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STAND-OFF WITH CHINA
De-escalation the way forward, says Rajnath

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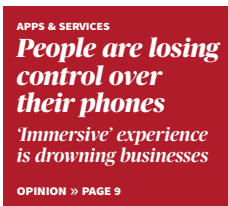
16-YEAR PEAK
Manufacturing sector activity surged in March

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BHUPENDER YADAV
Role reversal for BJP's go-to election manager

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APPS & SERVICES
People are losing control over their phones
'Immersive' experience is drowning businesses

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GIANT SHOW
Mayank shines in LSG's win over RCB

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INSIDE



Sri Lankan media hits out at Modi

COLOMBO
Sri Lanka's media on Tuesday took a critical view of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's remarks on Katchatheevu. » PAGE 4

India, U.S. plan high-level visits

NEW DELHI
Two high-level visits are being planned by Washington and Delhi amid concerns over strain in ties, sources told *The Hindu*. » PAGE 6

ED can summon anyone for 'any information': SC

Top court orders four District Collectors from T.N. to appear in person before ED on April 25 | **Raps them for not responding to summons, says they have no respect for court and Constitution** | **Says a summoned individual is 'bound to attend in person or through agents' according to PMLA**

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday endorsed the sweeping powers of the Enforcement Directorate (ED), saying the Central agency could call "anybody for any information" even as it castigated four Tamil Nadu District Collectors for failing to appear in person in response to a summons issued to them by the anti-money laundering body.

The Tamil Nadu government and the Collectors informed a Bench headed by Justice Bela M. Trivedi that they had written to the ED expressing their inability to appear in person as the Lok Sabha election in Tamil Nadu was due on April 19 and they needed more time to collect the information sought by the Central agency about sand mining sites in their districts.

'Time sought'
The Collectors said the information sought was not in their offices, but had to be collected from other branches of the district administration, verified and compiled to be presented before the ED. They had sought time till April-end.

The court refused to accept the Collectors' explanation. Justice Trivedi said their conduct showed

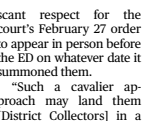
Sharp censure

SC reprimands District Collectors of Vellore, Ariyalur, Karur and Tiruchir in T.N. for not appearing before investigative agency

■ Bench states that Section 50(2) of Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) empowered the ED to summon "any person" whose attendance was considered necessary for giving evidence or production of records

■ District Collectors express inability to compile data and present it to ED on time owing to poll work and implementation of welfare programmes

■ Bench refuses to accept argument; lists case for May 6



strongly deprecated," Justice Trivedi addressed senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Amit Anand Tiwari, for Tamil Nadu, and senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, representing the District Collectors of Vellore, Ariyalur, Karur and Tiruchir.

Mr. Sibal submitted that the officials were still gathering the data for the ED from the various offices. They were also, as District Magistrates, saddled with the responsibility of maintaining law and order and fulfilment of programmes in their jurisdictions.

But Justice Trivedi said the Collectors should have respected the top court order and appeared before

the ED and "said whatever they wanted to say". Mr. Sibal asked what would have been the point of appearing before the ED without the necessary data. He said the Collectors did not also want to disturb the election process.

Justice Trivedi said 50(2) of the PMLA empowered the ED to summon "any person" whose attendance was considered necessary for giving evidence or production of records in the course of "any investigation or proceeding" under the statute. Section 50(3) mandated that the individual summoned was "bound to attend in person or through authorised agents" and would be required to make truthful statements and produce required documents.

All for Id



Tasty treat: A worker collects dry sevayan made from refined wheat flour ahead of Id-ul-Fitr when the gossamer-thin strands are turned into a delicious dessert with milk, sugar, ghee and dry fruits, a festive staple in Lucknow. SANDEEP SAXENA

Why did Centre turn a blind eye to Patanjali's 'COVID cure' claim, asks SC

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday questioned the government for "shutting its eyes" while Patanjali Ayurved "tom-tommed" its wares as a panacea to COVID-19 during the pandemic. The court turned the heat a notch higher on Baba Ramdev, self-styled yoga guru and Patanjali's co-founder, by threatening him with perjury proceedings.

A Bench of Justices Hima Kohli and Ahsanuddin Amanullah told the government, represented by Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, to file a detrailed affidavit to "dispel the impression" that the government machinery, both at the Central and State le-

vels, were complicit with Patanjali.

The court asked why the government did not inform the public, especially during the critical months of the pandemic, that the products advertised by Patanjali were supplementary to the main medication. "While the proposed contemnors (Patanjali Ayurved, its managing director Balkrishna, and Baba Ramdev) were going to town saying there was nothing else in modern medicine... why did you choose to keep your eyes shut while they tom-tommed," Justice Kohli asked Mr. Mehta.

The court said the proposed contemnors were taking the proceedings "too lightly". It expressed dissatisfaction with the affidavits filed by Patanjali and Mr. Balkrishna, expressing



Baba Ramdev

their apologies for publishing misleading advertisements in violation of the Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954 despite an undertaking given to the court last November.

The Bench had initiated contempt proceedings against Patanjali Ayurved and Mr. Balkrishna on February 27 for violating an

assurance that they would refrain from advertising or branding products as "permanent relief" for diseases.

'Personal apology'

Mr. Ramdev was in the courtroom standing behind his counsel, senior advocate Balbir Singh. Mr. Singh said his client had been unable to file an affidavit in response to the court's contempt notice to him on March 19. He said the affidavit was "ready", but the yoga guru had come with the hope of personally apologising to the court.

The court, on Mr. Mehta's suggestion, gave the proposed contemnors a week's time as a last opportunity to file fresh affidavits in the contempt case. The court listed the case for April 10.

Sanjay Singh gets bail; no trace of money trail: SC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party leader Sanjay Singh got bail from the Supreme Court on Tuesday in the Delhi liquor policy case, as the Enforcement Directorate (ED) chose to make a tactical withdrawal rather than risk an order from the top court which may affect the trial later on.

After half a day of hearing, Additional Solicitor-General S.V. Raju, appearing for the ED, told a three-judge Bench led by Justice Sanjay Khanna that the Central agency had decided to concede in favour of granting bail to the Rajya Sabha MP, whose custody was no longer necessary.

The turnaround came when Justice Khanna noted that Mr. Singh had been behind bars for six months with no headway made in recovering the proceeds of the alleged crime or any trace of the money trail



Walking free: The Enforcement Directorate says Sanjay Singh's custody is no longer required in the excise policy case. PTI

leading to him. "We need to know if further custody is required or not," the Bench, including Justices Dipankar Datta and P.B. Varale, told the ED.

The court pointed out that the accused-turned-approver Dinesh Arora had not implicated Mr. Singh until his 10th statement claiming that the MP had taken ₹2 crore in bribes. The Bench said that

there were still contradictions in Mr. Arora's statements.

The court cautioned the ED that it may have to pronounce a detailed order, citing explicit reasons, as required under Section 45 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), in case it decided to grant Mr. Singh bail. Justice Khanna warned the ED that it would have

Got offer to join BJP, threatened with arrest: Atishi

NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party leader and Delhi Minister Atishi said on Tuesday that she had received an offer to join the Bharatiya Janata Party in order to "save" her "political career", adding that she was threatened with arrest if she did not accept it. The BJP dismissed it, asking her to apologise for her "false allegation". » PAGE 4

to risk the possibility of such an order if it chose to argue against the bail. "If we pass an order, we have to record reasons in terms of Section 45 and state that he has not prima facie committed an offence," Justice Khanna told Mr. Raju.

Justice Khanna also subtly pointed out to the agency that such an order granting bail would have

later ramifications for the outcome of the entire liquor policy case, especially during trial.

'Peculiar facts'

Changing tack, the ED said that it would not oppose the bail in view of the "peculiar facts" but argued that the order should not be treated as a precedent. The Central agency said that though the case against Mr. Singh was arguable, it did not want to. The agency urged the court to record that it had not argued its case against the bail application.

Arguing for Mr. Singh, senior advocate A.M. Singhvi said that the absence of a money trail ideally meant there were no proceeds of crime. He highlighted that Mr. Singh deserved bail as he has been in custody for half a year now.

Seven charity workers killed in Israeli air strike in Gaza

Associated Press
DEIR AL-BALAH, GAZA STRIP

An Israeli air strike killed seven aid workers from World Central Kitchen, leading the charity to suspend delivery on Tuesday of vital food aid to Gaza, where Israel's offensive has pushed hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to the brink of starvation.

Ships still laden with some 240 tonnes of aid that arrived just a day earlier turned back from Gaza, according to Cyprus, which has played a key role in trying to establish a sea route to bring food to territory. Israel has only allowed a trickle of aid into devastated northern Gaza, where experts say famine is imminent.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu acknowledged that the country's forces had carried out



Reduced to metal: A car used by World Central Kitchen that was hit by an Israeli strike in Deir al-Balah, Gaza. AFP

the "unintended strike ... on innocent people". He said officials were looking into the strike and would work to ensure it did not happen again.

Footage showed the bodies, several wearing protective gear with the charity's logo, at a hospital in the central Gaza town of Deir al-Balah. Those killed include three British nationals, an Australian, a

Polish national, an American-Canadian dual citizen and a Palestinian, according to hospital records. José Andrés, celebrity chef and founder of the charity which operates in several countries wracked by wars and natural disasters said he was "heartbroken" by the deaths.

IRAN VOWS PUNISHMENT
» PAGE 14

IN BRIEF



Arun Govil of 'Ramayan' fame files nomination from Meerut

Veteran actor Arun Govil of TV serial 'Ramayan' fame on Tuesday filed his nomination as the BJP candidate from Meerut Lok Sabha seat. Mr. Govil filed his nomination papers in the Collectorate. State BJP leaders, including Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya and party's regional chief Satendra Sisodia, were present. Polling in Meerut is scheduled in the second phase on April 26. The Samajwadi Party (SP) has changed its candidate for Meerut and announced the name of Atul Pradhan, the sitting MLA from Sardhana. The SP had earlier fielded Bhanu Pratap Singh against Mr. Govil. **PH**

Shah to start U.P. campaign from Muzaffarnagar today

Union Home Minister and senior BJP leader Amit Shah will launch his Lok Sabha election campaign in Uttar Pradesh with a rally in Muzaffarnagar's Shahpur town on Wednesday. Sudhir Saini, the BJP's district unit chief, said on Tuesday that Mr. Shah will reach Muzaffarnagar at 1 p.m. The Home Minister will address a public rally at National Inter College Ground in Shahpur on Wednesday, sources had earlier said. Rashtriya Lok Dal chief Jayant Chaudhary will also address the rally, Mr. Saini said. Eight parliamentary constituencies in western Uttar Pradesh will go to the polls in the first phase of the election on April 19. **PH**

Court orders probe to know age of seven out of 35 pirates

A special court in Mumbai on Tuesday directed the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) to initiate an inquiry to ascertain the age of seven out of the 35 pirates, who were apprehended last month in an operation off the coast of Somalia, as they claim to be minors. All 35 pirates were produced before special judge B.D. Shelke at the end of their initial police remand on Tuesday. During the hearing, seven accused, through their lawyers, submitted documents such as birth certificates, school leaving certificates to claim that they are minors. However, special public prosecutor Iqbal Solkar, appearing for the police, raised an objection about the veracity of the documents. **PH**

BJP MP from Muzaffarnagar Ajay Nishad joins Congress

The sitting Lok Sabha member from Bihar's Muzaffarnagar, Ajay Kumar Nishad, joined the Congress on Tuesday after he was denied a ticket by his former party, the Bharatiya Janata Party. Mr. Nishad joined the Congress at the All India Congress Committee (AICC) headquarters in New Delhi in the presence of Bihar Congress MLA Akhilesh Prasad Singh, AICC in-charge Mohan Prakashand, head of the AICC media and publicity department Pawan Khena, among others. "Even a person condemned to the gallows is given a final wish but I was not even told once before my ticket was cut," Mr. Nishad said, vowing to shatter the "arrogance of someone" and strengthen the Congress in Bihar.

Congress fields Munish Tamang from Darjeeling

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

The Congress on Tuesday announced Munish Tamang as its candidate for the Darjeeling Lok Sabha seat. The election for Darjeeling seat is scheduled to take place on April 26.

Mr. Tamang, the former national president of Bharatiya Gorkha Parishad (BGP), joined the Congress in New Delhi last week. He will be supported by the Hamro Party (HP). Ajoy Edwards, chief of the Hamro Party, had also joined the Congress.

The development has turned elections in Darjeeling Lok Sabha seat, into a three-cornered contest.

The BJP has nominated sitting MP Raju Bista while the Trinamool Congress has fielded Gopal Lama.

