanka over arrest of fishermen and firing instances against them? Stalin said.

Tracking rain deficit across India



1st heat wave in K'taka as India braces for summer

Jayashree Nandi
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NEW DELHI: The first heat wave of the summer — the season starts April 1 across India — was recorded over parts of north interior Karnataka on Monday, presaging what the Indian weather office has forecast will be an uncomfortably hot summer in many parts of the country.

To be sure, parts of Saurashtra and Kutch, both in Gujarat, recorded a brief heat wave in March according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), but that will still pre-summer.

The maximum temperature recorded in Bagalkote on Tuesday was 40.7°C, 3.8°C above normal; Kalaburgi 41.6°C, 2°C above normal. "It is anticipated that heat wave conditions are being recorded in isolated areas around these stations and more stations will record during the next two days" said an official from IMD Bengaluru.

"Yesterday, heat wave conditions prevailed in isolated pockets over North Interior Karnataka," IMD said in its bulletin on Tuesday.

Heat wave is considered by IMD if maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40°C or more for plains and at least 30°C or more for hilly regions. Based on departure from normal, heat wave is declared when maximum temperature is 4.5°C to 6.4°C above normal.

India is in for a searing summer between April and June, IMD has forecast, warning of "extreme heat" and more than double the number of heatwave days than is seen usually at this time of the year.

The prediction comes as the country prepares to hold the world's largest elections with gatherings of tens of thousands expected in political rallies that have begun to build up and are expected to reach a crescendo in the peak summer weeks.

That's already evident in peninsular India. Maximum temperatures were in the range of

MAXIMUM TEMP RECORDED IN BAGALKOTE ON TUESDAY WAS 40.7°C, 3.8°C ABOVE NORMAL; AND 41.6°C KALABURGI DISTRICT, 2°C ABOVE NORMAL

40-42°C at many places over Vidarbha, Odisha and Rayalaseema; at a few places over Madhya Maharashtra, Marathwada, Telangana, Coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam; and in isolated pockets over Gangetic West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, north interior Karnataka and interior Tamil Nadu. The temperatures were 3-5°C above normal at a few places over Gangetic West Bengal; at isolated places over Sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim and Odisha, IMD said.

Peninsular India is also dry with a rainfall deficiency of 80% between March 1 and April 2. IMD's standard precipitation index (SPI) also shows that most districts in the peninsular region and northeast India are mildly or moderately dry for the period between February 29 and March 27.

SPI is an index for drought monitoring and reflects soil moisture levels.

HT reported on April 2 that northern part of Karnataka is reeling under the extreme heat and lack of water, the 13 districts that were declared drought-hit are given access to water in once every 10 days or even longer, officials from concerned departments said.

HT reported on March 31 that almost all major reservoirs in Telangana being on the verge of drying up, the state is witnessing acute water shortage for irrigating the standing crops during the ongoing Rabi season and also drinking water crisis in several parts of the state.

"SPI indicates soil moisture levels. But to understand if there is a water shortage other condi-

tions like catchment areas, reservoir levels should be monitored. We are seeing a rise in temperatures over peninsular and east India as forecast by IMD on April 1. We have said that above normal heat wave days are likely over south peninsula, east India and plains of northwest India in April," said KS Hosalkar, head of climate research and services, IMD.

On Sunday Kumool recorded 42.2°C; Cuddapah 41°C; Tirupattur 39.8°C; Bhubaneswar 39.4°C; Hyderabad 39.6°C; Kharajraho 37.2°C; Sagar 38.2°C; Kolkata 38.5°C; Kozhikode 37.5°C among others.

Experts attributed the higher likelihood of heatwaves and the hotter summer in general to the El Niño phenomenon, which is marked by a warming of the equatorial Pacific Ocean, which in turn leads to a cascading effect across the world.

But, encouragingly, latest forecasts indicate that strength of El Niño is likely to weaken from May-June — although it will still impact the summer. "We can expect extreme temperatures this summer mainly because of the impact of El Niño. Models are also indicating the development of La Niña conditions during the monsoon season, which may mean that we will have a good monsoon," said M Mohapatra, director general, IMD.

Interestingly, maximum temperatures have been below normal over most parts of north-west India. Experts said temperatures haven't spiked yet over the region mainly due to western disturbances.

A western disturbance is impacting the Western Himalayan region. Another fresh western disturbance is likely to affect Western Himalayan region from April 5.

Under their influence, isolated to scattered light to moderate rainfall/snowfall is likely over Western Himalayan region during next 5 days and very light rainfall over plains of north-west India during April 3 to 5.

{ EAM ON BORDER DISPUTES }

Nehru said India second, China first: Jaishankar

Press Trust of India
letters@hindustantimes.com

AHMEDABAD: External affairs minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday targeted Jawaharlal Nehru and claimed that past mistakes were responsible for the problems such as Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK) and occupation of some parts of the Indian territory by China.

Referring to India's stand when it was offered a permanent seat in the UN Security Council, he claimed there was a time when Nehru, the country's first prime minister, said "India second, China first."

"When the debate of a permanent seat of the UN (Security Council) came, Nehru's position was we deserve the seat but first China should get it. We at present are following India first policy, but then Nehru said India second, China first," he said while addressing the Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry event.

Replying to a question on whether India should reconcile itself to the status of PoK and Indian territories occupied by



S Jaishankar

China, or work to get them back, Jaishankar said: "In 1950, (then home minister) Sardar Patel had warned Nehru about China. Patel had told Nehru that today for the first time we are facing a situation on two fronts (Pakistan and China) which India had never faced earlier. Patel also told Nehru that he does not believe what the Chinese are saying as their intentions seem different and we should take precautions."

"Nehru replied to Patel that you are unnecessarily suspicious of the Chinese. Nehru also said it is impossible for anybody to attack us from the Himalayas. Nehru was totally dismissive (about Chinese threat)," Jaishankar said, adding that everyone knows what happened subsequently.

9-judge bench hears if states can regulate industrial alcohol

HT Correspondent
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NEW DELHI: A nine-judge constitution bench, led by Chief Justice of India Dhananjaya Y Chandrachud, on Tuesday began hearing a batch of appeals on whether states have the legislative power to regulate sale and manufacture of industrial alcohol after a seven-judge constitution bench held against them in 1990.

The bench, also comprising justices Hrishikesh Roy, AS Oka, BV Nagarathna, JB Pardiwala, Manoj Misra, Ujjal Bhuyan, Satish Chandra Sharma and Augustine George Masih, heard arguments of Uttar Pradesh, which is the lead petitioner in a batch of 30 appeals being heard by the nine-judge bench.

Senior advocate Dinesh Dwivedi, appearing for the Uttar Pradesh government along with advocate Samar Vijay Singh, began arguments by highlighting the errors in the 1990 decision of *Synthetic & Chemicals Ltd vs State of UP* that took away the state's power in relation to industrial alcohol even under Entry 33 of the Concur-

THE DISTILLERIES HAVE ARGUED THAT REGULATION OF INDUSTRIAL ALCOHOL FALLS WITHIN THE DOMAIN OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

rent List. This entry provides for trade and commerce in production, supply and distribution of certain industrial products.

The 1990 judgment held that "denatured spirit" is industrial alcohol and its regulation will fall outside the legislative jurisdiction of the states to regulate sale of "intoxicating liquor" under Entry 8 of List II of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution, he said.

The issue to be considered by the bench falls broadly within the scope whether states have legislative jurisdiction to deal with and regulate industrial alcohol, Dwivedi said.

"Excise, liquor and spirit have always been part of state jurisdiction, including indus-

trial alcohol, and the Centre did not have any jurisdiction in this regard," the lawyer said.

To this extent, he said that the 1990 judgment was wrongly decided. His arguments will continue on Wednesday.

The matter was referred to the nine-judge bench in December 2010 after a five-judge bench doubted the correctness of the 1990 judgment.

In the appeal argued by Dwivedi, the state had challenged a decision of the Allahabad high court of 2004, which directed it to refund all fees collected under "industrial alcohol" from distillery units along with a 10% annual interest payable to the business units.

Opposing the state's power to impose fees, the distilleries are also before the top court. They have argued that the subject matter of regulating industrial alcohol falls exclusively within the domain of the Centre under Section 18G of the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act, 1951.

The Centre is yet to file an affidavit in these proceedings and will be led by attorney general R Venkataramani.

1st batch of workers going to Israel under G2G pact, says envoy

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NEW DELHI: With Israeli authorities on Tuesday unveiling a move to send the first batch of Indian construction workers to Israel under a government-to-government agreement, there was no clarity on whether the Indian side had signed off on the move.

Israel announced plans to recruit tens of thousands of workers from India and other countries, mainly to replace Palestinian labour whose work permits were revoked after the start of the conflict with Hamas last October.

During a phone conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi last December, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called for "advancing the arrival" of workers from India.

Israeli ambassador Naor Gilon said in a post on X (formerly Twitter) that an event was organised on Tuesday for the first batch of Indian workers going to Israel according to the agreement.

He also posted photographs of himself with the workers and the CEO of the National Skill Develop-

ment Corporation (NSDC), Ved Mani Tiwari.

"Today we had a farewell event from the first batch of 60+ Indian construction workers going to Israel under the G2G agreement. This is an outcome of hard work of many, including @NSDCINDIA. I'm sure that the workers become 'ambassadors' of the great P2P relations between [India and Israel]," Gilon posted. The NSDC is a public limited company set up by the finance ministry under the public private partnership (PPP) model and provides skill development and vocational training to Indian workers. The NSDC has been part of events held in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh to interview and screen workers wishing to work in Israel.

There was no word on the development from the Indian side, including the external affairs ministry, which monitors employment abroad.

External affairs ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal had told a media briefing on March 8 that the G2G agreement for sending Indian workers to Israel is "still in the works".

7 KILLED, 1 INJURED AFTER TRUCK RAMS INTO AUTO IN U.P.

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KANPUR: Seven people were killed after a speeding truck collided with an auto-rickshaw on the Jhansi-Mirzapur national highway near Amanpur in Chitrakoot district of Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday morning, police said.

According to the police, the accused truck driver escaped from the spot after the accident, in which one person was critically injured.

The police are trying to "trace the driver and the vehicle with the help of CCTV footage," police said in a statement.

Chitrakoot additional superintendent of police (ASP) Chakrapani Tripathi said: "The auto-rickshaw was carrying the people to Chitrakoot when the speeding dumper hit it. While three people died on the spot, four others succumbed treatment at the hospital."

A probe into the matter has been launched, the ASP said.

POLICE SAID A SEARCH HAS BEEN LAUNCHED TO TRACE THE DRIVER AND THE TRUCK

BIJAPUR GUNFIGHT

the district.

"Ten bodies of Maoists have been recovered. Search operations are still underway, and we will know more about their identities tomorrow. Prima facie, however, it seems that they are members of the PLGA (People's Liberation Guerrilla Army) company number 2," said Sunderaj P, Inspector General of Police (Bastar) range.

The IG confirmed that one light machine gun (LMG), one .303 rifle, one 12 bore gun, a large number of under barrel grenade launchers and other arms and ammunition have already been recovered from the spot.

Officials aware of the matter said that there were intermittent exchanges of fire between security forces and Maoists that continued till 5pm.

"The information we had was of a congregation of Maoists, including influential Maoist commander Papa Rao, in the forests between Kendra and Karcholi. The firing began at 6am but then spread to different parts because the Maoists fanned out. After an initial burst of fire, there was another exchange around noon. The last round of firing kept taking place at intervals between 2 and 5pm. We think there could be more Maoist casualties. We have recovered a large cache of

medicines where the bodies were found and we believe they were a group of at least 100 cadre present," the official said.

Chhattisgarh deputy chief minister Vijay Sharma, who is in charge of the home department, confirmed the encounter and said that the recovery of a light machine gun was "worrying". "For them to have a weapon like an LMG is a matter of concern. We need to find out how they are getting them, where it is coming from, and what they want to achieve."

Senior officials based in Bastar and part of the security apparatus have said that the new aggression by integrated teams of the forces have been aided by an infrastructural push that has seen the creation of 17 new forward camps since December 2023. Camps do several things — they establish a security presence in hostile areas, help bring back a sense of civilian normalcy, but crucially, cut down the time needed to operate on intelligence inputs, and catch Maoists more unaware than before. "For several years, without these camps, we would come under fire on the way from Maoists who would either lay IEDs or prepare an ambush. This is how we lost personnel. But for the past few months, the focus has been to establish new camps in forward areas," a

{ FROM PAGE 1 }

senior officer said.

Officers also believe that the number of Maoists killed this far this year is higher than 47, which is only the number of bodies that they have recovered thus far. "Even in this encounter, at some point we retreated to ensure we lost no men. There could be more Maoist deaths, but they take away their bodies," a Bijapur based police officer said.

But the aggression on the ground has also had repercussions — both in terms of Maoists killing people they believe are informers, or attacking police personnel that they can isolate. In February, a small team of Maoists attacked a Chhattisgarh Armed Police Force jawan with sharp weapons in Bijapur town, the district headquarters that has itself seen little aggression over the past decade. The Maoists have also carried out hits on political targets — three of the 19 civilians killed were local leaders of the BJP.

The advances by the security forces have also brought with them allegations of fake encounters, all of which the police have dismissed as part of an established Maoist policy of obfuscation. Family members of three people killed in February in Kanker have alleged that they were not Maoists at all, and the CPI (Maoist) alleged in

a press note that an encounter in Bijapur the same month where four Maoists were killed was "fake". Another press release earlier this week did not deny that the six Maoists killed in Bijapur on March 27 were cadre, but said there was no exchange of fire and they were captured and killed. The police however have categorically denied all these claims.

Senior BJP leaders said that these "successes" were the result of a concerted "anti-naxal operations" in core areas that the Congress avoided in their five years in power between December 2018 and 2023. "This shows that the forces are now moving freely in once core areas and the Maoists are rattled. I congratulate the police force for the success and more strategic operations will follow," said Sachidanand Upasane, senior BJP leader and spokesperson.

RP Singh, senior Congress spokesperson claimed that the BJP is only reaping the benefits of a foundation laid down by the Congress during its tenure in government. "During the BJP rule before 2018, Maoist violence was at its peak. In 2022, the government even congratulated the state government for reducing Maoist violence. Things like this take a concerted long-term approach and they are only following the

Congress's policy," he said.

Experts believe that the sheer regularity of these security operations that are attacking Maoists in their core bastions will have an adverse effect on their morale, but crucially, their recruitment and supply chains. "This continuous movement in these areas shows that no base is safe for the Maoists. This onslaught will shake confidence, affect their ability to move cadre and supplies, and ultimately erode people's support. These are good signs," said RK Vij, former special director general, Chhattisgarh police.

CORRECTION

The news report 'Gang that stole jewellery, melted it into coins busted' in Tuesday's edition erroneously mentioned that second complainant Pankaj Mishra reported a theft of jewellery worth ₹1 crore from his house. The amount, in fact, was the value of total stolen items recovered by police from the three suspects. From Mishra's house, ₹30,000 in cash and silver jewellery items worth ₹10,000 were stolen. The error is deeply regretted.

buzz

Sheyphali Sharan assumes the role of Principal Director General, PIB
Sheyphali B Sharan assumed charge as the Principal Director General, PIB on Apr 1, upon superannuation of Manish Desai. Sharan is an officer of the 1990 batch of Indian Information Service. In her 30 years long career, she has held positions looking after media as a Press Information Bureau officer for Ministries such as Finance, and the like.

Nomination filing for 2nd phase of General Elections begin
Nominations for the 2nd Phase of General Elections began on Mar 28. The Gazette notification for 88 PCs across 12 States/UTs going for polls was issued on Mar 28. The polling in these 88 PCs and one part PC in Manipur in Phase 2 will take place on Apr 26. The notification for elections in the Outer Manipur PC was included in the phase 1 notification.

MIFF Doc Film Bazaar submission deadline extended
The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting announced the extension of the submission dates of projects for the first-ever Doc Film Bazaar organised alongside the 18th Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF). The deadline, which was earlier March 31, has been extended to April 10, for the ease of submission of projects by filmmakers working in geographically remote areas of the country.

Department of Defence Production issues notification
In a major reform towards 'Ease of Doing Business' and to achieve Aatm Nirbharta in Defence, the Department of Defence Production under the Ministry of Defence has issued notification for the reorganisation of the DGOA which is aimed at speeding up Quality Assurance processes and trials and reducing layers of decision-making. This reorganisation also factors in changes in the Quality Assurance methodology and revised role of DGOA post-corporatisation of OFB.

Army commanders review conceptual issues and security
Army Commanders' Conference, 1st for the year 2024, was organised. The conference was held in virtual mode on Mar 28. The rest of the conference was held in person in New Delhi on Apr 1 and 2. Rajnath Singh, Raksha Mantri addressed and interacted with senior military leadership during the conference. The conference served as a pivotal forum for apex leadership to brainstorm conceptual issues and review and assess the overall security situation.

International conference organised by NIOS in collaboration with CEMCA

With a rapid change in time, space too has undergone considerable change. The traditional idea of a classroom space has diversified into digital classrooms and the act of learning intertwined with technology has made our previous understanding of the education economy quite redundant. It becomes imperative, therefore for the stakeholders to adapt to the new modes of learning and education. Keeping this in mind, an international conference on the 'Perspectives and Innovations in Open and Dis-



International conference organised by NIOS in collaboration with CEMCA

NPTI and PTC India Ltd sign an MoU



NPTI and PTC India Ltd entered into an MoU to establish a CoE for Research & Development in the Energy Domain. The outcomes of the CoE's Research and Development endeavours will be disseminated to the power sector through Training and Capacity building.

Closing ceremony of IYM 2023 held

FAO organised the closing ceremony of the IYM 2023 on March 29 at the FAO headquarters, Rome, Italy. The event which allowed participants to join both in-person and virtually was graced by esteemed dignitaries including Additional Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Maninder Kaur Dwivedi, Govt of India. Additional Secretary, Maninder Kaur Dwivedi, Govt of India, underscored India's thriving Millet ecosystem comprising various Start-Ups, Industries, FPOs, in increasing promotion and adoption of millets.

BEL achieves record turnover of Rs 19,700 cr

Navratna Defence PSU BEL has achieved a turnover of around Rs 19,700 Cr (Provisional & Unaudited), during the Financial Year 2023-24, against the previous year's turnover of Rs 17,333 Cr registering a growth of 13.65 per cent. In the fiscal year 2023-24, BEL successfully secured orders worth around Rs 35,000 Cr. Among the notable defence orders obtained during the year were Electronic Fuzes, EW Systems, Communication Systems for naval warships, Fire Control Systems, and others.

C-Vigil app big hit with voters, over 79,000 violations reported

The c-VIGIL app of the Election Commission of India became an effective tool in the hands of people to flag election code violations. Since the announcement of General Elections 2024, over 79,000 complaints have been received as of today. Over 99 per cent of complaints have been resolved and close to 89 per cent of these complaints have been resolved within 100 minutes. Speed and transparency are the cornerstones of the c-VIGIL app. More than 58,500 complaints (73 per cent of the total) received are against ille-

gal hoardings and banners. More than 1,400 complaints received pertain to money, gifts and liquor distribution. Close to 3 per cent of the complaints (2454) pertain to defacement of property. Out of the 535 complaints received for display of firearms and intimidation, 529 have already been resolved. 1000 complaints reported were for campaigning beyond the prohibited period including use of speakers beyond permitted time. cVIGIL app marks a significant leap forward in electoral oversight and reducing campaign clutter.

ICGS Samudra Paheredar visits Vietnam



Indian Coast Guard's PCV Samudra Paheredar with integral helicopter made a port call at Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam on Apr 2, as part of its ongoing overseas deployment to ASEAN countries. The visit to ASEAN countries is in pursuance of India ASEAN Initiative for Marine Pollution, as announced by RM in the year 2022.

National Maritime celebrations begin

Gearing up for a weeklong celebration of National Maritime Day starting April 5, the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, was honoured with the 'Merchant Navy Flag,' pinned on his lapel by TK Ramachandran, Secretary of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, in the presence of Shyam Jagannathan, Director General of Shipping, and other senior officials in New Delhi on March 29. Additionally, a memento was presented to the Prime Minister. The significance of this celebration lies in honoring the services of seafarers.

Span Communications wins notable award

Span Communications, announced its success at the prestigious awards, solidifying its position as a trailblazer in the advertising industry. At the recent, Star of the Industry Awards, Span Communications was honoured with the title of "Digital Agency of the Year" and Naresh Kheterpal, CEO, Span Communications, was bestowed with the title of "Transformational CEO of the Year." This recognition underscores Span Communication's ability to deliver cutting-edge digital solutions that resonate with clients and audiences.



NHPC Ltd secured a Foreign Currency Loan of JPY 20.00 Billion from JBIC, Japan, for the implementation of renewable projects.



Cottage and NCHD signed an MoU on Mar 27 to facilitate their efforts in the promotion of handloom products.



REC Ltd was bestowed with the SKOCH ESG Award 2024 in the 'Renewable Energy Financing' category.



In a swift midnight operation, Indian Coast Guard Station, Veraval, evacuated a seriously ill patient from Tug ABS Anokhi 10 kms into sea from Veraval on Mar 26.



Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral R Hari Kumar visited DSSC, Wellington on Mar 28 and addressed the Future Leadership of the Indian Armed Forces attending the 79 Staff Course.



Defence Secretary Govt of India, Giridhar Aramane visited the ICG facilities from Mar 28 to 29. He inaugurated the infrastructure for HMU at Okha on Mar 28.



Department of Dental Surgery, VMMC & Safdarjung Hospital celebrated the Oral Health Day with great zeal.



BCLL bagged National Public Bus Transport Excellence Award 2022-23 under Digital Transaction category.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad Kendriya Vidyalaya, President's Estate, New Delhi-110004 (Ministry of Education, Government of India)

Notice for Admission in Balvatika-3 and Class - I (Session 2024-25)

Date of Registration - Registration for admission in Balvatika-3 and Class-I in Dr. Rajendra Prasad Kendriya Vidyalaya, President's Estate, New Delhi-110004 will start through online mode from 01-04-2024 (Monday) 10:00 am and will remain open till 15-04-2024 (Monday) 5:00 pm.

Age Limit - For Balvatika the age of the child should be five years but less than six years as on 31/04/2024. For Class-I the age of the child should be 6 years but less than 08 years as on 31/04/2024. Willing parents/guardians can do the registration through the link available on school website - www.drrajendraprasadpe.kvs.ac.in.