Mr. Bista had won the Darjeeling Lok Sabha seat in 2019 by the margin of over four lakh votes. To make the contest interesting BJP's Kurseong MLA Bishnu Prasad Sharma had filed nomination as an independent candidate.

The people of Darjeeling Lok Sabha constituency, which comprises three constituencies Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong in the hills and four in the foothills—Matigara, Naxalbari, Siliguri, Phansidewa, Chopra have been electing BJP MLAs since 2009.

CM should not step down, AAP MLAs, councillors tell Sunita Kejriwal at meeting

In their first meeting since Arvind Kejriwal's arrest, AAP's elected representatives say CM must continue to run govt. from jail; BJP seeks his resignation, says national capital deserves better

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's wife, Sunita Kejriwal, met party MLAs and councillors at the Chief Minister's residence on Tuesday.

This was the first meeting of the party's elected representatives since the AAP chief's arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on March 21.

The BJP questioned Mr. Kejriwal's insistence on continuing to occupy the Chief Minister's post despite being sentenced to jail and said Delhi's residents deserve a better Chief Minister who could provide them with an honest and transparent government.

A Delhi court on Monday sent Mr. Kejriwal to judicial custody till April 15 in connection with a money laundering case linked to AAP government's now-scrapped excise policy in Delhi. He is lodged in Tihar Jail.



Sunita Kejriwal read out a message from the CM, saying he was proud of AAP leaders who had stood by their Opposition colleagues in the mega Opposition rally on Sunday. FILE PHOTO

Addressing the media outside Mr. Kejriwal's residence, senior party leader and Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said AAP members had discussed the pressure being exerted on the Chief Minister to resign and that those present at the meeting wanted Mr. Kejriwal "not to resign at any cost".

He said 55 MLAs and councillors present at the meeting had assured Ms. Kejriwal of their support

and urged her to convey to the AAP chief that he must continue to run the government from jail.

When asked whether the party was considering replacing the Chief Minister with his wife, Mr. Bharadwaj said, "These are baseless rumours spread by the BJP, which has been waiting to come into power in Delhi for almost 25 years." He added that Ms. Kejriwal read out a message from the Chief Minister, saying he was proud of AAP leaders who had stood by their colleagues in the mega Opposition rally on Sunday.

ter, saying he was proud of AAP leaders who had stood by their colleagues in the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc in the mega Opposition rally at Ramliya Maidan on Sunday.

"The Chief Minister said that the rally gave a clear message that as long as he is in jail, the problems for the BJP will keep increasing," Mr. Bharadwaj said.

A party leader said four MLAs could not attend the meeting as they were not in the city and that the remaining three MLAs — Mr. Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia, and Satyendar Jain — were in jail. AAP has 62 out of 70 MLAs in the Assembly.

"Double standards" Meanwhile, BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia accused Mr. Kejriwal of "double standards".

He said the Delhi Chief Minister took the resignations of Mr. Sisodia and Mr. Jain after they were sent to jail, but had refused to resign from the Cabinet himself.

Fought against Trinamool in West Bengal, others joined in only later, says Dilip Ghosh

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA



Dilip Ghosh

In the eye of a storm for making derogatory remarks directed at Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, which were censured both by the Election Commission of India (EC) and his party, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Dilip Ghosh remains unfazed.

Mr. Ghosh, who is contesting the Lok Sabha elections from the Bardhaman Durgapur, on Tuesday where he had taken on the Trinamool Congress.

"I am the one who has fought against Trinamool, who else in West Bengal has done so? The others have only joined me in fighting the Trinamool," the former State BJP president said.

The remarks assume significance as many in the BJP feel that Mr. Ghosh has

bagged 77 seats. The West Bengal BJP is at present headed by Sukanta Majumdar, the MP from Balanghata, who entered active politics in 2019. Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly Suvendu Adhikari joined the BJP in December 2020 and has emerged as one of the most important voices of the party in the State.

Not only BJP leaders but representatives from the Trinamool Congress said that Mr. Ghosh was being sidelined.

"We express our sympathy to Dilip Ghosh. Why has his seat changed from Medinipur to Bardhaman Durgapur? We advise him to leave the party and return to the RSS," Trinamool leader Debangshu Bhattacharya said.

Meanwhile, Mr. Ghosh continued to target the Trinamool despite being cautioned by the EC.

Union MoS Bhoomik 'unhappy' after losing West Tripura ticket

Syed Sajad Ali
AGARTALA

Union Minister of State Bhoomik on Tuesday failed to receive the Bharatiya Janata Party's nomination in the West Tripura Lok Sabha constituency, has been noticeably absent from the high-voltage campaigning for her replacement Biplob Kumar Deb.

She has so far only attended one meeting in her home turf of Dhanpur in Sepahijala district.

"Skipping campaign" A local BJP leader and supporter of Ms. Bhoomik on Tuesday said she is unhappy after being denied the candidature and is making her displeasure known by staying away from active campaigning.

The BJP has nominated Mr. Deb, former Chief Minister and currently a Rajya Sabha member, from

AAP names two more candidates from Punjab

Press Trust of India
CHANDIGARH

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Tuesday named two more candidates from Punjab for the Lok Sabha election, fielding former Congress MLA Raj Kumar Chhabbavel from Hoshiarpur and Malvinder Singh Kang from Anandpur Sahib.

This is AAP's second list, announced in a post on X by Sandeep Pathak, the party's national general secretary. Polling for Punjab's 13 Lok Sabha seats will be held on June 1.

Mr. Chhabbavel quit the Congress and joined the AAP on March 15 in the presence of Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann. The 54-year-old also resigned as MLA from the Chhabbavel constituency in Hoshiarpur district. He had been the Deputy Leader of Opposition in the Punjab Assembly.

Mr. Chhabbavel had said after joining the party that he was impressed with the AAP government's "pro-people" policies, especially for the poor and the weaker sections.

The prominent Dalit leader, a doctor by profession, had contested the

Party names former Congress MLA Raj Kumar Chhabbavel from Hoshiarpur and Malvinder Singh Kang from Anandpur Sahib

Lok Sabha elections from Hoshiarpur in 2019 on a Congress ticket, losing to the BJP's Ms. Prakash.

The Congress, Shiromani Akali Dal and the BJP are yet to name their candidates for the seat.

Prominent face

Mr. Kang, the chief spokesperson of the AAP's Punjab unit, is one of the party's most prominent faces in the State.

He joined the AAP in July 2021, having quit the BJP in October 2020 over the now-repealed farm laws. He was the State general secretary of the BJP and a prominent Sikh face in the party's core committee.

The Anandpur Sahib seat is currently represented by Manish Tewari (Congress). No other major party has yet announced candidates from here. AAP, which is a constituent of the opposition INDIA bloc, is contesting the LS poll on its own in Punjab.

14,000 new migrant voters for Kashmir Lok Sabha poll

Peeraadza Ashiq
SRINAGAR

Around 14,000 new Kashmiri migrant voters have registered for the three Lok Sabha seats in the valley, taking the total figure to 1.13 lakh.

According to the Relief and Rehabilitation Department, more than 1.13 lakh Kashmiri migrants can now vote in the three seats.

"It is our appeal to all migrant voters to take part in voting in large numbers and exercise their democratic right. We have arranged facilities for them. Authorised zonal officers and camp commandants will distribute and attest M-forms on the spot," Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner Arvind Karwani said.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha poll, around 99,000 migrant Kashmiri voters had registered as voters.

BJP government trying to intimidate States ruled by Opposition, says Kamal

The Hindu Bureau
TRICHUR

Hitting out at the BJP government over the arrests of Delhi and Jharkhand Chief Ministers, Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) founder Kamal Haasan on Tuesday said that the Centre was trying to intimidate Opposition-ruled States and its leaders.

"They first send the Enforcement Directorate and Income Tax Department officials, and then the Governors. If a State does not flinch, they jail its Chief Minister. But how many can they intimidate? Can they scare 100 crore people of country?" Mr. Haasan asked, while canvassing for Duralai Vaiko, the MDMK's candidate for the Trichur



Criticising the Centre: MNM founder Kamal Haasan canvassing for MDMK's Duralai Vaiko in Srinagaram on Tuesday. M. MOORTHY

Lok Sabha constituency. Urging voters to support the DMK-led alliance, Mr. Haasan hailed the mid-day meal scheme and the Chief

Minister's Breakfast Scheme as historic and said that the Dravidian model of governance should be studied by the rest of India.

"Instead of making fun of Tamils, if they try to follow the Dravidian model, the world will follow India's model and our State would be the actual gateway of India," he added.

The MNM had promised the Mahalir Urimai Thogai in its manifesto first, and many mocked the party for it. But the DMK government listened to us, and implemented it. "That is the reason I have come to this campaign. We need a government that will listen to us," he said.

He also urged the MNM cadre not to worry about the party's decision of not contesting this election. "There can be no gain without pain. Accept this reality, tomorrow will be ours," he said.

Mahan Dal declares support to SP in Uttar Pradesh to 'oust BJP'

The Hindu Bureau
LUCKNOW

Mahan Dal president Keshav Dev Maurya on Tuesday offered his "unconditional support" to the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the INDIA bloc in Uttar Pradesh. Mr. Maurya said that his party is ready to make any sacrifice in the fight against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which is "anti-Dalit, anti-minorities, and anti-backward classes".

Founded in 2008, the Mahan Dal hasn't tasted any electoral success so far but seems to enjoy the support of sections of the OBCs, the Shukhs and the Kushwahas. In the 2022 Assembly

poll, it had joined the SP-led alliance but failed to make any mark. In June 2023, it had shown eagerness to enter into an alliance with the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) for the Lok Sabha poll. SP insiders said it is likely that the party may allocate two seats to the Mahan Dal but the candidates will fight on the SP symbol. "We all have only one objective — to oust the BJP, and we are together with the SP in this fight," said Mr. Maurya. Targeting the newly announced Apana Dal (Kamerawadi) and the All India Majlis-e-Itehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) alliance, he alleged that the proposed front is working behind the scenes to strengthen the BJP.

Pralhad Joshi now banking on Lingayat leaders within his party

Girish Pattanashetti
HUBBALLI

Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Coal and Mines Pralhad Joshi, who seemed to be comfortably positioned for another easy win in the Lok Sabha election in Dharwad, has been caught off guard by the sudden outburst of some Veerashaiva Lingayat seers, who initially wanted him replaced. And, in the latest turn, one of them has threatened to jump into the poll fray, while Mr. Joshi, on his part, is leaving no stone unturned to placate the community.

On March 27, Sri Fakira Dingaleswar Swami of Shirahatti Fakkieswar Math sought a change in the BJP candidature. The seer wanted Mr. Joshi replaced with a Veerashaiva Lingayat candidate. His demand was based on the perception that Mr. Joshi "ill treated the community seers". The seers of other prominent maths supported his stance but the BJP clarified that the party would not change Mr. Joshi's candidature.

Following this, on Tuesday, devotees of Sri Dingaleswar Swami and people from different sections of society decided to back the candidature of the seer for the constituency. However, the seer has not announced his decision yet.

Mr. Joshi is now banking on the Lingayat leaders within his party to help him sail through troubled waters.

Y.S. Sharmila to contest from Kadapa

APCC chief says her uncle's murder played key role in her decision in selecting the constituency; accuses her brother and CM Jagan Mohan Reddy of encouraging 'murder politics' by letting accused go scot free and even giving them poll ticket

A.D. Rangarajan
KADAPA

Announcing that she will contest the upcoming Lok Sabha election from the Kadapa constituency, Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Y.S. Sharmila Reddy said on Tuesday that the murder of her paternal uncle and former MP Y.S. Vivekananda Reddy had played a key role in her decision.

Speaking after paying tributes at the YSR Samadhi at Idupulapaya, Ms. Reddy indicated that her "tough decision" would have a telling effect on her relations with her family. Referring to the sensational murder case that played a pivotal role ahead

of the 2019 election, she alleged that her brother and Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy encouraged the politics of murder. "He not only extended support to those involved in the murder but also gave ticket to them without any qualms," she said.

Culprits going scot-free Ms. Reddy explained that she had no personal enmity with her brother, but said that he had changed upon coming to power after the 2019 election. "Though we are related by blood and I know him since my childhood, this Jagan Mohan Reddy after 2019 is new to me," she said.

The APCC chief alleged that the State government



APCC chief Y.S. Sharmila Reddy announces her candidature for Kadapa LS constituency after offering prayers at 'YSR Samadhi'.

had not only been inactive regarding the investigation of the murder, but had also actively supported those suspected to be behind it. "In spite of having solid evidence, there is no action against the accused. The culprits are allowed to

go scot-free; they are roaming in the open," she said, expressing her anguish.

Appealing to sentiment Noting the district's affection for her late uncle, Ms. Reddy said the sentimental voters of Kadapa would

never back the YSRCP's decision to put the accused in the fray. She also recalled that her uncle's last wish had been to see her as a Member of Parliament representing Kadapa.

Playing the 'YSR bidda' card once again, Ms. Sharmila said that she was going to contest as the daughter of the late Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, a popular former Chief Minister, and appealed to the public to extend support to her.

Neither her brother nor the Telugu Desam Party's (TDP) president Chandrababu Naidu had done anything for Andhra Pradesh during their stints in power, she said, taking the State's situation from bad during bifurcation to worse today.

Expedite criminal cases filed against MPs and MLAs: HC

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Madras High Court on Tuesday directed the prosecution to expedite proceedings in criminal cases pending against incumbent as well as former MPs and MLAs in Tamil Nadu and file a status report before the court on June 20.

The First Division Bench of Chief Justice Sanjay V. Gangapurvala and Justice J. Sathya Narayana Prasad issued the direction on a suo motu writ petition taken up by the court, on the request of the Supreme Court, in 2020 to monitor the progress of criminal cases booked against MPs and MLAs.

Advocate General P.S.

Raman and State Public Prosecutor Hasan Mohamed Jinnah informed the Bench that 561 cases had been registered in Tamil Nadu against the sitting as well as former legislators under the Indian Penal Code and other laws but for the Prevention of Corruption Act (PCA), 1988.

When the Chief Justice wanted to know how many cases had been booked under the PCA in the State, the law officers said 20 corruption cases were at the stage of trials while nine more were under investigation.

They also pointed out that of the 20 cases, nine were at the advanced stage of trials.

Cong. trying to politicise drought assistance, says Amit Shah

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Building tempo for the BJP's poll battle for the Lok Sabha election in Karnataka, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday launched an all-out attack on Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar for allegedly neglecting the interests of the State owing to their power tussle, and trying to politicise the issue of drought assistance from the Centre.

"The Chief Minister is trying to bring to his chair while the Deputy Chief Minister is busy trying to snatch the chair from him. The Congress government is neither bothered about development of the State nor is protecting the interests of



Union Home Minister Amit Shah with BJP leaders and JD(S) Karnataka president H.D. Kumaraswamy in Bengaluru on Tuesday.

people," Mr. Shah alleged while addressing a convention of representatives from the BJP's Shakati Kendras (cluster of booths) in the Lok Sabha constituencies of Bengaluru North,

South, Central, and Rural, and Chickballapur, at Bengaluru Palace Grounds on Tuesday.

Later in the day, he held a roadshow in Channarayana (ranked by JD(S) leaders. At the convention in Bengaluru, Mr. Shah spoke on drought and accused the Congress government of delaying sending a memorandum to the Centre for assistance by three months.

Referring to the model code of conduct kicking in, he said drought assistance issue is now before the Election Commission. But the Congress government

is politicising it, he alleged.

On the Congress government's charge that the Centre had discriminated against Karnataka in devolution of taxes and funds, Mr. Shah claimed that the State had received only ₹1,42,000 crore during the 10-year rule of the UPA government led by Manmohan Singh.

"But in the last 10 years, we have given ₹4,91,000 crore to Karnataka... In addition, ₹25,000 crore has been given for development of national highways, and ₹12,000 crore for development of airports," he said.

In the evening, Mr. Shah participated in a roadshow in Channarayana to campaign for BJP candidate C.N. Manjunath. The former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy, who represents Channarayana in the Assembly, BJP State president B.V. Vijayendra and BJP MLC C.P. Yogeshwar took part in the roadshow. This was the first public campaign of BJP central leaders with the JD(S) leadership. The choice of the place is seen as a challenge to Mr. Shivakumar and his brother and incumbent MP D.K. Suresh, who is seeking re-election from this seat.

Telangana govt. will not implement CAA or NRC

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Telangana Minister for Irrigation and former PCC chief N. Utam Kumar Reddy on Tuesday said the Congress government would not implement the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) or the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the State.

Speaking at an Iftar party in Kodad, the Minister said the return of the Congress government has reinstated democracy and secularism in Telangana. He said under the previous BRS regime none of the promises made for minorities, including the 12% Muslim reservation, were honoured.

"The return of the BJP for the third term at the Centre would be a severe blow for minorities, especially Muslims, he said.

Despite fierce opposition, the BJP-led government at the Centre has already implemented the CAA. If the BJP wins again, it will likely introduce the NRC and NPR, said Mr. Reddy.

"If Modi is re-elected, he will dismantle the secular fabric. However, if Rahul Gandhi becomes PM, he will uphold secularism and democracy," he emphasised.

The Minister said that, as promised, the budget for minorities' welfare will be increased to ₹4,000 crore, and a sub-plan for minorities will also be introduced after the Lok Sabha elections.

Complaint against Kerala Minister for poll code violation

The Hindu Bureau
KOZHIKODE

The United Democratic Front (UDF) has lodged a complaint with the Election Commission of India against Kerala Minister for Public Works P.A. Mohamed Riyas for alleged violation of the model code of conduct for the Lok Sabha polls.

During a campaign event for Left Democratic Front candidate Elamaram Kareem on April 1, Mr. Riyas announced that the State government had decided to construct an international sports stadium in Kozhikode. P.M. Niyas, general convener of the UDF election committee

for the Kozhikode constituency, said in a letter to the Chief Electoral Officer on Tuesday that he had earlier lodged a complaint on March 31 pointing out that organising such an event under government patronage itself was a violation of the poll code.

'Nothing new' Mr. Riyas, however, told the media that there was nothing new in the announcement as the decision to construct the stadium had been made much earlier. He also said that there was nothing wrong in publicising the development works already taken up by the State government.

K.C. Venugopal files criminal defamation case against BJP rival Shobha Surendran

The Hindu Bureau
ALAPPUZHA

All India Congress Committee general secretary and United Democratic Front Alappuzha Lok Sabha constituency candidate K.C. Venugopal, MP, on Tuesday filed a criminal defamation case against Bharatiya Janata Party leader Shobha Surendran for making unsubstantiated allegations against him of amassing huge wealth by colluding with the mineral sand mining mafia. Mr. Venugopal filed the case at the Alappuzha Judicial First Class Magistrate Court.

Ms. Surendran, who is contesting the Lok Sabha



K.C. Venugopal, and, right, Shobha Surendran

polls from Alappuzha as National Democratic Alliance candidate, last month alleged that Mr. Venugopal, with the help of Sis Ram Ola, a Union Cabinet Minister of Mines in the United Progressive Alliance government, had taken bribes to the tune of crores from the mining

mafia. Terming it unfounded allegations, Mr. Venugopal served a legal notice on Ms. Surendran asking her to withdraw the charges and tender an apology. As she did not apologise, the senior Congress leader filed the criminal defamation lawsuit.

Rahul to submit nomination papers for Wayanad today

The Hindu Bureau
KALPETTA

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi will submit his nomination papers at the collectorate here for the Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency on Wednesday after leading a roadshow at Kalpetta in Wayanad.

The roadshow will begin at 11 a.m.

All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretaries Priyanka Gandhi and K.C. Venugopal, Kerala's Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan, Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPC) acting president M.M. Hassan, and senior party leader Ramesh Chennithala, along with



Rahul Gandhi

other State leaders, will accompany Mr. Gandhi.

After the roadshow, Mr. Gandhi will submit his nomination papers to the District Collector and district election officer Renu Raj at noon.

Probe role of all DGPs in phone-tapping case: ex-MLA

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Former Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA and party candidate for Medak Lok Sabha seat M. Raghunandan Rao on Tuesday demanded that the Telangana government investigate the phone-tapping case from the inception of Telangana as a separate State and the role of all the DGPs since then.

Such orders cannot be carried out without instructions from former Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu. Hence, KCR should be the first accused, he said.

Woman and a couple from Kerala found dead in Arunachal Pradesh

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A woman who was reported to have gone missing from Thiruvananthapuram was found dead, along with a couple who hailed from Kottayam, under mysterious circumstances in Arunachal Pradesh on Tuesday. The deceased persons have been identified as Arya; her friend Devi, and her husband Naveen Thomas.

The trio were reportedly found dead in a hotel room in Ziro in Arunachal Pradesh. They were apparently found to have bled profusely with their wrists slit. Cuts were also found on various parts of their

bodies, according to the Thiruvananthapuram City police.

Arya, who used to teach French at a private school in the city, was reported to have gone missing on March 26. During the probe, the police came to know that Arya had gone to Guwahati with her close friend Devi, who had taught German in the same school until a few years ago, and Naveen, who used to run a bakery.

Soon, the Thiruvananthapuram City police alerted the Arunachal Pradesh police, and the latter's subsequent search led them to the scene of the deaths. The tragic news was conveyed to Devi's father,

noted wildlife photographer Balan Madhavan. The bodies were found in the room that was locked from within. The police also reportedly recovered a suicide note. Naveen's browsing history allegedly revealed searches made on the code of afterlife.

Cultural activist Soorya Krishnamoorthy said the youngsters are suspected to have fallen prey to black magic. Both Devi and Naveen were Ayurvedic doctors by qualification, but had opted for other careers by choice, he said.

A comprehensive inquiry will be undertaken. (Suiide prevention helpline: DISHA - 1056, 0471-2522056)

Revanth slams KCR over drought remark, asks BRS for report on farmer suicides

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Rebutting the allegations of the Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) that drought conditions in Telangana were the result of the Congress rule, Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy reminded that there was deficit rainfall during the monsoon last year, resulting in less water in the reservoirs and falling water table. He questioned the rationale of the allegations.

The Chief Minister observed that BRS president and former Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu visited agriculture fields as part of the 'Polam Bata' programme only for politi-

cal mileage ahead of the Lok Sabha election. "We welcome his visit as he could at least think about the people's issues now since he lost power, suffered a fracture and witnessed the arrest of his daughter," he said.

Responding to allegations that 200 farmers had ended their life in the State in the 100 days since the Congress came to power, Mr. Reddy asked the BRS to submit a report within 48 hours to the government with details of names and villages of such farmers, if any, so that his government could provide their family with compensation after the election.

Mr. Revanth visited Tuk-



A. Revanth Reddy

kuguda near Hyderabad on Tuesday as Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi are scheduled to address a public meeting there on April 6.

Speaking to the media,

Mr. Reddy slammed the Opposition comments that the State government had failed to provide irrigation water to standing crops and said the government's first priority is to meet the drinking water needs in view of the falling groundwater table and the below-normal storage levels in Nagarjuna Sagar and Srisaam projects.

"It is not fair to blame the Congress government for the drought. They (the BRS) were in power during the last rainy season. We (the Congress) came to power in December last year, which is the winter season. But KCR is talking nonsense about us," he said.

Told to join BJP or face arrest, says AAP Minister

Atishi claims she was threatened with arrest if she did not accept the BJP's offer to save her political career; Delhi BJP chief demands that she produce proof or apologise for her allegation

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Delhi Minister Atishi said on Tuesday she had received an offer to join the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in order to "save" her "political career", adding that she was threatened with arrest if she did not accept it.

The BJP, however, dismissed the claim, asking Ms. Atishi to apologise for her "false allegation" or to provide proof with details of the person who had approached her.

"I want to inform the people of the country that the BJP approached me through an individual, who is personally very close to me, to join their party," Ms. Atishi said. "I was told to join the BJP to save and ex-



Senior AAP leader and Delhi Minister Atishi addressing a press conference in New Delhi on Tuesday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHAP

tend my political career, and [that] if I did not join the BJP, then I would be arrested by the ED within a month."

Referring to the chain of arrests of AAP leaders, she alleged that the BJP had decided to "crush and eliminate the AAP" by putting its leaders in jail. She said that she had received information regarding an Enfor-

ment Directorate (ED) search on her personal residence, adding that other AAP leaders Saurabh Bharadwaj, Durgesh Pathak, and Raghav Chadha would also be arrested.

Evidence asked
Mr. Sachdeva said that Ms. Atishi and Mr. Bharadwaj should either present evidence of the allegations associated with their Operation Lotus or apologise to the BJP immediately, or be prepared to face legal action.

"We want Atishi to tender an apology for putting a false allegation against us or provide proof of the person who approached her. We will take legal action if she does not back her claim by this evening," Mr. Tiwari said.

BJP demands apology

At a press conference, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva and Northeast Delhi MP Manoj Tiwari said

Response sought on plea against INDIA acronym

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday gave the last opportunity to the Centre and several political parties to respond to a petition seeking to restrain them from using the acronym INDIA (Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance).

The High Court told the parties to submit their response within a week to the public interest litigation petition which alleged that by using the acronym, the Opposition political parties were taking "undue advantage in the name of our country."