Contact: 011-23010380, Email - rpkvadministration@gmail.com

Principal (Dr. Charu Sharma)

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NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY

E-TENDERING TENDER NOTICE

Divisional Railway Manager (Works) N.C. Railway, Jhansi for and behalf of President of India invites sealed "Open Tender" through on Line (E-Tendering) for the following work:

E-Tender No.: JHS-ENGG-C-2024-54 **Approx. Cost:** ₹ 122638640.46

Description of Work: Jhansi Division: Providing and Erecting "W" metal cattle barrier along the track to prevent CRG in Parauana-Govindpur section under ADEN/CNB.

Earnest Money: ₹ 6281900.00, **Date of Closing Tender:** 26.04.2024 at 15:00 hrs., **Date of completion / period from issue acceptance letter:** 12 Months.

Note:- (1) Tender on line can be submitted up to 15:00 hrs. on 26.04.2024. (2) For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways website www.ireps.gov.in.

NORTHERN RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE

The Dy. Chief Engineer/Const.-1, Northern Railway, State Entry Road, New Delhi for and on behalf of President of India invites open e-tender under One Packet System for the under noted work:-

1 Name of work and location	Construction of Double storied building for offices including rebuilding of Officer's Rest House, major repair & renovation works and other allied works along with Electrical works in CAOC office complex, Northern Railway, Kashmir Gate, Delhi
2 Completion period of the work	18 (Eighteen) months from the date of issue of acceptance letter.
3 Approx. cost of work	Rs. 956.24 Lakh (Rupees Nine crore fifty six lakh twenty four thousand only)
4 Earnest money amount (to be deposited Online)	Rs 6.28,100/- (Rupees Six lakh twenty eight thousand one hundred only)
5 Date, Time for submission of e-tender and opening of tender	Tender may be uploaded upto 11.30 hrs. on 25.04.2024 on IREPS web site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in The bidders can only participate in the e-tender, the tender will be opened at 11.30 hrs. on 25.04.2024
6 Detailed Tender Notice & Tender Document	Above tender document will be available on IREPS web site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in from 02.04.2024 to 25.04.2024 All other terms and conditions in respect of above tender are given in tender document. The detailed tender notice also can be seen on the Notice Board of the above office.

No. 220-Acs-1-1247-KG-Works Date: 02.04.2024 978/24
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No. RC/F-2/2024 Dated: 15.03.2024

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AIIMS, Raipur invites online applications from Indian nationals/persons registered as Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholder under Section 7A of the Citizenship Act, 1955 for the following Faculty positions on Direct Recruitment basis: **Total Posts 129, Professor (32, Pay Level-14A), Additional Professor (31, Pay Level-13A2), Associate Professor (43, Pay Level-13A1), Assistant Professor (23, Pay Level-12) + NPA & other allowances applicable as per institution norms.**

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Note: - * = Backlog post, # = Including 1 backlog post, ^ = Including 2 backlog post.

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OPINION

The
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{ OUR TAKE }

Battling the summer heat

IMD forecast of heat waves should be factored in as the country prepares for elections

The country is looking at searing heat ahead as it goes to polls in the peak summer months of April to June. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) in its seasonal outlook has forecast 10 to 20 days of heat waves, double the usual four to eight, for this summer. And this heat will not be restricted to one state or region. IMD in its outlook identified Gujarat, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and parts of Maharashtra as the most vulnerable areas. The weather office also warned of likely water shortages, cleared winter-sown wheat crop of any threat as harvesting has already begun, and highlighted who is most at risk, while also urging authorities to "take proactive measures".

Among these measures, the weather department suggested cooling centres, heat advisories and alleviation of heat island effects in affected areas. These may come in handy as nearly a billion people step out to vote in phases between April 19 and June 1, or we may be looking at a repeat of the political function in Maharashtra last year that claimed the lives of 30 people. But it is not just political activity that is likely to heat up. In an unusually hot week in June last year, over 100 people died of heat stress in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Odisha as they went about their lives. High temperatures and humidity are a combination just as dangerous as being out in the sun, as the "feels-like" temperature or heat index—a more accurate tool to assess risk—of 40-50°C can cause heat strokes. So, what may help the authorities in "safeguarding public health" is recognising heat-related deaths as such instead of attributing them to existing comorbidities, so that they can train health care providers to recognise and treat symptoms.

As spring recedes, the temperatures have inched past the 40°C mark in several regions and many parts of the southern peninsula are already struggling with unprecedented water crises. The country needs to plan for long-term exigencies as these issues are set to compound. Such circumstances tend to strain infrastructure such as water supplies, power grids and transportation networks. It may appear that, in the short-term, dealing with this strain needs more investment in fossil fuel-based systems, which runs contrary to India's climate commitments at the global level. This will also further exacerbate the temperature rise in the long-run. Caution and scientific wisdom should not be abandoned in the heat of the moment.

Opposition revival in Turkey's political churn

Nine months after losing the presidential elections, the Opposition in Turkey is back in the game, winning a majority of provinces in the local body polls. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's AK Party failed to win Istanbul, where one-fifth of Turkey lives, for the second consecutive time since 2019. Ekrem Imamoglu, leader of the social democratic Republican People's Party (CHP), won the Istanbul mayor's seat the second time in a row, making him potentially the main rival to the AKP nominee when presidential polls are held next in 2028. As per the Turkish constitution, Erdogan, who will complete three terms in the president's office by then, will be ineligible to stand for president.

Erdogan, a former Istanbul mayor, has been accused of running an increasingly authoritarian regime that has jailed many of its critics. His followers project him as a State-builder comparable to Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, and he harbours visions of reviving Turkey's Ottoman legacy, including becoming the pre-eminent power in West Asia, by rejecting Ataturk's secular heritage and reimagining Turkey as an Islamic nation. This enabled him to dislodge the old ruling elite and ride a surge of the subalterns, who identified with his faith-centred politics. However, an economy in decline, highlighted by high inflation and low employment opportunities seems to have turned the tide against the AKP. Importantly, the Islamist Yeniden Refah (New Welfare) Party, founded in 2018 by Fatih Erbakan, the son of Islamist leader Necmettin Erbakan, who inspired Erdogan, has won over 6% of the vote. Clearly, the AKP's defeat in the key cities has also to do with its failure to consolidate its core base, some of which has moved to the Yeniden Refah Party. Imamoglu, 52, appears to have the stature, popularity and ambition to unite a fractious Opposition. But he should know the churn in Turkey is also producing new Right-wing voices.

Emerging outlines of Opposition's agenda

Unease with institutional decline, adherence to the ethics of the Constitution, and an alternative politics of spirituality seem to frame the INDIA bloc's poll narrative

The Save Democracy rally organised by Opposition parties on March 31 was a significant political development, providing an opportunity for the INDIA bloc to assert itself as a formidable alliance. The arrest of Delhi chief minister (CM) Arvind Kejriwal was an important and immediate factor that somehow legitimised the need for Opposition unity and its effective demonstration.

The INDIA bloc, for the first time, has moved away from the routine business of seat-sharing. The Opposition was able to come out with a coherent political agenda to raise the stakes against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). To illustrate, the Delhi CM's wife, Sunita Kejriwal, read out a letter on his behalf, explaining the six guarantees of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which include free electricity for poor households, and the establishment of government schools and mohalla (locality) clinics in the country. Similarly, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav evoked the unity of the PDA (pichre, Dalit, aapsankhyak, or the backward classes, Dalits, and

minorities) for protecting democracy, the Constitution and, above all, reservation.

The rally finally adopted a resolution underlining five key demands: The Election Commission of India (ECI) should ensure a level playing field for all parties in the Lok Sabha elections; it should ensure that Opposition leaders are not targeted by government agencies such as the Enforcement Directorate (ED), the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Income Tax (I-T) department; former Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren and Arvind Kejriwal should be released immediately; any tactic to "financially strangle the Opposition parties" before the Lok Sabha elections must immediately cease; and a Special Investigation Team (SIT), under the supervision of the Supreme Court (SC), should be formed to look into "money laundering and extortion" by the BJP through electoral bonds.

Neither the demands nor the poll promises are entirely new. Opposition leaders have been highlighting these demands since the inception of the alliance. And when it comes to the poll promises, in fact, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra did make a serious attempt to redefine social justice and democratic equality as a counter-narrative to that of the ruling party. However, these individual efforts could not be translated into an action oriented electoral agenda. The Save Democracy rally, in a way, has emerged as a public platform where the collective resolve of

the Opposition has found clear political expression.

It will be too early to make any speculative comment on the electoral outcomes of this mega event. However, three important future oriented arguments have begun to take concrete political shape after this rally.

First, the Opposition has expressed its collective unease about the actual functioning of State institutions. Government agencies are not merely criticised for being biased and narrow-minded, their expanded institutional mandate is also being questioned. The status of ECI, in this sense, becomes very delicate. The Opposition did not reject ECI completely. However, the statements made by a few senior leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, clearly show that the Opposition is apprehensive about ECI's role in the coming election. The SC is identified as the most trusted institution in this schema. This criticism of the institutional apparatus has the potential to destabilise the established narrative of development and democracy in the long-run.

Second, the Opposition has given a new meaning to the Constitution. Both Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav evoked the principles of the Constitution as a serious political resource. In a way, a simple and uncomplicated argument is advanced: The Constitution is a living document that ensures democratic equality and social justice. Therefore, the survival of democracy is seen as a prerequisite for the protection of the Constitution.



Hilal Ahmed



At the Save Democracy rally on March 31, the Opposition was able to come out with a coherent political agenda to raise the stakes against the BJP

Yadav's speech is very significant in this regard. He did not just talk about Dalits and OBCs but also included minorities in his configuration of PDA. This argument is powerful and persuasive. It may not merely be used to substantiate the anti-BJP posture, but also help the Opposition strengthen its criticism of institutional misuse, especially against marginalised social groups.

The third evolving argument is related to what I call the religionisation of Indian politics. In her short concluding speech, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra used the encounter between Lord Ram and Ravana in an interesting manner. She highlighted the fact that Lord Ram did not have money, resources, and institutional support, while Ravana was politically authoritative and financially powerful. Despite this imbalance, Lord Ram was able to win because he was fighting for a just cause. This metaphorical use of the *Ramayana* as a resource for making a political point is important.

The BJP has normalised the use of religious symbols in public life in overtly Hinduva terms. In fact, Hinduva-driven nationalism has emerged as the dominant electoral narrative of Indian politics. The impact of this narrative was so power-

ful that the entire political class began to adjust itself to Hindu idioms and metaphors. The Congress's intellectual leaders such as Shashi Tharoor and Salman Khurshid also tried to develop a counter-argument by making a distinction between Hinduism and Hindutva. Kejriwal redesigned his politics around Hindu symbols. Priyanka Gandhi's short speech was a significant departure from others. She was able to communicate Hinduism in simple political terms while questioning the politics of the ruling party.

These three arguments—unease with institutional decline, adherence to the ethics of the Constitution, and an alternative politics of faith—have not yet been linked to each other in any coherent manner. One should not exaggerate them to envisage any possible anti-BJPism, or for that matter, any counter-narrative at this stage. At the same time, one cannot underestimate the importance of this emerging political churning. It will be interesting to observe how these arguments help the INDIA bloc counter the BJP's Hinduva-driven nationalism and *labharthi* (beneficiary)-driven development electoral narrative in 2024.

Hilal Ahmed is associate professor, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies. The views expressed are personal

Putin's power playbook has parallels elsewhere

Vladimir Putin has won a fifth term in office. His re-election to the Russian presidency was expected. And the 87% vote share, which he apparently secured, only reinforces the fact that Russian authoritarianism is masked by a democracy whose managed character the Russian elite does not hide and the Russian citizenry has capitulated to. We might call the process by which Putin has stayed in power—remember that he once made himself prime minister (PM) for a term so that he could become president again—a farce but for the damage it has caused to Russia and its neighbours. But Putin's long political career has the virtue of helping us understand some key trends in contemporary leadership in major countries as well as the variety of ways in which democracy can be eroded.