The court was hearing an application filed by Girish Bharadwaj seeking early hearing of the matter on the grounds that the petition was pending since August 2023 and the election schedule has already been announced by the Election Commission.

The court, however, declined to advance the date of hearing but said an endorsement would be made to hear and dispose of the petition on April 10.

Modi govt. scared of uttering a word against China: Cong.

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Accusing the Narendra Modi government of a "very weak response" after China renamed 30 places in Arunachal Pradesh, the Congress on Tuesday asked why the Modi government cannot utter a word against China if it can display a "muscular" attitude on Katchatheevu.

Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters, senior leader and Lok Sabha member Manish Tewari slammed the BJP for its campaign against former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Hitting out at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for suggesting that Mrs. Gandhi gifted Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka, Mr. Tewari said it was laughable to suggest this about a Prime Minister who divided Pakistan into two parts and did not care about threats from the United States.

"It is ridiculous to imagine that the Prime Minister who changed the geography of South Asia would give any territorial concessions to any other country," said the Congress leader.



Manish Tewari

posts along the LAC. "One-and-a-half years have passed, the government has not reacted to what a senior officer of the government revealed," he said.

'Double standards'
Former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram, in a post on X, also targeted the government over its double standards.

He said the BJP's stance would put 25 lakh Sri Lankan Tamils and 10 lakh Indian Tamils living in Sri Lanka in a problem and "is a double standard."

"Any untruthful and beligerent statement on Katchatheevu after 50 years will bring the Sri Lankan government and the 35 lakh Tamils into confrontation. Let the government show its belligerence to China," Mr. Chidambaram said in his post.

"Under the BJP government, China has occupied 2,000 square km of Indian territory and is fortifying the area. China is on a renaming spree and is merri-ly changing the names of villages and landmarks. Why is the Foreign Minister silent in his response to the actions of China," he asked.

'Talks to resolve stand-off with China will continue'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The ongoing talks for peaceful resolution of the stand-off with China in eastern Ladakh "will continue, and disengagement and de-escalation is the way forward," Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Tuesday.

"Doctrinal changes whenever required should be made to make the armed forces future ready," he said, addressing the ongoing biannual Army Commanders' Conference.

On the situation along the western borders, Mr. Singh referred to the "excellent synergy" between the Central Armed Police Forces, the police, and the Army in tackling the "menace of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir." "The synergised operations in Jammu and Kashmir are contributing to increased stability in the region and the same should continue," he said.

He complimented the



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh being greeted by Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan in New Delhi on Tuesday. PTI

efforts of the Border Roads Organisation that has led to vast improvement of road infrastructure in the border areas of both the western and northern front, while working under difficult conditions.

Touching upon the prevailing global situation, the Defence Minister said "unconventional and asymmetric warfare, including hybrid war", will be part of future conventional wars. "Cyber, information, communication, trade, and finance have all become an inseparable part of future

conflicts. This necessitates that the armed forces will have to keep all these facets in consideration while formulating strategies," he added.

"The Army is present in every domain from security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, medical assistance to maintaining the stable internal situation in the country," Mr. Singh said.

"The role of the Army is very important in nation building as also in the overall national development," he added.

Arunachal an integral part of India, says Union govt.

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

India on Tuesday outrightly rejected China renaming some places in Arunachal Pradesh as "senseless", and asserted that assigning "invented" names does not alter the reality, that the State "is, has been, and will always be" an integral part of India.

India's reaction came in response to Beijing releasing the fourth list of standardised geographical names for 30 more places in Zangnam, the Chinese name for autonomous Chinese names for 30 more places in Arunachal Pradesh, which the neighbouring country claims as part of south Tibet.

"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.

Sri Lankan media hits out at Modi, Jaishankar's Katchatheevu remarks

Meera Srinivasan
COLOMBO

The Sri Lankan government is yet to comment on the recent remarks by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Katchatheevu, but the island nation's media took a critical view of the development, while fishermen's associations urged Sri Lankan authorities to take up the issue of bottom trawling more vocally with the Indian government.

The Colombo-based English newspaper *Daily Mirror*, in its editorial on Tuesday, noted: "Sadly, even the seemingly unflappable Indian External Affairs Minister - Jaishankar - has dropped all pretence of statesmanship and has joined hands with his premier to rouse communal feelings in the hope of gaining a few votes in Tamil Nadu." "Lanka desires to be left to its own devices away from India's internal politics," it said.

The editorial was responding to Mr. Modi's claim - and Mr. Jaishankar's subsequent media statement which sought to



Sri Lankan Navy vessels at Katchatheevu. L. BALACHANDAR

back it - that the Congress party "callously gave away" Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka.

In its editorial titled "Katchatheevu was not India's 'give away'", business newspaper *Daily Financial Times* termed their remarks "a distortion of the facts, a dog whistle to South Indian nationalism and a dangerous and unnecessary provocation of a friendly neighbour that could have serious repercussions".

"The constant provocative claims on Sri Lankan territory, especially from the highest echelons of power in India, would only force our country to seek security guarantees elsewhere. Having learnt the art of diplomacy from Ashoka and strategy from Kau-

politicians have suggested that had Katchatheevu remained in India's territory, the fishermen from Tamil Nadu would not face arrest by Sri Lankan authorities.

Leaders of fishermen's groups in northern Sri Lanka said linking the two issues was "insincere". Further, it distorts the persisting problem of Indian boats fishing along Sri Lanka's coastline, using the destructive bottom trawling method. The practice severely affected the livelihoods of northern Sri Lankan fisher folk.

Annalagan Annarasa, northern coordinator of an island-wide federation of fishermen's organisations, said the remarks exposed the Indian leaders who "are simply politicising" the issue at the cost of the livelihoods of fisher folk in both countries. "Instead of remaining silent, the Sri Lankan government should resist any attempt to link the resolved matter of Katchatheevu to the unresolved question of bottom-trawling by Indian fishermen in our seas. They must take necessary steps to solve the real problem," he told *The Hindu*.

Truth alone triumphs, says AAP on bail to Sanjay Singh

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court order granting bail to Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh shows that the "truth alone triumphs", said the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Tuesday as it hailed the leader's release from jail six months after he was arrested in an excise policy case.

However, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) said the AAP leader's release does not mean that he has been given a "clean chit". It also said that the court order underscores the judiciary's independence, contrary to the claims made by the Opposition leaders.

'Money laundering'

Mr. Singh was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on October 4 last year in a money laundering case involving allega-

The AAP leader's release does not mean that he has been given a 'clean chit', BJP says

tions that the now-scraped Delhi excise policy for 2021-22 was formulated and implemented to favour certain liquor manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers in exchange for money.

His release came a day after a Delhi court sent Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to judicial custody till April 15 in the same case.

Former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia has been in judicial custody for over a year in the excise policy case.

Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj told reporters that no recovery has been made by probe agencies in connection with the case and that the ED arrested Mr. Singh on the basis of only one statement. "When the SC questioned the ED over it, they had no answer," he said.

Reacting to the development, Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said Mr. Singh got bail as the ED did not oppose it. He also junked the allegations that the judiciary is being pressured by the Centre.

BJP spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla said, "From now on, AAP cannot claim that the ED is working in a vindictive manner since it did not oppose Sanjay Singh's bail. Moreover, AAP celebrating Mr. Singh's bail proves that others in custody in the case are guilty."

10 Naxalites killed in encounter in Bijapur district, says IGP

Shubhomoy Sikdar
RAIPUR

Ten alleged Naxalites, including a woman, were killed in a Bastar battle with security personnel in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh on Tuesday, police said.

The incident marks the biggest encounter in the past 10 years in terms of casualties inflicted by the security forces on Naxalites in the State.

The gun battle took place around 6 a.m. in a forest between Lendra and Korcholi villages in the Gangaloor police station area, when a joint team of security personnel was out on an anti-Naxal operation, Inspector-General of Police (Bastar Range) P. Sundarraj said.

The team consisted of personnel from the District

Why rake up retrieval of Katchatheevu islet: Stalin

The Hindu Bureau
VELLORE

DMK president and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Tuesday sought to know whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi raised the issue of the retrieval of the Katchatheevu island with his Sri Lankan counterpart even once during his 10-year rule.

Mr. Modi was raking up the issue in view of the Lok Sabha poll, he said.

Addressing a public meeting at Vellore Fort in support of his party's candidates, D.M. Kathir Anand (Vellore) and S. Jagathrakshakan (Arakkonam), Mr. Stalin said that Mr. Modi would have visited the island nation several times as Prime Minister, but never raised the Katchatheevu issue on behalf of affected fishermen in Tamil Nadu. He wondered if Mr. Modi had at least condemned



M.K. Stalin

the Centre, he said. "Citing the 'support' for the welfare schemes launched by his government, Mr. Stalin said that the Chief Minister's Breakfast Scheme had become very popular, and was being replicated not only in other States but also overseas. For example, a similar scheme was introduced by the Government of Canada in schools this month, he said.

Mr. Stalin said that unlike the AIADMK, his party had been a guardian of the rights and welfare of minorities. "Once INDIA bloc comes to power at the Centre after the Lok Sabha election, we will ensure that the Citizenship (Amendment) Act will be repealed," he said.

The upcoming poll was crucial, involving Indian democracy, including its federal structure, from becoming dictatorial, he said.

ELECTIONS 2024



Azad to contest Lok Sabha polls from Anantnag

Ghulam Nabi Azad, a former J&K Chief Minister and the Democratic Progressive Alliance Party (DPAP) chairman, will contest from the Anantnag-Rajouri constituency in Kashmir. The announcement came a day after the National Conference (NC) decided to

field Mian Altaf, who holds sway among the Gujjar population, from the seat. The decision of Mr. Azad, a former Congress leader, to contest from south Kashmir will pose a challenge to Mr. Altaf. So far, only two parties have nominated candidates for the seat. The BJP sees the seat as an opportunity to increase its tally in J&K. Mehbooba Mufti's Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) sees the seat as a bastion. The PDP has not made it clear if the party will field a candidate.



Ghulam Nabi Azad's decision came a day after the NC fielded its candidate. FILE PHOTO

Lalu's daughter kicks off her poll campaign

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad's daughter Rohini Acharya kicked off her election campaign on Tuesday with a roadshow. Though no official announcement has been made as yet, it is understood that she will be the RJD's candidate for the Saran Lok Sabha seat.

contesting against BJP MP Rajiv Pratap Rudy. She is the second daughter of Mr. Prasad and his wife Rabri Devi — both former Chief Ministers — to enter the political arena. "After taking the blessing of my parents, now I am going to the people's door," she said on X. Ms. Acharya will visit all the six Assembly constituencies that fall under the Saran Lok Sabha seat. She will be doing door-to-door campaigns apart from road shows, RJD MLC Sunil Kumar Singh said.



Akhilesh Yadav (Samajwadi Party chief) People will take into account the way murders are taking place in jail, lynchings in police stations and are going to vote against them [BJP]

BJP leaders join Congress in Manipur

At a time when leaders from other parties are joining the BJP across Northeast India, a few BJP leaders, including a former MLA, joined Congress in conflict-scarred Manipur. Former MLA Ghangbam Chand Singh and three other BJP leaders joined the Congress in Imphal on Monday.



I think this poll will be fought on issues relevant to our present and future. Efforts to undermine institutions will be one such issue. SACHIN PILOT Congress leader



Lashing out: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma and other leaders at Kotputli in Jaipur on Tuesday. PTI

BJP focused on 'nation first' principle, Cong. plundered country: Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday accused the INDIA bloc of shielding the corrupt leaders and contesting the Lok Sabha election for the "selfish motives" of its constituent parties, which seek to promote their families. "I am their target because I question dynastic parties and their corruption," Mr. Modi said. Mr. Modi was addressing a meeting at Kotputli town in Rajasthan, falling in the Jaipur Rural Lok Sabha constituency, in support of BJP candidate Rao Rajendra Singh. He said the Congress leaders were threatening that if the BJP wins, the country would be on fire. "The Congress is showing its dangerous intentions ahead of the election. I have been extinguishing the fire for the past 10 years, but it will be important to save the country's future in the polls," Mr. Modi said. The family-based parties were holding rally after rally to save the dynasties leading them, the Prime Minister said.

While affirming that the country had progressed fast during the past 10 years of the BJP regime, Mr. Modi said the works performed in the period were just a trailer and the third regime of the party would take decisive action and implement far-reaching measures to help the nation march ahead.

The Prime Minister held the Congress responsible for the poverty prevailing in the country for 60 years after Independence, when India depended on other countries for technologies and defence equipment. "The Congress never allowed our armed forces to become self-reliant. In contrast, India is exporting weapons under the BJP's rule," Mr. Modi said.

He said the country's politics was divided into two camps. While the BJP was committed to the principle of "nation first", the Congress was busy finding ways to plunder the country, he said. Calling upon the people to vote for the BJP, Mr. Modi said Rajasthan had stood firm against dynastic forces and given all the 25 Lok Sabha seats to the BJP in 2014 and 2019.

'Neglected farmers'
Mr. Modi said the Congress had neglected small and marginal farmers as well as poor labourers during its rule, while the Kisan Samman Nidhi and pension schemes of his government had immensely benefited these sections. He said that the BJP government was also providing free rations to 80 crore needy people in the country. He said the BJP regime had fulfilled the long-awaited decisions, including the abolition of Article 370, building the Ram temple in Ayodhya, enactment of legislation against triple talaq and implementation of one rank, one pension. "In the past 10 years, we have doubled the length of electrified railway lines, which was only 20,000 km by 2014," he added. Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma and senior BJP leaders also addressed the rally, where the people from Jaipur, Alwar and Sikar came in large numbers.

In Alwar, BJP's go-to poll manager has a role reversal

A key back-room strategist for the party, Bhupender Yadav is contesting his first Lok Sabha election; he says being the candidate is more about connecting with the public, many a time leaving behind-the-scenes manoeuvres to someone else

ONE DAY WITH...
Nistula Hebbbar
ALWAR

What's the difference between being a political manager, formulating strategy for elections in the back room, and being the candidate and the face of a campaign? Union Minister Bhupender Yadav, the BJP's candidate from Alwar, fighting his first Lok Sabha election, is discovering the nuances of his position, a difference he describes as one between "a programme and a festival". Mr. Yadav, 54, has for long handled important States for the BJP — Bihar, for both the 2015 and 2020 Assembly elections, and more recently, Madhya Pradesh. The work, he told *The Hindu*, was more about how the party's organisation was geared for the elections, whereas being the candidate was more about connecting with the public at large, many a time leaving the back-room manoeuvres to someone else. He has also been a Rajya Sabha member twice. Being a candidate is also about answering uncomfortable questions, including the one posed by *The Hindu*, that he had preferred Mahendragar constituency to Alwar, and



In the spotlight: Union Minister Bhupender Yadav on the campaign trail in Rajasthan's Alwar along with Tijara MLA, Baba Balaknath. NISTULA HEBBAR

that he was fighting the "outsider" tag. "The party wanted me to fight from Alwar, and truly speaking, Mahendragar, Rewari and Alwar are only delineated by political boundaries. It is, in terms of society, culture and kinship, a common ground," he responded. "My maternal grandmother hails from Jakhrana, in Alwar. My paternal aunt has family in Siyryani, which also falls in this constituency. More to the point, the Congress candidate, Lalit Yadav, and I, also have connections in common," he said. Important pit stops on his campaign day were the

Arya Samaj Mandir at the Tijara market town, where he quickly paid obeisance at the shrine and spoke to the crowd, and a *jansampark* (public outreach) at Kakrali village. A united front His itinerary takes him deep into rural Tijara, the Assembly seat represented by Baba Balaknath, who had won the Alwar Lok Sabha seat in 2019, and was asked to contest the Assembly election in 2023. The outreach programme here, as in other places where Mr. Balaknath accompanies Mr. Yadav, is part of the optics of pre-

sending a united front amid talk that the current Tijara MLA was missing being an MP. "Bhupendraji and I know each other from the time when my Guruji Mahant Chandranathji was alive," Mr. Balaknath said. At a small public meeting in Gothada village, Mr. Balaknath puts forward his "request" to the waiting crowd — "like always, Gothada should be number 1, in terms of votes polled for the BJP", adding a word of caution at the end to voters not to "lend a ear to anyone who is speaking otherwise". Mr. Yadav, made to

stand on a weighing scale for a *tulabhara* (ritual weighing), then launches into his stump speech. The emphasis is on "Modi's guarantee", Prime Minister Narendra Modi's record of governance and delivery on welfare promises. "The Congress party is a sinking ship. We cannot hand over the country to them. Look at what the Congress did in Rajasthan when it was in power. They did not allow money sent for the development of the State to be used. The party allowed corruption to run rampant," he said. "Please remember Alwar and should remain Rajasthan's *singhdwar* (lion's gate)," Mr. Yadav said in the end, a reference to the 15th century Bala gila or fort, which remained impregnable for centuries — code for asking that the seat remains an impregnable bastion for the BJP. The Alwar Lok Sabha constituency has eight Assembly segments, of which the BJP holds three and the Congress five, with a mixed population of Yadavs, Muslims, Brahmmins, Vaishyas, and tribals. Talking of strategy gets Mr. Yadav animated, till a wave from a handcart at a market town reminds him that he is the candidate, and must take centre stage where he would earlier duck behind the curtain.

Congress releases list of 17 Lok Sabha candidates

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress announced names of candidates in a fresh list for the Lok Sabha election on Tuesday. Prominent candidates include Andhra Pradesh Congress chief Y.S. Sharmila Reddy from the Kadapa seat, which had been won four times by her father, the late Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, a popular former Chief Minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh; Tariq Anwar from Kathbar and Mohammed Jawed from Kishanganj in Bihar; Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka from Koraput in Odisha; and former Union Ministers M.M. Pallam Raju from Kakinada and J.D. Seelam from Bapatla — a seat reserved for a Scheduled Caste candidate — in Andhra Pradesh.

Revival plan
The party's choice of Ms. Reddy for the Kadapa Lok Sabha seat is politically significant, as the Congress — which got politically wiped out in Andhra Pradesh after the creation of Telangana — is making a clear attempt to claim YSR's legacy for its revival. The new Congress list of candidates included those for eight seats in Odisha, five in Andhra Pradesh, three in Bihar, and one in West Bengal. The party has now decided a total of 231 candidates. However, the suspense over the high-profile seats of Amethi and Raebareilly in Uttar Pradesh continues.

'It was my decision; my father did not play role in getting ticket for me'

The 25-year-old daughter of Ashok Choudhary, a Bihar Minister, says she is ready to face all challenges in Samastipur; her aim is to work for economic development of constituency, she adds

INTERVIEW
Shambhavi Kumal Choudhary



Amit Belhari
PATNA

Fielded from the reserved seat of Samastipur in Bihar by the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), 25-year-old Shambhavi Kumal Choudhary is the youngest Dalit woman to contest the Lok Sabha election in the State. Her father, Ashok Choudhary, is a Minister in the Nitish Kumar Cabinet and her grandfather Mahvir Choudhary, from the Congress, has also served as Minister. Ms. Choudhary said that her father had not played any role in getting ticket for her and that she was ready to face the chal-

lenges before her. Excerpts:
What made you take the plunge into politics?
I chose politics because I wanted to make a difference in society and I feel that politics allows you to be an agent of change. You can lead people by example. I come from a political family and, as a child, I always saw my grandfather and father serving the people of their constituencies.

NDA leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, keep attacking "dynasty politics". How do you defend your position?
I feel that because of my father, my father-in-law (former IPS officer Kishore Kumar) and my grandfather, I may have easy passage of communication. I could have had a better chance at being heard, being understood, but the whole process of getting ticket from the LJP (RV) and being able to establish the communication with party president Mr. Chirag Paswan has been an independent decision. He has a personal relationship with my husband (Saayan Kumal). So, we have been talking as friends or you could say that he has played the role of elder brother in my husband's life. It was only

when the election was announced that I told him that I have a keen interest in politics and I wanted to contest. So, the whole process of getting ticket is an independent decision and my father played no role in that.
What are the challenges you anticipate?
The biggest challenge is that I feel people will target me because I am not from Samastipur. I was not born and brought up in Samastipur but I think that it is not important for a leader to be born in a place to do good work in it. A good leader is somebody who has vision, who has the capacity to lead others and is sensitive to other people's emotions and demands. He or she should have the vision to grow the constituency economically. I know I am going to face the challenges and I am ready.

EC transfers several top officials, appoints special observers

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on Tuesday issued transfer orders for top officials in five States — Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. It also appointed special observers in West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Bihar, which have a population of over seven crore. Both steps have been taken to ensure a level playing field during the election. The decision on the transfers was taken as part of the regular review during a meeting chaired by Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar, the EC said in a statement. The officials transferred include the District Magistrate of Udaigiri, Assam; DMS and SPs of Bhojpur and Nawada districts, Bihar; SP, Deoghar, Jharkhand; DMS of Cuttack and Jagatsinghpur, SPs of Angul, Behrampur, Kurda and Rourkela, DCP, Chhattisgarh and Odisha, it said.

IN BRIEF



TRAI seeks more inputs on National Broadcasting Policy

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on Tuesday launched a consultation to seek inputs on the National Broadcasting Policy. The TRAI sought inputs on strategies to improve TV access in households and boost local manufacturing of broadcast equipment, improving India's standing as an "uplinking hub" to attract foreign broadcasters, strengthening Doordarshan and All India Radio parent Prasar Bharati, upskilling broadcast industry workers and encouraging local content, and updating policy and regulatory frameworks. The policy is likely to expand the ambit of broadcasting from linear television to streaming and online gaming.

Leaders of NSCN (IM) revolt against their 'military' chief

Fourteen top 'officers' of the military wing of the extremist National Socialist Council of Nagalim, also referred to as NSCN (Isak-Muivah), have revolted against their commander-in-chief, Lt. Gen. Anthony Ningkhin Shimray. In a statement issued by the Eastern Flank of the NSCN (I-M)'s Naga Army, the officers said the 'longjivbu' (army chief) had publicly proclaimed after his release from prison in 2016 that he was freed conditionally to bring the other armed groups in the northeast to the "so-called" mainstream.

Cash-for-query case: ED initiates probe against Mahua

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has initiated a money laundering probe against Trinamool Congress leader Mahua Moitra and Dubai-based businessman Darshan Hiranandani in connection with the cash-for-query allegations.

The ED action is based on a first information report (FIR) registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against the former Lok Sabha member and Mr. Hiranandani, following a directive from the Lokpal.

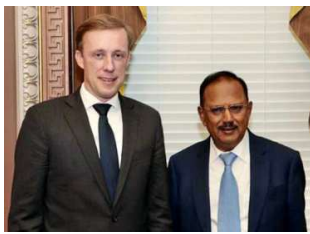
Earlier, the CBI had submitted a preliminary inquiry report before the Lokpal on its findings related to the charges. It is alleged that Ms. Moitra had shared her user identity and password of the Lok Sabha 'Member's Portal' with Mr. Hiranandani, who posted questions in her name.

Amid friction, India, U.S. plan high-level visits this month

Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra likely to be in Washington next week and U.S. NSA Jake Sullivan may visit Delhi soon: despite concerns over a strain in the relationship between the two countries, it is unlikely to affect ties, says USISPF head

Subhasini Haidar NEW DELHI

Amid concerns over a strain in the India-U.S. relationship over comments ahead of the general election, two high-level visits are being planned by Delhi and Washington, sources confirmed to The Hindu. Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra is "likely" to visit the U.S. mid-April for consultations with the U.S. State Department, and both sides are also trying to schedule a visit by U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan to Delhi, the sources said.



Diplomatic relations: (from left) U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan with National Security Adviser Ajit Doval. FILE PHOTO

Mr. Sullivan was due to visit Delhi in February for an annual meeting of the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (ICET) launched last year during National Security Adviser Ajit Doval's visit to Washington. He was also due to address the Raisina Dialogue during the visit, but both engagements were cancelled as he was asked to focus on West Asia amid growing tensions ov-

er the Israeli bombardment of Gaza at the time.

Strategic partnership

Sources said that the U.S. and India have been working on a "mutually agreeable date" for ICET discussions and that they "hope to have that finalised soon". While here, Mr. Sullivan is also expected to discuss a number of other issues in the India-U.S. strategic partnership.

Planning for the visits came as India protested the U.S. State Department's re-

peated reference to political developments in India. Last Tuesday, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) had summoned a senior U.S. diplomat and conveyed the government's "strong objections" to the State Department spokesperson's comments raising concern over the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. On Thursday, the MEA issued another strong message after the State Department compounded its remarks, adding a statement of concern over the

freezing of funds of the Opposition Congress party as well. This week, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar also countered remarks by U.S. Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti's comments in an interview to news agency ANI about U.S. allegations that Indian government agents had plotted to assassinate Khalistani separatist leader Gurbaj Singh Panun in New York, which he had called crossing a "red line".

Jaishankar remarks

"The U.S. Ambassador, obviously as an Ambassador, will say what is the thinking of his government, I will say what is the position of my government," Mr. Jaishankar said at a press conference on Monday. "In this particular case [Panun case] there has been certain information provided to us that we are investigating. And it is something we are investigating because we believe our own national security interests are involved in that investigation," he said.