First, when Putin first came to power in 1999-2000, it was still possible to believe that despite struggling through the 1990s, democracy had a chance in Russia. But in 2008, after two terms, Putin placed his loyalist Dmitry Medvedev in the presidential office while he exercised real powers relegated as PM, thus giving Russia's political transition a decidedly authoritarian turn. That the Russian system continues to enact the theatre of democracy illustrates how democracy has come to be considered the only legitimate means of securing power and exercising authority in modern times. After all, even China and North Korea call themselves democratic. Paradoxically, it also reveals how easily the meaning of democracy can be made a subject of national definition.

In several non-western countries, we find the argument that because their country is sovereign, it has the right to decide what democracy means. This argument is sharpened by placing it in opposition to liberal democracy, which is described as western, culturally alien and unsuited to the non-West. This is a caricature because the fundamental feature of liberal democracy is that it regulates the powers of the elected executive. Paths to authoritarianism or majoritarianism swiftly open if the elected executive goes unchecked. This is a good reason why claims of countries being a "sovereign democracy" (Russia), a "people's democracy" (China), or a "mother of democracy" (India) must be viewed sceptically.

Second, Putin has stayed in power for 24 years. He is 71 years old. As he has aged, he

has positioned himself as Russia's all-purpose patriarch. He has brought the idea of family to the centre of his political project, equating it with the traditional heterosexual unit with children and relatives, on the one hand, and the Russian people, as a whole, on the other. In public projection, Putin has become the father figure who protects the Russian State, the Russian people, and each Russian family. Variations of this father figure can be found in contemporary Turkey, India and China, where the top leader is also projected as having laid the foundation of a new nation. Lofty comparisons are made—Recep Tayyip Erdogan with Mustafa Kemal Pasha and Xi Jinping with Mao Zedong—and age is substituted for wisdom and restraint as the characteristic features of statesmanship.

Third, changes have been made to the Russian constitution to prolong Putin's stay in power. A four-year presidential term has been extended to six years, and a pathway created for him to stay in power until 2036, which could mean 36 years in power. This pattern is found elsewhere too. A two-term limit on the presidency was removed from the Chinese constitution, enabling President Xi Jinping—elected in 2013—to potentially stay in power for life. Another long-termer, Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu, has sought to tame the powers of the country's supreme court to review governmental actions. In Turkey, Erdogan (in power for over 20 years) has abolished parliamentary government, turned the system presidential, and given more powers to the president. (On March 31, Erdogan suffered a shock setback when the Opposition Republican People's Party won big in Turkey's local elections.)

A detailed study of these and similar cases is likely to show that leaders who stay more than two terms—or 8 to 12 years—in office are likely to change the basic governance structure of their countries to directly or indirectly prolong their stint in power. The fourth major feature of Putin's long political career has been the systematic emasculation of dissent and opposition. Alexei Navalny was the most famous and latest victim in a long line where critics of the regime have mysteriously died, been imprisoned or exiled. China's Xi has filled the top-rung of the leadership with his loyalists. Following a failed coup attempt in 2016, Erdogan has cracked down on his political opponents. And in India, action against Opposition leaders and regime critics through the coercive apparatus of the State is an established pattern.

Countries and leadership styles tend to differ in important ways, but the tactics of leaders who seek to stay for long periods in power tend to be similar: They turn ultra-conservative, alter constitutional orders, and become authoritarian and self-referential. Their governance outcomes are suboptimal but the political and social toll of their time in office—which are intangible and hard to measure—are deeper and long-lasting. It is a measure of contemporary world politics that half of humanity is governed by leaders above 70, many of whom are sceptical of liberal democracy.

Atul Mishra teaches international relations at Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence, Delhi-NCR. The views expressed are personal



As Putin has aged, he has positioned himself as Russia's all-purpose patriarch

{ DAVID CAMERON } BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY

We have called on Israel to immediately investigate and provide a full, transparent explanation of what happened. It is essential that humanitarian workers are protected

Reacting to reports of aid workers, including a British national, being killed by an Israeli airstrike in Gaza

Courts must know bail, not jail, has to be the rule

The grant of bail or its refusal in criminal cases has become a matter of controversy. It is unfortunate that the subject has acquired pronounced political overtones instead of remaining within the realms of law. I hold all the principal *dramatis personae* in the criminal justice system responsible for this unfortunate distortion of what is an uncomplicated principle of judicial procedure.

I am appalled by the continual injustice we are doling out to persons who have allegedly committed criminal offences defined in our statutes. I am not for a moment suggesting that all prosecution and judicial decisions in bail matters are flawed or are malafide. I am only pleading for greater objectivity and compassion while taking decisions that adversely affect the human rights of individuals. The affected parties are both political personalities and ordinary people, especially the poor.

In this context, I worship the late justice VR Krishna Iyer of the Supreme Court (SC) of India. I worship him not only for his brilliance but also for his compassion and clarity when it came to offering succour to powerless citizens. Justice Iyer's much-quoted remark—bail is the rule, jail is an exception in *State Of Rajasthan, Jaipur vs Balchand @ Baitiy, 1977*—remains forever the edifice on which our system should stand.

I must unequivocally record here that I am pained at recent developments with regard to the granting of bail to the accused. The dice is, undoubtedly, loaded heavily against persons hauled up by enforcement agencies, including the police. This has to change at once if we are to hold our heads high in the comity of nations.

Several court decisions have put down succinctly the law on the subject. Any offence punishable with seven years or more in jail does not entitle a prisoner to bail until the conviction or acquittal is pronounced by the trial court. For offences punishable with shorter terms, three circumstances merit consideration when a prisoner applies for bail: First, the prisoner is likely to flee from justice; second, he or she is likely to inflict bodily injury to anyone connected with the crime; third, he or she is likely to tamper

with the available evidence or intimidate the prosecution witnesses. If the answer to all three is "no", it will be unjust to hold a prisoner until the trial court pronounces its judgment.

No decision to grant bail to an accused is irrevocable. Any adverse report from the prosecution on prisoner conduct during court proceedings that impinges on the outcome of the trial will send him or her back to jail. I have come across several instances of lower courts ignoring all these factors and keeping a prisoner in custody. This is objectionable and smacks of vindictiveness. It deserves the condemnation of higher courts.

Rightly or wrongly, there is an impression among the public that affluent and politically connected prisoners get privileged treatment at the hands of trial courts. The SC has come down on such blatant discrimination on several occasions with minimum impact on the lower judiciary. The latter misguidedly continue to believe that a spell in prison is tantamount to justice. Such courts need to be educated on the objectives of imprisonment.

I am also incensed over the time courts take to pronounce their orders on bail applications. Arguments before courts can be greatly curtailed once a prisoner applies for bail and the prosecution has had a look at it and offered its comments. There is no case for elaborate arguments lasting for days. Courts have to take the blame for allowing this unethical prolongation of arguments, which are backed by vested interests.

In sum, the matter of bail is no rocket science that could baffle the parties concerned, including the judiciary. It is heartening that the Chief Justice of India, Dhananjaya Y Chandrachud, has resolved to hear at least 10 bail petitions daily. This should gladden all those who believe in ethics and compassion. This, however, begs the question of whether bail decisions should go up to the highest court at all. Obviously, there is a serious flaw in the manner in which lower courts handle bail applications.

RK Raghavan, a former CBI director, is currently professor of criminal justice and policing at the Jindal Global University.

The views expressed are personal



Donald Trump speaks to the media after a pre-trial hearing in hush-money case in a New York City court, on March 25. AFP

Ex-president Trump posts \$175mn bond in NY civil fraud case

Agencies
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW YORK: Embattled former US president Donald Trump posted a \$175 million bond in his New York civil fraud case on Monday, a court document showed, avoiding asset seizures while his case winds through the appeals process.

Last week, a New York appeals court cut a \$454 million bond payment he was originally required to make, reducing the sum to \$175 million and giving him 10 days to pay a bond in that amount.

The nearly half billion sum he originally owed had raised the possibility that New York authorities would move to seize Trump assets if he could not pay, but the reduction — and his finding a company to put up the bond, as announced on Monday — has given him breathing room. “I greatly respect the decision of the appellate division and I will post \$175 million in cash and bonds or security or whatever is necessary very quickly, within the 10 days,” Trump said at the time.

The lifeline came from a California outfit called Knight Specialty Insurance Company, which announced the bond in a document released by the court on Monday.

The 77-year-old real estate magnate, who has once again clinched the Republican nomination, received the fine after Judge Arthur Engoron found him and his two adult sons guilty in a non-jury trial, ruling that they and his family company lied about the value of assets, deceiving banks and insurers.

They were accused of having inflated the valuation of properties such as Trump Tower and a building at 40 Wall Street in New York by billions of dollars to obtain more favourable bank loans and insurance terms.

Gag order expanded

The New York judge presiding over Trump’s hush-money trial expanded a gag order in the case after the former president attacked the judge and his daughter on social media.

Judge Juan Merchan had already restricted what Trump could say publicly about jurors and potential witnesses in the trial that starts April 15. But Merchan expanded his March 26 gag order on Monday to include comments about prosecutors, court employees and their families. However, Trump can still make comments about Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, who brought the criminal charges.

‘Unintentional’ Israeli strike kills 7 aid workers in Gaza

The US has “urged a swift, thorough and impartial investigation to understand exactly what happened”

Agencies
letters@hindustantimes.com

GAZA STRIP: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Tuesday an Israeli airstrike that killed seven people working for the aid charity World Central Kitchen (WCK) charity in Gaza was unintended and “tragic”, and the military pledged an independent inquiry.

The Israeli military confirmed the deadly strike on a WCK convoy that killed citizens of Australia, Britain and Poland as well as Palestinians and a dual citizen of the United States and Canada.

Lalzawmi Frankcom, a woman born to an Australian father and a Mizo mother, lost her life in the Israeli airstrike. Frankcom, 43, was working as a senior manager at WCK.

Her death prompted condemnation from Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, who described it as “completely unacceptable”, highlighting the loss of an exceptional individual dedicated to humanitarian causes.

WCK said they were travelling in two armoured cars emblazoned with the charity’s logo and another vehicle.

“Unfortunately in the past day there was a tragic event in which our forces unintentionally harmed non-combatants in the Gaza Strip,” Netanyahu said in a video statement.

“This happens in war. We are conducting a thorough inquiry and are in contact with the governments. We will do everything to prevent a recurrence.”

Israel has long denied accusations that it is hindering the distribution of urgently needed



United Nations staff members inspect a car used by US-based aid group World Central Kitchen, that was hit by an Israeli strike the previous day in Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip, amid the ongoing battles between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas, on Tuesday. AFP

food aid in Gaza, which it has besieged in a war since October, saying the problem is caused by international aid groups’ inability to get it to those in need.

Despite coordinating movements with the Israeli military, the convoy was hit as it was leaving its Deir al-Balah warehouse after unloading more than 100 tonnes of humanitarian food aid brought to Gaza by sea, WCK said.

“This is not only an attack against WCK, this is an attack on humanitarian organisations showing up in the most dire of situations where food is being used as a weapon of war,” said Erin Gore, chief executive of World Central Kitchen.

US secretary of state Antony Blinken said Washington had spoken directly to close ally

Israel’s government and “urged a swift, thorough and impartial investigation to understand exactly what happened”.

Blinken, speaking to reporters in Paris, added that humanitarian workers must be protected. Britain, Australia and Poland, countries which have generally been friendly towards Israel, all demanded action to protect aid workers, underlining Netanyahu’s increasing diplomatic isolation over the situation in Gaza.

Toll in Gaza at 32,916

The bloodiest-ever Gaza war erupted with Hamas’s October 7 attack, which resulted in about 1,160 deaths in Israel, mostly civilians. Israel’s retaliatory campaign has killed at least 32,916 people, mostly women and children.

Iran vows to punish Israel for deadly strike on consular annex in Syria

Agence France-Press
letters@hindustantimes.com

TEHRAN: Iran warned its arch foe Israel on Tuesday that it will retaliate for an airstrike that killed seven Revolutionary Guards, two of them generals, and destroyed its consular annex building in the Syrian capital.

Israel declined to comment on Monday’s strike in Damascus, which fuelled Middle East tensions already inflamed by the Gaza war and violence involving Iran-backed groups in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

Iranian state media said 13 people were killed in the strike in which, according to Tehran’s ambassador, Israeli F-35 fighter-jets fired six missiles that levelled the five-storey consular building adjacent to the embassy. The building was reduced to a mountain of rubble by the blasts which blew out windows in nearby buildings and incinerated cars parked on the roadside in a leafy and upscale suburb of the city.

Iran’s supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei vowed that Israel “will be punished at the hands of our brave men. We will

make them regret this crime and the other ones”.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi condemned the attack as a “clear violation of international regulations” which “will not go unanswered”. “After repeated defeats and failures against the faith and will of the Resistance Front fighters, the Zionist regime has put blind assassinations on its agenda in the struggle to save itself,” Raisi said on his office’s website.

The UN Security Council was to discuss the strike later on Tuesday at a meeting requested by Syrian ally Russia.

Biden, Xi hold phone call to discuss ties; Blinken, Yellen to visit China

Prashant Jha
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WASHINGTON: In their first conversation this year, US President Joe Biden warned China’s President Xi Jinping against Beijing’s ongoing support for Russian military industrial base, its aggressive tactics in the South China Sea, China’s “unfair” trade and economic practices, and reiterated the importance of maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, the White House said on Tuesday.

But the official readout also indicated that the US continues to see engagement with China as important, with Tuesday’s phone call between the two leaders billed as a follow-up to their in-person meeting in Woodside, California in November where both leaders agreed to keep talking to prevent an unintended conflict. The call, the first between Biden and Xi since July 2022, also comes ahead of impending visits by two senior US cabinet officials — treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Secretary of State Antony J Blinken — to Beijing soon.

The US statement termed the conversation “candid and con-



Chinese President Xi Jinping (left) and his US counterpart Joe Biden. REUTERS

structive” on “bilateral, regional and global issues” that include both areas of cooperation and differences.

“They reviewed and encouraged progress on key issues discussed at the Woodside Summit, including counter-narcotics cooperation, ongoing military-to-military communication, talks to address AI-related risks, and continuing efforts on climate change and people-to-people exchanges,” the statement said.

But the US side said that it had communicated its range of concerns directly to Xi. Previewing the call, a senior administration official had told reporters on Monday, “We have not changed our approach to the PRC [People’s Republic of China],

which remains one focused on the framework of invest, align, and compete. Intense competition requires intense diplomacy to manage tensions, address misperceptions, and prevent unintended conflict. And this call is one way to do that.”

The American statement on the meeting said that Biden had “emphasised the importance of maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and the rule of law and freedom of navigation in the South China Sea”.

“He raised concerns over the PRC’s support for Russia’s defence industrial base and its impact on European and transatlantic security”, the official US statement said.

Offering context on the China-Russia link, the senior administration official quoted above said, “As time has gone on, we’ve really seen the PRC start to help to rebuild Russia’s defence industrial base, essentially backfilling the trade from European partners, helping provide the components that get us slowly towards increasing Russia’s capabilities in Ukraine. And that has, of course, longer-term impacts on European security as well.”

Istanbul nightclub fire kills 29

Agencies
letters@hindustantimes.com

ISTANBUL: A fire at an Istanbul nightclub during renovations on Tuesday killed at least 29 people, officials and reports said. Several people, including managers of the club, were detained for questioning.

At least one person was being treated at a hospital, the Istanbul governor’s office said in a statement.

The Masquerade nightclub, which was closed for renovations, was on the ground and basement floors of a 16-storey residential building in the Besiktas district on the European side of the city bisected by the Bosphorus. The fire was extinguished.

Masquerade can host up to 4,000 people with DJ performances and stage shows several times a week, its website says. Governor Davut Gul told reporters at the scene that the cause of the fire was under investigation and the victims were believed to be involved in the renovation work.

The fire began at 12:47pm (local time), governor Davut



Police officers stand guard in front of a building where a fire broke out during daytime renovation work at a nightclub in Istanbul, Turkey, on Tuesday. REUTERS

Gul’s office said, and was only brought under control by firefighters hours later. Television images showed flames and a column of thick smoke rushing from upper-storey windows.

Authorities detained five people for questioning, including managers of the club and one person in charge of the renovations, Justice Minister Yilmaz Tunc said.

Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu said authorities were inspecting the entire building to assess its safety. Several firefighting and medical teams were dispatched to the scene, he said.

US, UK announce partnership on AI safety, testing amid concerns

Reuters
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WASHINGTON: The United States and Britain on Monday announced a new partnership on the science of artificial intelligence (AI) safety, amid growing concerns about upcoming next-generation versions.

Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo and British Technology Secretary Michelle Donelan signed a memorandum of understanding in Washington to jointly develop advanced AI model testing, following commitments announced at an AI Safety Summit in Bletchley Park in November.

“We all know AI is the defining technology of our generation,” Raimondo said. “This

partnership will accelerate both of our institutes work across the full spectrum to address the risks of our national security concerns and the concerns of our broader society.”

Britain and the United States are among countries establishing government-led AI safety institutes.

Britain said in October its institute would examine and test new types of AI, while the United States said in November it was launching its own safety institute to evaluate risks from so-called frontier AI models and is now working with 200 companies and entities.

Under the formal partnership, Britain and the US plan to perform at least one joint testing exercise on a publicly acces-

sible model and are considering exploring personnel exchanges between the institutes. Both are working to develop similar partnerships with other countries to promote AI safety.

“This is the first agreement of its kind anywhere in the world,” Donelan said. “AI is already an extraordinary force for good in our society, and has vast potential to tackle some of the world’s biggest challenges, but only if we are able to grip those risks.”

Generative AI — which can create text, photos and videos in response to open-ended prompts — has spurred excitement as well as fears it could make some jobs obsolete, upend elections and potentially overpower humans and catastrophic effects.

EGYPTIAN PREZ SISI SWORN IN FOR THIRD TERM

Agence France-Press
letters@hindustantimes.com

CAIRO: Egypt’s President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi was sworn in on Tuesday for his third term as leader of the Arab world’s most populous nation.

In power for the past decade, the 69-year-old former army chief is now set to remain the head of state until 2030.

He starts the term flush with tens of billions in new loans and investments to fight a severe economic downturn.

Speaking before parliament, Sisi vowed to “remain faithful to my work, my eyes seeing only your interests and this country’s”.

Sisi won a December election with more than 89% of the vote against three relative unknowns after opposition challengers were sidelined or jailed.

{ FINLAND } SCHOOL SHOOTING

One child killed, two wounded in shooting; 12-year-old suspect held

HELSINKI: One child was killed and two seriously wounded in a shooting at a school outside the Finnish capital on Tuesday, police said, with a 12-year-old fellow pupil suspected of the attack taken into custody.

The arrest of the boy was made without further violence in the Helsinki suburb of Siltamaki, 4km south of the Viertola school in Vantaa district, police said.

Education Minister Anna-Maja Henriksson broke into tears when speaking to reporters hours after the attack in a country where gun violence among youths is rare.

“One 12-year-old child will never again return home from school,” she said. The suspect and the three victims were all sixth-graders, the



Police officers at the scene of shooting in Vantaa, Finland. AP

police said in a statement. “The injuries of both victims who were taken to the hospital are very serious,” said Criminal Commissioner Marko Sarkka. There were no other sus-

pects, police said. They provided no details on the identity of the suspect or victims, apart from saying they were all 12-year-old Finns and pupils at the school and the suspect was a boy. Prime Minister Petteri Orpo said the shooting was deeply shocking.

The suspect had admitted the attack in a preliminary interview, police said, and the offences would be investigated as murder and attempted murder. No one has yet spoken on the suspect’s behalf. He will be put in the care of social services because a child cannot be remanded in custody, police said.

Police said the motive was not clear. The handgun’s permit belonged to a relative of the suspect, they said. REUTERS



Lou Conter. REUTERS

Last survivor of attack on Pearl Harbour ship dies

LOS ANGELES: The last survivor of the USS Arizona, the battleship that was sunk in the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour, has died aged 102, on Monday. Lou Conter was a 20-year-old quartermaster who helped rescue fellow sailors on December 7, 1941, after the United States’ Pacific fleet came under surprise attack. AFP

Zelenski signs bill to lower age for combat duty to 25

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenski signed a bill to lower the age of conscription during war after initially rejecting the legislation, which was adopted by parliament almost a year ago. The law drops the age to 25 years from 27, according to parliament’s website. The parliament in Kyiv had approved the legislation in May, 2023. BLOOMBERG

North Korea fires medium-range ballistic missile

SEOUL: North Korea fired a medium-range ballistic missile on Tuesday, with South Korea, the United States and Japan conducting a joint aerial exercise involving nuclear-capable B-52H bombers just hours later. Seoul’s military said the missile flew around 600km before splashing down in waters between South Korea and Japan. AFP

DELHI HC DIRECTS
IOA TO EXPLAIN
WHY WRESTLING
AD HOC BODY
WAS DISSOLVED

Shruti Kakkar
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Delhi high court on Tuesday directed the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) to file an affidavit indicating the circumstances in which it dissolved the ad hoc committee for wrestling last month. "Why did you revoke the ad hoc body? Just one fine day you got up and decided that you will remove the ad hoc body. Tell me what is the reason. You file an affidavit. Who takes these decisions? The director who takes the decision will have to be personally present," a bench of justice Sachin Datta told the lawyer who appeared for IOA.

"The IOA is also directed to file an affidavit indicating the circumstances in which the office order dated March 18, 2024 came to be issued whereby the ad hoc committee appointed on December 27, 2023 has been dissolved. Let the director concerned of the IOA also be present before the court on the next date of hearing," the court said in its order.

The court was considering an application filed by four wrestlers including Tokyo Olympics bronze medalist Bajrang Punia after the IOA dissolved the ad hoc committee on March 18 saying that there was "no further need" for it to run. In its office order, IOA had stated that the decision to dissolve the ad hoc committee had come after the lifting of the ban on WFI by the United World Wrestling (UWW) and the successful completion of selection trials by the ad hoc committee.

The ad hoc committee was constituted by the IOA on the directions of the union sports ministry on December 27 after the ministry suspended the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI).

In the application, the wrestlers also including Vinesh Phogat, Sakshi Malik and her husband Satyawart Kadian had sought directions to the union sports ministry to not revoke the suspension of WFI during the pendency of its plea to declare the federation's December 21, 2023 elections as illegal.