Discounting the fric-

E-commerce sites told to classify food items correctly

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) on Tuesday directed all e-commerce food business operators (FBOs) to ensure the appropriate categorisation of food products being sold on their websites.

In a written communication, the Authority noted instances of licensed "proprietary foods" which are dairy-based, cereal-based, and malt-based beverage mixes being sold on e-commerce websites under the category of health or energy drinks. "The FSSAI has clarified that the term 'Health Drink' is not defined or standardised anywhere under the FSS Act 2006 or rules/regulations made thereunder. Therefore, the FSSAI has advised all e-commerce FBOs to promptly rectify this misclassification by removing or de-linking such drinks or beverages from the category of 'Health Drinks/Energy Drinks' on their websites and place such products in the appropriate category as provided under the extant law," the regulator said.

First batch of 64 Indian workers from Haryana, Uttar Pradesh leave for Israel

Subhasini Haidar NEW DELHI

The first batch of Indian construction workers bound for jobs in Israel during the conflict there was flagged off by Israeli Ambassador Naor Gilon and government officials on Tuesday.

The Israeli government raised an urgent request for construction workers in November 2023 and in December as the country faced major labour shortages after it banned thousands of Palestinians from working in Israel following the terror strikes by Hamas on October 7.

The first group of 64 workers were recruited over the past few months during a massive drive in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

They are part of a requisitioned 10,000-strong



Naor Gilon, Israeli Ambassador

This is an outcome of hard work of many... I am sure the workers become 'ambassadors' of the great relations between India and Israel

workforce that will be flown to Israel over the next few weeks, with batches due to fly almost every day on board Air India and even chartered flights, the National Skill Development Council (NSDC) said in a presentation made during the farewell event hosted by the Israeli Embassy.

While officials had earlier said they were part of business-to-business recruitment, the External Affairs Ministry subsequently clarified that the workers were travelling to Israel under a government-to-government arrangement, as part of the India-Israel mobility partnership signed in

2023. "This is an outcome of hard work of many, including NSDC India. I am sure that the workers [will] become 'ambassadors' of the great people to people relations between India and Israel," Mr. Gilon said on a social media platform.

Safety concerns

The decision to send the workers comes despite the Ministry's own advisory on the safety of Indian labour in Israel issued by the Indian Embassy in Tel Aviv on March 5, "in view of the prevailing security situation".

The Ministry declined to respond to queries over

whether the government has received any assurances that the Indians now being sent for construction work will only be assigned to "safe areas", or whether they may be employed in border areas, Gaza, or even in occupied Israeli settlements not recognised by India.

As Israel is not on the list of "Immigration Clearance Required" (ECR) countries, registration for the workers is not mandatory on the Ministry's eMigrate portal, Minister of State V. Muraleedharan said in a parliamentary reply on February 9.

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions had urged the government not to send the workers, raising questions about ethical issues given that the Indian workers are meant to replace Palestinian workers during the conflict.

With the first batch of 64 leaving on Tuesday, an estimated 1,500 Indians will leave for work in Israel over April, the officials said.

Manmohan will always be a hero to the middle class and aspirational youth: Kharage

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said on Tuesday that former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh would always be a hero to the middle class and aspirational youth, a guide to industrialists, and a benefactor to the poor, whose lives were changed by his reformist policies.

Mr. Kharge made these remarks in a letter he wrote to Dr. Singh as the former Prime Minister is set to retire as a member of the Rajya Sabha, he said. Dr. Singh had been always a source of wisdom, and urged him to continue as the moral compass of the nation by speaking to citizens as often as possible.

"As you retire from the Rajya Sabha after having served for more than three decades, an era comes to an end. Very few people



Manmohan Singh

can say they have served our nation with more dedication and more devotion than you. Very few people have accomplished as much as you for the nation and its people," Mr. Kharge said.

"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 Prime Minister, Bharat Ratna Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao," Mr. Kharge wrote.

He said it had been a privilege for him to be a Minister in Dr. Singh's Cabinet, which brought about landmark reforms. "You have shown that it is possible to pursue economic policies that were equally beneficial to large industries, young entrepreneurs, small businesses, the salaried class and the poor," Mr. Kharge wrote, noting that India had been able to lift 27 crore people out of poverty.

"You will always remain a hero to the middle class and the aspirational youth, a leader and guide to the industrialists and entrepreneurs, and a benefactor to all those poor who were able to climb out of poverty due to your economic policies," Mr. Kharge said.

Mr. Kharge claimed that though the Narendra Modi government was reluctant to give credit to him, many of its policies were simply a continuation of Dr. Singh's government.

Crossword puzzle grid with clues and solutions. Clues include: 13 Injured gazelle lost leg badly in fire (4), 14 Initially pacer involved in wrong type of bowling (4), 16 Editor opening hospital in French town (5), 18 Stop completely. Give up drug (4), 21 A very great and unconventional modern art (5-5), 23 He evaluates fools very rudely from the beginning (8), 25 Get old book, work out right away (6), 26 Every now and then, poor man called soothsayer (6), 27 Rich strong husband suppressed by wife (7). Down: 1 Guy after short conversation is showing charm (8), 2 Following debates framing republican in breaks (8), 3 Some ban extended later (4), 4 Advocate fired new extremely lethargic guard (6), 5 Angry tears final letter, that's fake (6), 6 Vanara somehow is back in city (8), 7 Bill in Brazilian port to get communication device (5), 12 Popular singer dropping leading violinist in country (5), 15 Happiness from prayer? Without doubt! (8), 17 Citizen's love for a visionary (8), 18 Question American taking over European individual share (8), 20 Outline of small craft (6), 21 Rejection of aircrew's naive reply (6), 22 Flower is packed in time (5), 24 Fights in queues (4).

Sudoku puzzle grid with numbers and difficulty rating. The grid is a 9x9 square with some numbers pre-filled. Difficulty rating is shown as five stars.

FAITH section featuring a quote by Gadhya Thrayam: "Devotees often make various appeals in their prayers to God, including the wish for a trouble-free and peaceful life. Akkarakani Srinidhi Swamy said in a discourse that in our prarthanas (prayers), we should include pleading with God to grant us the strength and opportunity to extend our best possible service to Him. Sri Pillai Lokacharaya says people sometimes forget this due to the turmoil of samaras. Saint Ramanuja, considered the manifestation of Adishesha, had the sole aim of serving God. The Acharya prayed that God would extend His blessings to us so that we could serve Him. The Acharya suggested the easiest mode of worship, saranagathi or surrender, for the benefit of the people. The Upanishads describe saranagathi in detail. It is appreciated and followed by Acharyas and noblemen. The scriptures say it is equally relished by God. Keeping in mind the above three, Sri Ramanuja, through his work, exemplified the concept of surrender. Gadhya denotes the prose form (in the order of Saranagathi Gadhya, Sri Ranga Gadhya and Sri Vaikunta Gadhya), and thrayam refers to three. Saranagathi to Lord Sri Ranganatha will result in moksha in Sri Vaikunta. Saranagathi Gadhya is an explanatory note to the 'Dwaya Mantra'. Thondaradipodi Azhwar says he would not cherish even the eternal world except the feet of Lord Ranganatha (Acharu perum vendan Aranga ma nazar ulane). Thiruppanazhwar says Lord Ranganatha undergoes severe penance to extend relief and to retrieve us (Ghora ma thavam sei kod)."

Page footer containing logos for CM, YK, and other entities, along with a small graphic of a person's face.

How has Kahneman's work in psychology withstood the test of time?

Psychology, behavioural economics and science, public policy, and many other fields owe a great debt to the work of Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky. It couldn't be generalised to more than a few settings or contexts, but that shouldn't spell the end of their mission to rethink how people think

Anirudh Tagat
Hansika Kapoor

In March 27, one of the pioneers of psychology and economics research, Daniel Kahneman, passed away. Kahneman was a psychologist who spent a large part of his career at Princeton University. He did some of his best known work with Amos Tversky, a mathematical psychologist who passed away in 1996.

No stranger to fame
Kahneman and Tversky made substantial contributions to the field of judgement and decision-making, which deals with how human beings make choices in different situations. They published a series of pioneering research papers in the 1980s that integrated insights from psychology and economics to better understand human behaviour at large. Together, they form the bedrock of the contemporary field of behavioural economics, despite explicitly never having had the intention for their work to be part of economics.

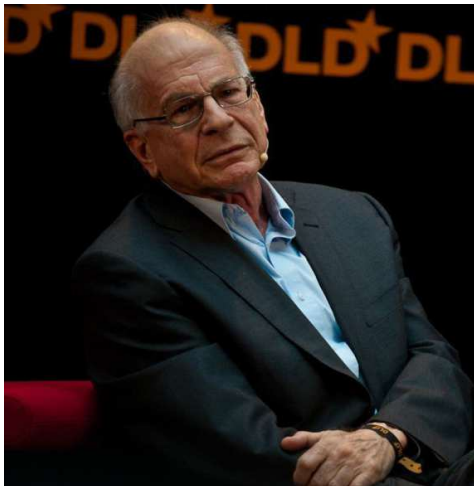
Kahneman was also not a stranger to fame and attention outside of academia. His 2011 book *Thinking Fast and Slow* is among the best-selling books in psychology and business, and his partnership with Tversky was famously the subject of Michael Lewis' 2016 book *The Undoing Project*.

But before embarking on his unspoken mission to change the face of psychology and economics, Kahneman's work was concerned with attention and perception, which are the core cognitive faculties that often precede action, or for that matter inaction.

Attention and decision-making
His first book, *Attention and Effort* (1973), summarised the then-state-of-the-art literature on divided attention, which is the bane of multi-tasking; focused attention, i.e., what moves in and out of an individual's awareness; and selective attention. He also co-authored some other papers with Anne Triesman, a leading cognitive psychologist, and his wife on the topics of attention, memory, recall, and visual perception. Triesman passed away in 2018.

His book *Judgement Under Uncertainty* (1982) cemented the connections between Kahneman's early work in mental effort and the then emerging area of decision-making. Their original 1974 paper, published in the general-interest journal *Science*, has nearly 50,000 citations, according to Google Scholar, making it one of the most influential papers in psychology.

For example, one of the major



Kahneman and Tversky published a series of pioneering papers that integrated insights from psychology and economics to better understand human behaviour at large. ERIK SOLHEIM (CC BY-SA 3.0)

postulates of the duo's prospect theory deals with loss aversion. They hypothesised that individuals are more sensitive to loss than an equivalent amount of gain, and that, in general, losses loom larger on an individual's mind. They were able to prove this by running laboratory experiments in which they compared outcomes framed as gains and losses.

The results changed the world of decision-making, which previously held that individuals only looked at outcomes in an absolute way, not as changes in outcomes. For example, if someone found an unclaimed \$500 note on the ground versus if they suddenly realised a \$500 note was missing from their wallet, loss aversion contended that the person would experience the loss more strongly than the gain.

Limits on loss aversion

Kahneman and Tversky's experiments, however, didn't explicitly delve into the context in which loss aversion manifests in the human psyche. For example, they did not test whether loss aversion is sensitive to the stakes of a decision (e.g. a choice such as gaining or losing a high-valued stock or asset).



Kahneman was a psychologist who spent a large part of his career at Princeton University. He did some of his best known work with Amos Tversky, a mathematical psychologist who passed away in 1996

In later studies (Zeif and Yechiam 2022), other psychologists found that loss aversion actually only showed up when people were dealing with very large losses, those worth more than around \$40 (\$3,300). Loss aversion was also found to be somewhat context-specific. One 2019 study (Mrkva et al.) found it was more common in decisions related to automobile purchases and household financial decisions.

Nonetheless, when he won the economics Nobel Prize in 2002 with experimental economist Vernon L. Smith, it was a formal recognition of the role psychological insights, as Kahneman and his collaborators had inferred them, played in economics. Although the Nobel Prize has never been awarded

posthumously, Kahneman has said his half of the prize was shared with Tversky, to honour their joint work.

Measuring happiness

Kahneman also made substantial contributions to the study of happiness and well-being later. His work focused on measuring happiness using multiple methods. One, called the day reconstruction method, asked participants to think about their previous day and break it up into episodes. For each episode, a participant had to calculate the happiness they experienced as the difference between a rating of "happy" (worth +6 points) and other ratings for "tense," "depressed" or "angry" (each worth -6 points). This measure, as well as some others, drew from Kahneman's theory of hedonic psychology, which suggests that people value experiences, not just outcomes.

Such advances in measurements were important because scholars were beginning to realise they couldn't measure individual well-being in economic terms alone. An important study by Anna Alexandrova in 2005 suggested such an approach only accounted for a part of subjective well-being, not for happiness as an experience and an attitude. Kahneman's work also identified how high income could impact life satisfaction but not really happiness.