The siblings hoping to take
the Candidates by a storm

Susan Ninan
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BENGALURU: The preparatory camps are over, prayers have been offered, the jet lag is wearing off and only a day separates Indian Grandmaster siblings R Vaishali and R Praggnanandhaa and the biggest tournament of their young careers so far.

The Candidates in Toronto that will decide the challenger to the world chess champion will have their first rounds played out on April 4 (midnight IST).

The first-ever brother-sister duo in the tournament's history is psyching themselves to summon their optimal states of mind. The siblings — aged 22 and 18 — arrived in Toronto a couple of days ago and have each other's back for last-minute pep chats and what-have-yous.

"It's a good opportunity for me... If I win it will be very good. I'll give it my best and if a great result comes, I'll take it," said Praggnanandhaa. "But it's not something I should chase right now. I'm trying to treat it as just another tournament and play. I don't feel like I'm under pressure, even if things don't go well."

He's a lot more certain about his older sister's prospects. "I said it before the Grand Swiss (which Vaishali went on to win) that if she plays well, she can dominate the tournament. And that happened. I think it's possible here (Candidates) too. She has the strength and ability to play at a very high level."

Vaishali has been training to recreate a "Grand Swiss" (her biggest tournament win in November last year) state of mind. "I play my best when I'm just enjoying my game without pressure or overthinking results," she said. "Of course, at the back of my head, I know it's the Candidates and it's going to



be tough to act like it doesn't matter." For Praggnanandhaa it's about striking the middle path. "If I'm too relaxed, I can't focus. If I'm too much pressure then it's the same thing. Finding that balance is important for me." At the recent Prague Masters, Praggnanandhaa's 47-game unbeaten streak in classical chess was broken. "If you haven't lost in a long time, you

I can talk to him about the game anytime. Sometimes when he asks me stuff when I'm really tired, I don't answer properly," she laughed. "It's been good to see how he goes about preparation."

Praggnanandhaa finds the idea of having a sibling around to talk chess comforting. "We discuss a lot of chess and it helps us both in making opening decisions. When things aren't going great or when they're going too great, it's nice to have someone to turn around to who knows you so well...nowadays I'm stealing her opening ideas," he laughed.

For the first time, the Candidates will have their Open and Women's competitions taking place concurrently at the same venue. It will allow the siblings to steal glances at each other's boards during the games.

Vaishali talks about the time at the Prague Masters when she finished her game and went over to look at her brother's board. It was just after he'd blundered and lost to Richard Rapport.

"I thought the Kings were placed incorrectly at first. I'd seen he was winning earlier but I got into some time trouble and when I had a look later, the game had finished and he'd lost. I was shocked."

To call upon divine powers so they are in for good games and fewer shocks, parents Rameshbabu and Nagalakshmi made a trip to a temple in Andhra Pradesh to offer prayers a couple of weeks ago.

At the Candidates, the women will play shorter time control than the men (90 mins for first 40 moves, as opposed to 120 mins in Open) and Vaishali is somewhat relieved she won't perhaps be blindsided by her sibling's results this time.

"This time Prag is probably going to have that problem," she laughed. Roughly 300 Elo apart, Vaishali said she finds it amazing that her brother who's the stronger player (Elo 2747), is always ready to talk about the game — irrespective of his mood, energy levels or time of the day. "He's just so passionate,

Bindyarani clinches
bronze in lifting WC

HT Correspondent
sportsdesk@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: India's Bindyarani Devi won bronze in 55kg at the weightlifting world cup in Phuket. Competing in non-Olympic 55kg weight class, Devi lifted a total of 196 kg to finish third. She recorded lift of 83kg in snatch and 113 kg in clean and jerk.

North Korea's Gong Hyon Kang (234kg) won gold while Romanian Mihaela-Valentina Cambai came second with a lift of 201kg.

Devi has two medals in commonwealth championships and a silver medal in Birmingham Commonwealth Games in 55kg. Devi had switched to an Olympic weight (59kg) for the 2022 world championships but finished 25th. Currently she is ranked 29th in 59kg Olympic qualification rankings and is out of reckoning for Paris Olympics. A maximum of 12 athletes will compete in each weight category established at Paris Games.



Bindyarani Devi. GETTY

FIR lodged against Delhi
U19 cricketer for age fraud

HT Correspondent
sportsdesk@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: An FIR has been lodged against an under-19 Delhi cricketer and his parents for producing "forged and fabricated" birth record to secure a place in the state team.

The age-fraud complaint was filed by Anand Singh at IP Estate police station on March 30 claiming that the U19 player and his parents "forged and fabricated" birth records while concealing his actual date of birth. "It alleged that on the basis of such a document the cricketer appeared for trials of the U19 Delhi team in 2021-22 and got selected for Delhi.

The complainant also alleged that the secretary of the Delhi District Cricket Association who was supposed to "conduct due diligence including checking of Aadhar card history of the candidate deliberately ignored the record as Aadhar history of the player would have revealed change in date of birth."

The FIR said that as per BCCI norms any player who is born

after 01.09.2002 was eligible to play U19 cricket in its tournaments. The actual date of birth of the player is 19.03.2002, alleged the complainant while attaching Facebook posts in which his father has wished birthday to his son for three years on this date. However, his date of birth was presented as 30.10.2002 in documents submitted for selection, the complainant has submitted.

To counter the menace of age fraud, BCCI has adopted a voluntary disclosure scheme for registered players in 2020-21. "Under this scheme, players who voluntarily declare they have manipulated their date of birth by submitting fake documents in the past will not be suspended.

"However, if registered players do not disclose the facts and are found to have submitted fake/tampered DOB proof documents by BCCI, then they will be banned for two years, and after completion of 2-year suspension, they will not be allowed to participate in age-group meets of BCCI as well as age group events organised by state units," as per BCCI.

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E-Tender Notice
1. E-Tender- N-PAR/B/MMC1/PD01/6000005069 "Supply of PVC Sheet in PTPP Parichha Jhansi." Estimated Cost Rs. 14,50,000.00 EMD Rs. 20,000.00 e-bid Submission dt.: 20.04.2024 up to 09:00 AM.
2. E-Tender- N-PAR/B/MMC1/PD01/6000004794 "Solenoid valve for Ash Handling Plant." Estimated Cost Rs. 6,20,000.00 EMD Rs. 8,000.00 e-bid Submission dt.: 15.04.2024 up to 04:00 PM.
3. E-Tender- ET-07/CMD2/PTPP/2023-24 "Miscellaneous Civil works in Power House at PTPP Parichha." Estimated Cost Rs. 36,48,145.00 EMD Rs. 73,000.00 e-bid Submission dt.: 15.04.2024 up to 12:00 PM.
4. E-Tender- N-PAR/C/OMC5/CHD1/6000004876_00 "Annual Rate Contract for routine maintenance and replacement overhauling/repairing breakdown maintenance of BEML make Bulldozer BD-155 PTPP Parichha Jhansi." Estimated Cost Rs. 39,92,875.00 EMD Rs. 70,000.00 e-bid Submission dt.: 12.04.2024 up to 04:00 PM.
5. E-Tender- N-PAR/C/OMC2/BMD2/6000005037_00 "Round the clock Contingency work feeding auxiliaries of milling circuit for handling of sticky wet coal during rainy season in unit no. 5 and 6 of 2x250 MW PTPP Parichha." Estimated Cost Rs. 3,81,780.00 EMD Rs. 7,000.00 e-bid Submission dt.: 10.04.2024 up to 12:00 PM.
6. E-Tender- N-PAR/C/OMC2/BMD2/6000005065_00 "Round the clock maintenance of pulverized fuel pipeline of milling system of Unit 5 and 6, 2x250 MW, CTPS Parichha." Estimated Cost Rs. 22,12,701.00 EMD Rs 35,000.00 e-bid Submission dt.: 12.04.2024 up to 12:00 PM.
7. E-Tender- N-PAR/C/OMC2/TMD/6000005017_00 "Bearing Inspection of TG Bearing No. 1 TG Bearing No. 2 of TG Set of Unit no. 6, 2x250 MW, CTPS, Parichha." Estimated Cost Rs. 11,50,469.00 EMD Rs 12,000.00 e-bid Submission dt.: 11.04.2024 up to 04:00
8. E-Tender- ET-19/CMD4/PTPP/2023-24 "Two Years long Maintenance Works of 19750 Nos. Saplings by PTPP Parichha." Estimated Cost Rs. 12,12,876.00 EMD Rs. 24,500.00 e-bid Submission dt.: 16.04.2024 up to 12:00 PM.
9. E-Tender- N-PAR/C/OMC5/CHD3/6000004931_00 "Re-winding of different capacities of L.T Motors, Re-shafting of Damaged rotor and other miscellaneous works in LT Motors and Overhauling/Re-Insulation of Suspended magnet/In Line magnetic separator at different conveyors in Coal Handling Plant, PTPP." Estimated Cost Rs. 28,97,202.00 EMD Rs. 60,000.00 e-bid Submission dt.: 12.04.2024 up to 02:00 PM.
10. E-Tender- N-PAR/B/MMC1/PD01/6000004989 "Supply of Misc. Electrical items in PTPP Parichha Jhansi." Estimated Cost Rs. 11,00,000.00 EMD Rs. 20,000.00 e-bid Submission dt.: 20.04.2024 up to 09:00 AM.
NOTE:- Total Quality of work, tender specification and other terms & conditions is as per tender document available on the e-tender portal our website www.etender.up.nic.in & uprvnl.org. Bidders are advised to visit the website regularly for updated information from time to time.
पत्रांक : 79 / टीएएसडी-30 / पीटीपीओ / दिनांक 02.04.2024
"Save Electricity for Nation"

INSTITUTE OF NANO SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, MOHALI
(An Autonomous Institute of Department of Science and Technology, Govt Knowledge City, Sector 81, SAS Nagar, Mohali-140306, Punjab
No. 14(7)/2024-INST Date: 02.04.2024
Walk-in-Interview (Offline & Online)
Institute invites eligible candidates for Walk-in-Interview on 29.04.2024 at 10.00 a.m. for engagement of a Junior Research Fellow (JRF) on contractual basis under SERB funded project entitled "Computational design of 2D materials and their interfaces for a high out-of-plane piezoelectricity". For details, candidate may visit https://inst.ac.in/careers

बिहार लोक सेवा आयोग
15, नेहरू पथ (बेली रोड), पटना-800001
आवश्यक सूचना
विज्ञापन संख्या-25/2024, शिक्षा विभाग, बिहार के अंतर्गत प्राथमिक विद्यालयों में प्रधान शिक्षक के रिक्त पदों पर नियुक्ति हेतु दिनांक-01.03.2024 को प्रकाशित विज्ञापन के लिए ऑनलाइन आवेदन भरने की अंतिम तिथि 02.04.2024 को विस्तारित करते हुए दिनांक-10.04.2024 तक निर्धारित किया जाता है।
पूर्व में प्रकाशित विज्ञापन के अन्य शर्तें यथावत् रहेंगे।
विशेष सचिव,
बिहार लोक सेवा आयोग, पटना