Rethinking thinking

Kahneman's legacy is multifold. Among his most influential works is the dichotomy between System 1 and System 2 thinking. The former is quick, intuitive, and nearly automatic, whereas the latter is slow, deliberative, and cautious. Psychologists have studied and verified the two processes extensively.

But then, like some of his other work, including loss aversion, experts realised Kahneman didn't have the full picture: they found System 1/2 may not apply across cultures, especially in non-WEIRD (Western, educated, industrialised, rich, and democratic) contexts.

Even so, psychology, behavioural economics, science, public policy, and many other fields owe a great debt to Kahneman's work. His work couldn't be generalised to more than a few settings or contexts, but that shouldn't spell the end of Kahneman's mission to rethink how people think. Much like other foundational work in the behavioural sciences, it has instead given us a better idea of where to begin.

(Anirudh Tagat and Hansika Kapoor are researchers at the Departments of Economics and Psychology, respectively, at Monk Prayogshala.)

THE GIST

Kahneman and Tversky's work forms the bedrock of the contemporary field of behavioural economics, despite them never explicitly having had the intention for it to be part of economics

One of the duo's major postulates dealt with loss aversion. They hypothesised that individuals are more sensitive to loss than an equivalent amount of gain, and that, in general, losses loom larger on an individual's mind

Kahneman's theory of hedonic psychology, part of his study of happiness and well-being, suggested that people value experiences, not just outcomes

BIG SHOT



Venezuela is battling a record number of wildfires as a climate-change-driven drought plagues the Amazon rainforest region. Satellites registered more than 30,200 fire points in Venezuela from January to March, the highest level for that period since 1999, according to Brazil's Inpe research agency. Here, volunteers of the Central University of Venezuela firefighter brigade battle a wildfire in Maracay, Venezuela, on March 29. REUTERS

QUESTION CORNER

How does a fridge keep biscuits crisp?

Q: When biscuits are kept in cool air, they lose their crispness.

Then how do they remain crisp when kept in a fridge?

A: Moisture content in fresh biscuits is about 5% after baking resulting in crisp texture and good storage stability. When they are left open in air, they absorb moisture and lose their crispness. The relative humidity in the atmosphere can vary from about 40% (during summer) to 90% (on a cool, rainy day).

Inside a fridge, the temperature is kept low by cooling the air. The water molecules present inside the fridge condense on the cooling coils (evaporator coils) and so the humidity is also low (the air is moisture-free). This moisture appears as frost. As a result the biscuits remain cool as well as crisp.

(M. Elavarasan, Chennai)



Water molecules inside the fridge condense on the cooling coils and this keeps humidity low. ADITYA KULKARNI/UNSPASH

For feedback and suggestions for Science, please write to science@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Daily page'



A reform window

Buoyant GST revenues create a chance to prioritise its overhaul

The financial year 2023-24 appears to have ended on a high on the revenue front. Net direct tax collections rose 19.9% by mid-March to hit 97% of revised Budget targets, while the Goods and Services Tax (GST) has yielded a robust ₹20.18 lakh crore. Gross GST revenues in March, for transactions undertaken in February, crossed ₹1.78 lakh crore, the second highest tally since the rollout of the indirect tax six and a half years ago. The only month when collection stood higher was in April 2023, aided by year-end compliance. There is a good chance the same compliances effect will lift this month's tally past ₹2 lakh crore, marking a fresh high. Average monthly collections have grown 11.6% in 2023-24 to over ₹1.68 lakh crore. The growth may be lower than the previous year's 21.8% uptick but establishes a new normal for revenues that the coming year can build on. This should settle the Centre's concerns that the GST has not yielded expected returns. Central GST collections in 2023-24 have overshoot revised estimates presented in the interim Budget and the Finance Ministry may have to revise its 2024-25 targets when it presents the full Budget as those can now be achieved even if growth slips below 10%.

Some of the excess in collections may well stem from tax demands raised for past years and tightening the screws on known evasion routes such as fake invoices and fraudulent input tax credits. Yet, an uptick in growth of net GST revenues, which the government has started revealing since last month, and the rise in gross collections from domestic transactions (7.6% compared with 13.6% in February) suggest economic activity has been busy in the last quarter of 2023-24. Perhaps, the only worry is a 5% decline in GST on goods imports during March, from an 8.5% rise in February, which may signal some casualties. The airstrikes and bombing in Rafah too have intensified in the past few days. Reports also indicate Israel targeting Southern Lebanon, killing civilians. Meanwhile, Hezbollah has intensified its missile strikes into Northern Israel, inflicting damage to key military assets and loss of lives. Houthis in the south continue to disrupt and block Israeli, U.S. and British ships in the Red Sea, causing heavy economic losses for Israel and

A new low

The U.S. is turning into an enabler of Israel's atrocities in Gaza

When it comes to Israel's military atrocities, the U.S. has historically had high tolerance levels. It never questions Israel's nuclear arms. It ignores investigations reports that have accused Israel of committing war crimes. It hardly does anything to hold Israel accountable for the continuing occupation of the Palestinian territories flouting international laws and norms. But even by America's standards, Joe Biden's policy towards Israel's war is a new low for the 'leader of the free world'. It took five and a half months of war, in which over 32,000 Palestinians were killed, 70,000 injured and more than 90% of the besieged enclave's population displaced, for the Biden administration to let a UN Security Council resolution, demanding an immediate ceasefire, pass. But the U.S., which abstained from voting, did nothing to enforce the resolution. Ever since the war began on October 7, the Biden administration has delivered more than 100 military sales to Israel. Just last week, when the world was raising concerns about a possible Israeli invasion of Rafah, the southern-most town of Gaza, Washington cleared the sales of more bombs and warplanes for Israel.

While Israel and the U.S. are arguably the closest two nation-states can get to each other, in the past, American Presidents had used hard pressure to influence Israel's decision making. In 1956, during the Suez crisis, U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower threatened to cut off American aid unless Israel withdrew from Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. And Israel complied. In the 1970s, President Jimmy Carter's carrot and stick policy played a crucial role in the peace process that resulted in the historic Camp David Agreement. In 1981, even Ronald Reagan, the Republican President known for his pro-Israel policies, initially withheld sales of F-16s, asking Israel to withdraw from Lebanon. But, for some strange reasons, despite domestic concerns and international criticism, Democratic President Biden continues to back Israel in one of his country's worst massacres of Palestinians. The UN has warned that the enclave is on the brink of famine. The Biden administration itself has admitted that nearly all Gazans are hungry. And dozens are getting killed from gun shots, in air strikes, stampedes and under air drops of food deliveries. If the U.S., which at least rhetorically takes pride in its commitment to human rights, cannot see this suffering of over two million Palestinians, it will go down in history as an enabler of this violence. Mr. Biden must start behaving as a statesman. His administration has the leverage to influence Israel's behaviour. It should call for an immediate ceasefire and more aid into Gaza and stop all arms supplies to the Jewish state if it continues the war.

In March 25, 2024, there was finally some good news in the ongoing conflict in Gaza when the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted a resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza during Ramadan, while also calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. This was the UNSC's first successfully passed resolution calling for a ceasefire since the war in the Gaza Strip following the brutal terror attack by Hamas last October in southern Israel. The previous four resolutions in the UNSC had failed due to veto, thrice exercised by the United States. The U.S., however, abstained this time and 'let the resolution pass'.

The resolution this time drew mixed reactions. Israel was the first to react, with its Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu alleging that the U.S. had "abandoned its policy in the UN" and was, therefore, harming the war effort and the measures for the release of Israeli hostages in Hamas's custody. Israel also cancelled the visit of its ministerial delegation to Washington which was scheduled to discuss the offensive in Rafah and other options. In an almost immediate U-turn, under Israeli pressure, the U.S. came out with a statement that the UN Resolution is 'non-binding' and that Israel can continue what it is doing in Gaza, making a mockery of the whole process in the UNSC. Hamas, on the other hand, initially welcomed the ceasefire resolution, but on March 26, reiterated its position on a permanent ceasefire accompanied by a complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. As a result, the initial euphoria and hopes for an early ceasefire have very quickly turned into a 'back to square one' position.

The war grinds on

With no assurance that the ceasefire will actually take shape, the focus is now back to the joint efforts of Egypt and Qatar – these countries have been separately negotiating for an early ceasefire. Meanwhile, Israel has upped the ante. It launched an attack on the Al Shifa hospital in Gaza for the second time, again resulting in heavy civilian casualties. The airstrikes and bombing in Rafah too have intensified in the past few days. Reports also indicate Israel targeting Southern Lebanon, killing civilians. Meanwhile, Hezbollah has intensified its missile strikes into Northern Israel, inflicting damage to key military assets and loss of lives. Houthis in the south continue to disrupt and block Israeli, U.S. and British ships in the Red Sea, causing heavy economic losses for Israel and



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Gaza is an unwinnable conflict and Israel and Palestine, bound by geography and destiny, will need to search for major climb-downs

its allies. As in the latest estimates, the war in Gaza has resulted in the loss of over 32,000 lives in Gaza. Meanwhile, in a clear act of provocation, the U.S. finally made a messy exit in August 2021. The U.S. war in Iraq in 2003 is another example of a military offensive without a clearly defined exit strategy. The result? Although the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, was defeated within weeks, the war of attrition continued for years. The ongoing Russia-Ukraine war too has dragged on for over two years with no ceasefire or exit.

War objectives, their status

When Israel launched its counter-offensive into Gaza on October 7, it stated three clear aims: to flatten Gaza; eliminate Hamas, and get back all its hostages. With the war well into its sixth month, it is important to review each of these aims. Yes, Israel has flattened Gaza, in fact so badly that many who have been on the ground seem to suggest that Gaza will be virtually uninhabitable for years. Israel has also, in the past few weeks, flattened a kilometre-wide stretch along the border with Gaza, with the intention of converting it into a buffer zone later.

Second, the destruction of Hamas. The best estimates suggest that Israel has succeeded in eliminating only 30% of an estimated 30,000 Hamas fighters. Hamas's fighting potential remains intact while the supply of rockets and ammunition has not dried up. Also, the mastermind of Hamas's military operations, Yahya Sinwar, continues to evade Israeli forces.

Third, except for the exchange of a few hostages during a brief 'humanitarian pause' last November, Israel has not been able to rescue its hostages. In fact, around 32 hostages are reported to have been killed in cross fire in the war, leading to an uproar and protests against Mr. Netanyahu in Israel.

For Hamas, it was a question of two clear objectives. The first is to remind the world that while talks of normalisation and reconciliation between Israel and the Arab world could go on, the cause for a Palestinian state could not be lost sight of. The second is to expose to the world, and especially its support base, the false sense of the invincibility of the Israeli military and its intelligence services. Hamas has succeeded on both counts. When it unleashed terror on Israel on October 7, Hamas would have calculated the costs of an Israeli counter-offensive into Gaza. For Hamas, it was not about winning the war militarily but making its voice heard.

It is always easy to start a war but very difficult to decide when and how to call it off. Ceasefires often occur more due to stalemated situations or international pressure and less on account of military and political objectives. The U.S. war in

Afghanistan is a classic example. Launched in October 2001 with the aim of 'finishing off Al-Qaeda', it became a war that dragged on till the U.S. finally made a messy exit in August 2021. The U.S. war in Iraq in 2003 is another example of a military offensive without a clearly defined exit strategy. The result? Although the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, was defeated within weeks, the war of attrition continued for years. The ongoing Russia-Ukraine war too has dragged on for over two years with no ceasefire or exit.

Impact on Israel

Israel, therefore, has to be mindful of the possibilities and the consequences of a prolonged conflict which has military, economic and political costs. The Israeli Army has suffered losses and injuries to its personnel. Its economy is shrinking rapidly, with some estimates showing a decline of almost 20%. Politically, it is becoming difficult for Mr. Netanyahu to hold on to his position, domestically and internationally. The U.S., Israel's staunchest ally, has, in the past few weeks, made it clear that Israel has to restrain itself and cannot bank upon blanket support for any Israeli action in Gaza.

Israel launched the offensive in a state of rage and revenge. However, after the initial onslaught, and instead of reviewing its war strategy and politico-military objectives, it continues to unleash punitive strikes into Gaza. Israel, therefore, needs to work out a clear and achievable end state. Militarily, Gaza has been defeated, but Hamas, as an organisation, is unlikely to be eliminated.

What is the most viable option then for Israel? An early ceasefire, withdrawal of forces from the Gaza Strip and using the recently flattened one kilometre strip along the Gaza border as surveillance cum buffer zone, under 24x7 surveillance, to prevent a recurrence of 'another 07th October', could be a possibility. On hostages, Hamas would most likely agree to an exchange of hostages once Israel agrees to the above.