NORTHERN RAILWAY
OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE
The Sr. Divisional Engineer-III, Northern Railway, Delhi Division invites E-Tender for the following work.
1. Name of Work Repair and strengthening of ROBs RAB & Girder bridges in the section of SSEW/DLI under ANDEN/DLI.
2. Approx. Cost of work Rs.1,19,93,487.37/(Rupees One Crore Nineteen Lakh Ninety Three Thousand Four Hundred Eighty Seven and Thirty Seven paise only)
3. Earnest Money to be Deposited Rs. 2,10,000/- (Two Lakh Ten Thousand Rupees)
4. Cost of tender document Rs. 0.00/-
5. Date & Time of submission of tender bid and opening of tender, 23.04.2024 at 15:00 Hrs.
6. Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen. www.ireps.gov.in
* The tenderers must be registered on the Indian Railway E-Procurement system (IREPS) site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for participating in the e-tender system. * For all terms and conditions please refer tender document. * No manual offers are acceptable. * Cost of tender document and Earnest money will be acceptable through net banking or payment gateway only. No.128-W/280/e Tender Notice/NIT/01/2024-25/W-3 Dated: 01.04.2024
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 977/24

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
See Section 82 Cr. P. C.
Whereas a complaint has been made before me that accused person namely Vinod S/o Sh. Sita Ram R/o G-278, Sultanpuri, Delhi, have committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence under FIR No. 713/20 U/s 129/55 IPC., has been registered at P.S. Raj Park, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said, Vinod cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said, Vinod has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).
Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Vinod of FIR No. 713/20 U/s 129/55 IPC., registered at P.S. Raj Park, Delhi is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 25.05.2024.
By Order
Ms. Ebbani Aggarwal, MM, (NW) Rohini Courts, Delhi
DP/3763/OD/2024

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED
General Public is hereby informed that one person namely: Vishal Mishra, S/o: Shambhu Nath Mishra, R/o: H.No. 359, Street No. 4, Meethapur, Sai Nagar, New Delhi has been Kidnapped since 16.03.2024 at 08:00 am from the area of PS Jaitpur, Delhi. In this regard a DD No. 36A dated 16.03.2024 has been registered at P.S. Jaitpur, Delhi. The description of the missing person are as under- Age: 27 years, Height: 5' 6", Complexion: Wheatish, Face: Round, ID Mark: Mentally Weak, Built: Thin, Wearing: White colour T-shirt and blue colour jeans. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing person but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this missing person kindly inform to the following.
Website: http://cbi.nic.in
E-Mail ID - c/cb@cbi.gov.in
Fax No. 011-24368639
Ph. Nos.: 011-24368638, 24368641
DP/3756/SE/2024
SHO
P.S. Jaitpur, Delhi
Ph.: 011- 26666410, 8750871645

बिहार लोक सेवा आयोग
15, नेहरू पथ (बेली रोड), पटना-800001
आवश्यक सूचना
विज्ञापन संख्या-26/2024, शिक्षा विभाग तथा अनुसूचित जाति एवं अनुसूचित जनजाति कल्याण विभाग बिहार के अंतर्गत उच्च माध्यमिक विद्यालयों में प्रधानाध्यापक के रिक्त पदों पर नियुक्ति हेतु दिनांक 01.03.2024 को प्रकाशित विज्ञापन के लिए ऑनलाइन आवेदन भरने की अंतिम तिथि 02.04.2024 को विस्तारित करते हुए दिनांक-10.04.2024 तक निर्धारित किया जाता है। पूर्व में प्रकाशित विज्ञापन के अन्य शर्तें यथावत् रहेंगे।
विशेष सचिव,
बिहार लोक सेवा आयोग, पटना

कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियंता, सार्वजनिक निर्माण विभाग, वृत्त - शहर उदयपुर
क्रमांक- 01 दिनांक- 01.04.2024
इस कार्यालय द्वारा जारी निविदा सूचना संख्या 06/2023-24 पर क्रमांक 1172 दिनांक 12.03.2024 द्वारा प्रकाशित निविदा में निम्नानुसार संशोधन किया जाता है। संशोधनों में निवेदन है कि तत्सम्मत निविदाओं में भाग लेंगे।
क्र. पूर्व संशोधित प्रकाशित दिनांक/पूर्व में प्रकाशित शर्तें संशोधित दिनांक/शर्तें
1. अंतिमदिन निविदा फॉर्म मिलने की तारीख 13.03.2024 13.03.2024 (बुधवार) से 01.04.2024 (बुधवार) से 01.05.2024 (बुधवार) सार्व 6.00 बजे तक।
2. अंतिमदिन निविदा फॉर्म जमा करने की अंतिम तिथि 13.03.2024 दिनांक 13.03.2024 (बुधवार) से 01.05.2024 (बुधवार) सार्व 6.00 बजे तक। 01.04.2024 (सोमवार) सार्व 6.00 बजे तक।
3. अंतिमदिन निविदा फॉर्म जमा करने की तारीख 03.05.2024 02.04.2024 (मंगलवार) अथवा 05.05.2024 (बुधवार) अथवा 03.00 बजे कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियंता कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियंता सा.नि.वि. वृत्त शहर उदयपुर।
4. निविदा फॉर्म/मोटर साई/RSIL सूचक जमा करने की दिनांक एवं समय/दिनांक 02.05.2024 (बुधवार) सार्व 5.00 बजे तक अंतिमदिन सूचक अभिलेख सा.नि.वि. संशय प्रथम उदयपुर पूर्व समर्पित अधीक्षण अभियंता सार्वजनिक निर्माण विभाग शहर उदयपुर सार्वजनिक निर्माण विभाग में जमा करने की तारीख 03.05.2024 (बुधवार) सार्व 11.00 बजे तक इस कार्यालय में समर्पित अधीक्षण अभियंता सार्वजनिक निर्माण विभाग शहर उदयपुर कार्यालय के नाम से सूचक जमा कराए जा सकती हैं।
5. प्रविष्टि की दिनांक 27.03.2024 (बुधवार) सार्व 4 बजे (बुधवार) सार्व 11 बजे कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियंता सा.नि.वि. वृत्त शहर उदयपुर।
निविदा में शामिल अनुसूचित वर्गों के उम्मीदवारों को सूचित किया जाता है।
NIB Code: PWD23245089
UBN No.: 1. PWD2324WS0822242 2. PWD2324WS0822243 3. PWD2324WS0822245 4. PWD2324WS0822247 5. PWD2324WS0822248 6. PWD2324WS0822250
(राजीव कुमार अग्रवाल)
अधीक्षण अभियंता
सार्वजनिक निर्माण विभाग, वृत्त-शहर उदयपुर

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED
(See Section 82 Cr. PC)
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person namely Vikash Singal S/o Vipin Kumar Singal R/o H.No. B-28, Kailash Colony, New Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 218/18, Dt 19.12.2018 U/s 174 A IPC at PS: Greater Kailash-1, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused Vikash Singal can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Vikash Singal has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Vikash Singal of FIR No. 218/18, Dt 19.12.2018 U/s 174 A IPC of PS: Greater Kailash-1, Delhi is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 06.05.2024.
By Order
Devanshi Janmeja
Metropolitan Magistrate-04
South East District Court No.10
Saket Court Complex, New Delhi
DP/3847/SD/2024

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED
(See Section 82 Cr.P.C.)
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Gulzar S/o Ahmed R/o H.No. 4571 Ajit Nagar, Gali No. 4 Dharampura, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in Case FIR No. 1115/2015 U/s 279/337 IPC & 3/181 MV Act at PS Madhu Vihar, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused Gulzar can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Gulzar has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).
Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Gulzar of FIR No. 1115/2015 U/s 279/337 IPC & 3/181 MV Act at PS Madhu Vihar, Delhi is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 20.07.2024.
By Order
Udbhav Kumar Jain
Metropolitan Magistrate-04
Room No. 37, Karkardooma courts, Delhi
DP/3886/ED/2024

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION
General public is hereby informed that an unidentified woman (depicted in the photo) name: unknown, residence and family is unknown was found in Railway Track Sadar Bazar side near DLT (NDLS 1106) on 30.03.2024 she was admitted in LHMC Hospital and she was declared dead by doctors on 30.03.2024. In this regard a DD No. 13-A, U/s 174 CrPC, Dated 30.03.2024 has been registered at PS New Delhi Railway Station, Delhi. The Dead body has been preserved in LHMC Hospital Mortuary, Delhi for 72 hrs. for Identification. His physical description is as under:-
Sex: Female, Age: 30-35 years, Height: 5' 2" ft., Complexion: Fair, Face: Round, Injury: Whose both legs were amputated above the knee and the right leg was severed, Built: Medium, Wearing: Yellow colour Suit-Salwar.
Any person having any information or clue about the deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone numbers:-
SHO
Website: http://cbi.nic.in PS: New Delhi Rly. Stn., Delhi
E-mail: c/cb@cbi.nic.in Ph.: 011-23744073
Tel. No.: 011-23014046/23015218 Mob.: 8750871305
Fax No.: 011-23011334 DP/3838/Rly/2024

RCB's famed batting blown away by the pace of Mayank

Fast bowler dismisses Maxwell, Green and Patidar after Pooran and de Kock help LSG to 181 in a 28-run win

Somshuvra Laha
somshuvra.laha@htlive.com

KOLKATA: Catches win matches, but so do other things. Krunal Pandya may want to forget the spilled catch that triggered a promising resistance from Rajat Patidar, or Deepak Hooda the missed run out of Mahipal Lomror who raised hopes with a scintillating counterattack. Nicholas Pooran however held his share of catches apart from affecting a brilliant run out as Lucknow Super Giants beat Royal Challengers Bengaluru by 28 runs at Bengaluru on Tuesday.

On a greenish but two-paced pitch, Quinton de Kock tempered his instincts to carve a 56-ball 81 before Marcus Stoinis and Pooran provided a late order surge in the form of seven sixes.

Once again stealing the show however was speedster Mayank Yadav, clocking 156 kph this time, dismissing Patidar, Glenn Maxwell and Cameron Green and almost getting Dinesh Karthik; but more significantly, finishing with an impressive economy of 3.5. The 21-year-old just built on his sensational 3/27 against Punjab Kings three days earlier on his debut.

Half the job however was already done within the first Powerplay. And it all began with the dismissal of Virat Kohli. Mastering the chase is the chief reason Kohli is still considered for white-ball selection but that reputation could have taken a small hit on Tuesday after he came down the pitch and miscued slow left-arm bowler Manimaran Siddharth to backward point when the momentum of that over had already been set with a boundary through point off the previous ball.

Two runs in the next four balls probably pressed Faf du Plessis into calling Rajat Patidar for a single clipping Yadav towards mid-wicket but Devdutt Padikkal was quick to swoop on it and coolly run him out despite having just one stump to aim at. Two balls later, pace got the better of Glenn Maxwell as he got a top edge off Yadav trying to pull a 151 kph delivery. Three wickets, all of the bigwigs, gone in the space of nine deliveries and RCB were woefully behind in the chase from that

point onwards. More misery came their way when Yadav surprised Cameron Green with a length ball outside off that straightened and beat him for pace to disturb his off-stump.

Had it not been for Patidar's vigil, RCB's innings could have gone further south after that dismissal. But Anuj Rawat couldn't get started at all, taking up 21 balls to score just 11, making the required run rate soar till something had to give. Rawat and Patidar fell in quick succession but Lomror infused some life into the chase, hitting 64 and 6 off Yash Thakur in the 16th over. Thakur though removed Lomror with a fuller ball that he couldn't club past Pooran in the deep, and that was that for RCB's chase.

RCB could have been chasing less, but it was also a curious innings from LSG in many ways. Fifty runs from the last five overs

isn't par any more in IPL, more so when 30 of those came from five hits off Pooran's bat. Not many teams can brag about bowling fifty plus dot balls in an innings, certainly not RCB who have a rather unfortunate history of never getting their bowling rosters right. And it seemed to go that way too when Mayank Dagar and Cameron Green bowled four back-to-back overs to aggregate 49 runs for RCB's fifth-bowler quota, almost negating the pressure built up by Glenn Maxwell's slow off-breaks.

It helped Marcus Stoinis and de Kock release the pressure, as the two added 56 runs in 30 balls and took LSG to a threatening 121/2 in 13 overs. Maxwell returned and Stoinis looked to have had a measure of him when he muscled him over deep midwicket for a huge six. Three balls later though, Stoinis backed away too early to pull off a premeditated hoick, only to end up being stretched into a slice to Dagar at point.

This was the time Yash Dayal and Mohammad Siraj were mixing up the slowers and short balls well, taking the sting out of the pulls and drives. De Kock finally broke the deadlock with two boundaries but in came Reece Topley, who removed him with a back-of-the-hand slower ball in a two-run over. Badoni gone in the next over, Pooran had to take charge and that resulted in five sixes in the next two overs, giving LSG's innings just the flourish they needed at the end.

Brief scores: LSG 181/5 (Q de Kock 81, N Pooran 40*; G Maxwell 2/23). RCB 153 in 19.4 ovs (M Lomror 33; M Yadav 3/14, N Haq 2/25). **LSG won by 28 runs.**



LSG's Mayank Yadav clocked the season's fastest delivery of 156.7kph on way to 3/14 against RCB. **BCCI**

His pace was great but more impressive was his ability to control length and bowl with discipline. It's pace combined with accuracy

FAF DU PLESSIS, RCB skipper

Chahal creates the right buzz with flight and guile

Sanjeev K Samyal

sanjeev.samyal@htlive.com

MUMBAI: Yuzvendra Chahal's place in the all-time list of IPL greats is secure. With 193 wickets in 148 games, he is way ahead in the all-time top wicket-taker's list. It is the result of maintaining a high strike-rate since making his debut in 2013. Among the current players, Rashid Khan is possibly only one who could have a shot at his numbers, being at 142 wickets in 112 games.

The beauty of the leg-spinner's craft is the way he goes about setting up the batters. Being a fine chess player is an advantage for the spinner but even if you don't have a chess player's mind, with experience you start to understand the game better, gain the control to execute the plans better. That's why we are seeing the best of the leg-spinner from Haryana in his 30s.

In the last five seasons starting from 2019, he has finished with 18 wickets twice, 21 twice and 27 in 2022 when he won the Purple Cap by topping the wicket-taker's list.

He has made an impressive start to the new season as well. After taking 1/25 in three overs versus Lucknow Super Giants, 2/19 versus Delhi Capitals, he gave a masterful exhibition of leg-spin bowling in T20 cricket with 3/11 in four overs against Mumbai Indians on Monday. It's not just about the numbers, he is getting big breakthroughs with his scalps including Deepak Hooda, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya and Tilak Varma.

His success is down to the delightful use of the wicket delivery. It foxes many batters and gives them precious little in their hitting arc. When they do try to hit, the ball either goes straight by, or is a googly or the regular leg-spinner. The variations are endless and Chahal seems to know just how and when to use them.

For all his success in the highly competitive T20 league, Chahal is yet to get a chance in the T20 World Cup. He has played in only one ICC World Cup, the 50-over tournament in 2019. That was a period when his partnership with chinaman bowler Kuldeep Yadav was India's main spin weapon. But they didn't have the desired



Yuzvendra Chahal (L) of RR celebrates a wicket. **BCCI**

impact at the tournament and the wrist-spin partnership fizzled out. In this age of focus on batting deep, his limited talent is a handicap when it comes to the balance of the side. Now, Kuldeep is back in contention while the 33-year-old Chahal, who has 96 wickets in 80 T20s, will be hoping a good IPL season will earn him a berth for the forthcoming T20 World Cup which starts right after the end of IPL 2024.

After his masterly spell of 4-0-11-3, Royals bowling coach Shane Bond advised the bowler to avoid any undue pressure by thinking about his World Cup chances.

"The competition is pretty tough (in the India team), so one of the real challenges for any bowler coming into this tournament is to forget that there is a World Cup, and you start bowling to get into a World Cup team," he said.

"If your team is successful, and you are in a winning team, then selections and rewards come from that. That has more of been our focus, to forget about all that other noise from the outside and just work really hard for each other."

Bond added: "If we do that, then I have got no doubt people are going to start talking like you are now about Chahal and whether he

will feature in a World Cup or not. He is bowling beautifully, and if he keeps doing that, then we have got a massive chance in this tournament."

On Monday at the Wankhede Stadium, he was brilliant. Trent Boult had set up the game for Rajasthan Royals with a three-wicket burst with the new ball, but the spinners had a job to do after Hardik Pandya and Tilak Varma launched a counter-attack during their fifth wicket partnership of 56 runs.

Chahal broke the partnership with the wicket of Pandya on 34 before also accounting for Tilak. In all, 16 of Chahal's 24 deliveries were dots, and his four-over spell ended with an economy of only 2.75.

A crafty operator, the way he sets up batters shows he has a big heart and brain ticking. He is always looking to spot the chink in the batter's game, trying to lure him into playing a false shot. Pandya also fell for the trap set by flight. The MI captain perished to a lofted shot caught at long-on.

Sharing his approach, he told the official broadcaster: "I back myself, my skills, I know that this is the format sometimes I will get hit, sometimes I will get wickets."

Team	P	Won	Lost	NRR	Pts
1 Rajasthan Royals	3	3	0	1.249	6
2 Kolkata Knight Riders	2	2	0	1.047	4
3 Chennai Super Kings	3	2	1	0.976	4
4 Lucknow Super Giants	3	2	1	0.483	4
5 Gujarat Titans	3	2	1	-0.738	4
6 Sunrisers Hyderabad	3	1	2	0.204	2
7 Delhi Capitals	3	1	2	-0.016	2
8 Punjab Kings	3	1	2	-0.337	2
9 Royal Challengers	4	1	3	-0.876	2
10 Mumbai Indians	3	0	3	-1.423	0



AIFF suspends EC member facing assault charges

KOLKATA: AIFF suspended its executive committee member Deepak Sharma till further notice and referred the charges of assault and harassment made against him by players of the Khad FC women's team to its disciplinary committee.

This was decided by the emergent committee of the AIFF which comprises president Kalyan Chaubey, vice-president NA Harris and treasurer Kipa Ajay. AIFF's decision comes after union sports minister Anurag Thakur wrote on X that his ministry was taking "serious note" of the "physical assault upon women footballers by an official during the ongoing Indian Women's League in Goa."

Nagal beats Moutet in ATP Marrakesh

MUMBAI: Sumit Nagal made a promising start to the clay court season, defeating 99th-ranked Frenchman Corentin Moutet 4-6, 6-3, 6-2 to move into the Round of 16 of the ATP 250 event in Marrakesh, World No. 95 Nagal will face 61st-ranked Lorenzo Sonego of Italy.

Stokes pulls out of T20 World Cup

LONDON: Test captain Ben Stokes has ruled himself out of England's T20 World Cup title defence, the ECB said. The 32-year-old said he was skipping the WC to ensure he could be a fully-fledged all-rounder in Test cricket. England begin that title defence against Scotland in Barbados on June 4.

SL close to victory in 2nd B'desh Test

CHITTAGONG: Prabath Jayasuriya, Lahiru Kumara and Kamindu Mendis each claimed two wickets as Sri Lanka came within grasp of another victory in the second Test. Bangladesh were 268/7 at stumps, still needing 243 for win. Mehidy Hasan Miraz (44*) and Tajul Islam (10*) were at the crease.

Turning back the clock with mane and magic, Dhoni fires up IPL again

Ashish Magotra

ashish.magotra@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: For Chennai Super Kings faithful, it was almost as if the result didn't matter. Just being able to watch MS Dhoni bat seemed to make the trip to the stadium worthwhile. The hair now long again had people commenting on how it felt like the 42-year-old had turned back time. It wasn't just that though, the power and timing of his shots was all there too.

It was the second home venue for Delhi Capitals - Visakhapatnam. But it was Dhoni's homecoming too. It was in Vizag, in an ODI versus Pakistan in April 2005, that the India team rookie served notice to the cricket world with a stunning 148.

Back to Sunday versus Delhi Capitals. The last over was a particular case in point. CSK needed 41 runs off six balls and the result was already beyond question.

The DC bowlers had adopted a wide line all through the innings and it had worked brilliantly for them. Anrich Nortje bowled the first ball, full and wide. But Dhoni, waiting deep in his crease, smashed it through the covers.

That shot forced the fast bowler to reassess, and the second ball was a full toss. This time Dhoni tonked it over mid-wicket for six. The third ball was a yorker outside off-stump and the CSK legend hit it to long-off for no run.

The fourth ball was another full toss. This time it was smashed over mid-on. The fifth was a dot ball and the sixth - and final ball of the match - was dispatched high over cover for six. Dhoni finished on 37 off 16, showing that he can still be a



MS Dhoni of Chennai Super Kings in action against Delhi Capitals in Visakhapatnam. **BCCI**

force to reckon with.

But it wasn't the innings that was truly surprising. Rather, it was the fact that Dhoni, who plays just one tournament a year, can turn up and play at such a high level. The last time Dhoni batted in a competitive game before Sunday was in 2023. It was the final against Gujarat Titans, which CSK won.

A few days earlier, he had taken a nice diving catch; and

his reading of the game remains as good as ever. He's fit and firing.

So, how is he doing it? Conventional wisdom says a player needs regular game time to maintain a competitive edge. To keep your level up; to acquire the muscle memory and to stay match sharp - it all requires a player to spend time in the middle.

That is true of most players

but not of Dhoni. The CSK set-up helps. They don't push the players into compulsory training sessions. Rather, the onus is on the players to figure out what they need in their game.

In an interview to ESPNcricinfo, CSK head coach Stephen Fleming said that CSK's pre-season has got longer but the planning for a day or a session is left to the player.

TODAY'S MATCH

DC vs KKR

WHERE: Visakhapatnam | WHEN: 7:30 pm

HEAD-TO-HEAD

DC WON 15 | KKR WON 16 | 32 MATCHES PLAYED | 1 NR

RISHABH PANT
CAPTAIN, DC

The initial nerves shaken off and a solid fifty to show for against defending champions CSK, Pant has already tasted DC's first victory in three matches this season. The bowling has delivered with Khaleel Ahmed - he took two wickets inside the powerplay - producing a crafty spell and backed by Anrich Nortje and Mukesh Kumar at the death

SHREYAS IYER
CAPTAIN, KKR

A dodgy back notwithstanding, Shreyas Iyer has led KKR to two wins in as many matches and they are placed second on the points table. With some runs under his belt against RCB, the KKR skipper has lent steel to an already explosive batting line-up. A big win on Wednesday can take them to the top early in the competition and add to the winning momentum

KEY PLAYERS

DAVID WARNER (DC)

The inclusion of Prithvi Shaw paid instant dividends for Capitals as he blasted 43 off 27 balls to help his team post a 91-run opening stand with David Warner (52). Both Warner and Shaw have a good record against the Knight Riders. Shaw's best score of 99 is against the Knights while Warner has an IPL century against KKR

SUNIL NARINE (KKR)

Year after year his mystery spin continues to fox some of the best hitters in the trade. Sunil Narine has hit the ground running with game-changing performances with the ball. The previous match, when KKR took on RCB, was his 500th T20 game and the Trinidadian stamped his class with a match-winning showing with the bat

PREVIOUS MATCH

DC beat CSK by 20 runs | KKR beat RCB by 7 wks