When it relates to the future and a two-state solution, all parties will have to go back to the drawing board and search for a time-bound and acceptable solution. Israel and Palestine are bound by geography and destiny and the solution for a peaceful future will have to include major compromises and climb-downs from previously stated positions. If all this is agreed upon, both sides can then ensure a face-saving and smart exit from what is an unwinnable war in Gaza.

Poll campaigns in India must reflect climate issues

The State of the Global Climate report that was released recently is cause for concern. The report, by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) of the United Nations, states that 2023 was the hottest year in the recorded history of the planet. Moreover, the average temperature rise from pre-industrial levels has been 1.45 °C, with a margin of uncertainty of ±0.12 °C. The temperature rise is tantalisingly close to breaking the agreed limit of 1.5 °C by different nations. Such a rise in global temperatures, also popularly known as global warming, is definitely alarming.

The WMO report states that 2023 was not only the warmest year by a clear margin but also one where many records were breached. For instance, records for a rise in ocean temperatures, glacier retreat and diminishing Antarctic ice cover were also broken. Moreover, evident sea level rise around the planet has also been observed. Consequently, the frequency of extreme weather events such as heat waves, torrential rains and tropical cyclones has increased. It is said that public memory is short. However, every reader of this daily and also article is sure to recall extreme weather events. Such events have disrupted many activities including agriculture, and are having a significant impact on socio-economic developments around the world. The WMO report is, therefore, extremely worrisome, making it imperative to trigger collective public action – something similar to what happened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Progress and mitigatory steps

As is well known, industrial progress since the mid-18th century has improved the quality of life significantly.

The principal drivers of this progress have been mechanisation and technology-led



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Political parties should recognise that elections in India have the potential to generate the momentum for climate justice

innovations in all sectors. Among other things, exploitation of natural resources to drive progress has grown considerably in the post-industrial Revolution period. Unfortunately, the apparent progress driven by the use of natural resources has also had an adverse impact on the environment. Dependence on natural resources for energy requirements has had enormous bearing on the climate. The use of fossil fuels, for example, has led to large emissions of greenhouse gases, leading directly to the rise in global temperatures.

Recognising the gravity of the climate situation and the urgency to address it comprehensively, has led to all nations agreeing, in what is famously known as the Paris agreement, to holding the temperature rise to well below 2 °C from that in pre-industrial times, and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5 °C. Entered into force on November 4, 2016, it became a legally binding international treaty. Since then, many nations have taken steps to limit carbon emissions, with some notable examples in the renewable power sector.

In the power sector in India, for example, the government announced the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC). The National Solar Mission was one of the missions that came under the NAPCC. India has also announced the National Green Hydrogen Mission, making a strong commitment to the energy transition plan. Thus, although the Paris agreement has seen a positive intent of action from different nations, the latest WMO report raises fundamental questions. Have we acted too late? Or, are we doing too little? Or, have public commitments fallen short of expectations on such action plans?

Election season as opportunity

It is election season in many democracies around the world. In India, the election season has

expectedly brought in festivities, enthusiastic audiences to televisions, passionate debates in every corner of the country and hope that the outcome of the elections will change lives. Indeed, the hope that every political party plants in the minds of voters and the promises that are made in every election, make people anxiously anticipate the outcome of the elections. The State of the Global Climate report, therefore, has arrived at the right time to initiate discussion across the political spectrum.

In this election season, the WMO report should result in an awakening not only for all of humanity, but also, specifically, for all political parties. The anxiety over climate change expressed by the WMO, the UN and scientific fraternity should motivate parties across the political spectrum to make their action plans clear. People will wholeheartedly welcome stands taken by political parties on such an important issue.

Political parties, for example, must commit themselves to enhancing public awareness on climate change and clearly defining steps to reduce global warming. Political differences in approaching both these questions may persist, but the larger public interest would be served by addressing these issues, thereby giving voters a chance to assess these views. Political parties may also wish to spell out the steps that they would undertake to reduce the impact of global warming on India. If India were looking to find its rightful place in the global order, and be counted as a true world power in the 'Amrit Kaal', the demands on its leadership on climate change actions will be watched. All political parties are pitching the agenda of shaping India's economic prosperity and the well-being of its people. This is an agenda which would be incomplete without addressing the core issue of a climate change action plan.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#Katchatheevu

By raking up the Katchatheevu 'issue' just before the first phase of the Lok Sabha elections, and at the fag end of his second consecutive tenure, the Prime Minister has only betrayed his desperation for his party to get a firmer political toehold in Tamil Nadu. The top leader does not seem to have been briefed adequately on the subject, as the Editorial and reports in *The Hindu* (April 2) show. And, his External Affairs Minister seems to have scored a self-goal. One hopes that the Prime Minister would heed the advice given by some of

India's former and distinguished diplomats (Inside pages, 'Ex-diplomats caution govt. on Katchatheevu', April 2). Electoral expediency should not be allowed to shape the contours of India's foreign policy.

One wonders why the Prime Minister has raked up an issue that will only result in controversy. How will it help the BJP electorally?

Joseph Kurian, Kochi, Kerala

India has strained relations with Pakistan and the

Maldives. The Opposition parties in Bangladesh and in Nepal have been challenging their governments over their 'close ties' with India. Do we now require introducing a point of tension with Sri Lanka? Does this regime think that it can ride roughshod over Colombo just because it helped Colombo during Sri Lanka's economic troubles? Even if the Sri Lankan government refrains from making comments now, the Opposition in that country is sure to retaliate at an opportune moment.

Hemachandra Basappa, Bengaluru

What a clever ploy to divert attention from the issue of alleged Chinese incursions in the north of India! It is unfortunate that the Opposition in India is unable to confront the government on the government's real failures.

The sharp political attack on the Congress for 'ceding' Katchatheevu island to Sri Lanka in 1974 is quixotic to say the least. Raking up an issue that is 50 years old is nothing but politics and a case of political expediency. It would be better for the Centre to introspect on the

damning silence that it has maintained over alleged Chinese incursions into India. It would also be immensely beneficial if elections are fought on livelihood issues that confront the masses rather than regaling the hordes of parties and other nations over a subject that is done and dusted.

J. Anantha Padmanabhan, Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu

Baltimore accident
The crash of the ship *Dali* into the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore, the destruction of the bridge, and the economic impact, reminded me of mariner

concerns over lurking dangers at ports. I have served on 13 Navy ships, and as a conning officer and navigator, I remember being on total alert as we transited harbours through designated channels. We typically maintained enough speed at about five knots to provide headway for steering, and always had two to four tugboats assisting us. All port authorities should review their ship transit policies and procedures and require all major sea-going vessels to utilise tugboats at every port.

Donald Moskowitz, Londonderry, NH, U.S.

People are losing control over phones

The Internet was designed to evolve in a distributed fashion. Indicating that machines which were connected to the Internet were given the power to decide who people should talk to for a service in which they are interested. In the entire design of the network layer, there were no gatekeepers except for very basic functionality such as allocation of Internet Protocol addresses and root servers for resolving top-level domains like .com, .org, and .net. Anyone could connect to the Internet and start providing or consuming a service.

As a result, the Internet saw rapid growth in the 1990s and 2000s. Many services such as emails, websites, and chats came up and became an important part of the Internet ecosystem. They enabled the sharing of information and e-commerce. To access a website, all we needed was a web browser. The standardisation of protocols and languages made this easy. In the beginning, Yahoo provided a directory of websites under various categories. As the number of websites exploded, a search engine, Google, came up to quickly provide a list of web pages that matched our search queries.

Ceding control

And then came mobile devices. When Apple came up with the iPhone, everyone began porting their websites so that these sites could be easily viewed on small hand-held devices. Apple also urged third-party developers to build web applications (apps) that could run on its Safari browsers. But then developers wanted the same control over the devices that Apple had. They wanted the ability to ship native apps on these hand-held devices. Apple opened the App Store for third-party native code on July 10, 2008.

Apps are software programs that can run natively on mobile phones. Running untrusted software and that too natively is a big security nightmare. With direct access to the machines,



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apps can exploit local privilege escalation vulnerabilities and get control over the devices. This is something that cannot be exploited remotely. Understanding the risk of running untrusted native code, Google's security team came up with a wonderful sandbox called Native Client in 2009. With few changes to the software, it can run safely on user devices. But none of that materialised and the app stores continue to allow apps as usual.

Web standards, on the other hand, evolved into accepting JavaScript as a safe-enough language to do client side computing. Supported by browsers, it became the standard for running untrusted software on users' machines. It presented a decent sandbox that eliminated a lot of security threats, so the people could browse untrusted websites without much danger. Over time, JavaScript matured, hardened, and presented a decent way to run untrusted code.

But businesses loved the apps. It meant they could run their native code on millions of machines, unhindered. They started pushing their users to install their apps rather than providing their services through the standardised browser. The users were told that the apps would provide a far more "immersive" experience than a website could ever give. But to get such an experience, users needed to cede control over their SMSs, photos, videos, and location. They also had to lose the controls that a web browser provided, such as blocking advertisements.

The gatekeepers, app stores, tried to allay the fears of users that these apps are safe. Yet, newspapers are filled with stories on how app stores contain apps with malware, or commit financial frauds, or even steal private information. Apps were wonderful for everyone except the users who have been at the receiving end of various unscrupulous apps. Developers can publish their apps on app stores and get users to

install their apps (untrusted native code) on their phones just because the app stores say they are safe.

A decade ago, I had highlighted these security issues with the apps and why web browsers are a better alternative. But people loved apps, businesses loved apps, and now the app stores love apps because they can impose an app tax ranging from 15% to 30%. The businesses, which loved apps for the control they got over the users, are now enraged. They believe that they had only signed up to get control over the users and not to share revenue.

Anti-trust cases have been filed across the globe against organisations such as Google for abusing their dominant position. Even when Epic Games won its court cases, there was little solace as Apple kicked out Epic Games from its App Store. Google lost its Play Store case against the Competition Commission of India, which ruled that Google is abusing its dominant position and fined it ₹1,337 crore. But Google came back with a refreshed version of the app tax called it User Choice Billing and started removing apps from the Play Store.

A raging battle

The battle between businesses and app stores is far from being settled. It seems unlikely that the app stores will easily leave out the lucrative revenue coming from the app tax. Instead of rethinking whether we need to go back to web services accessible on a web browser, businesses want an app store that doesn't have any app tax. Some have even advocated an Indian app store in national spirit.

Irrespective of how this battle between app stores, business, and courts pans out, it should be clear to the users that apps are not the way they should have chosen to access Internet services. The "immersive" experience was drowning the users earlier and is now drowning the users. Developers can publish their apps on app stores and get users to

Helping the hills breathe easy

Restricting traffic on the ghat roads leading to Ooty and Kodaikanal is welcome

STATE OF PLAY

Mohamed Imanullah S. mohamedimran.s@thehindu.co.in



Ooty and Kodaikanal, known respectively as the 'Queen of Hill Stations' and the 'Princess of Hill Stations', in Tamil Nadu have been choking with traffic for some time now. Heavy and unregulated tourist movement has taken a heavy toll on these hills forcing the Madras High Court and the State government to step in and contemplate certain restrictions.

Nudged by a special Division Bench of Justices N. Sathish Kumar and D. Bhārathā Chakravarthy, constituted to hear forest-related cases, the State government has in-principle agreed to control vehicular movement by fixing a 'carrying capacity' for the ghat roads after conducting scientific studies through IIT Madras and Anna University.

Advocate General P.S. Raman recently informed the court that the decision was taken at a high-level committee meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Shiv Das Meena. If the plan fructifies, the government will fix a cap on the number of motor vehicles that will be permitted to ply on the ghat roads every day.

The Bench was seized of a number of cases related to several issues in both Nilgiris and Dindigul districts, where the two hill stations are located. These include elephant poaching, electrocution of elephants, deaths of elephants on railway tracks, eradication of exotic and invasive species from forests, and the banning of plastics.

It was while hearing the plea to ban plastics in the hill stations that the Bench ordered the establishment of

On being asked to submit data on vehicular movement, Nilgiris Collector M. Aruna told the court that while on average, around 2,000 vehicles ply on the ghat roads every day, during tourist seasons the number increases to about 20,000 a day.

Providing a rough estimate of the accommodations available in the district, she said 1,035 commercial buildings had 5,620 rooms which could accommodate approximately 20,000 people at a time. However, a detailed scientific assessment would have to be carried out before fixing the carrying capacity for the ghat roads, she said.

After taking note of her submissions and finding that the ultimate decision on fixing carrying capacity could be taken only by the State government, the judges requested the Advocate General to assist the court in the matter by taking the issue to the notice of the Chief Secretary.

The Advocate General reversed order and the government had in-principle accepted the court's suggestion on fixing a carrying capacity. He said scientific assessments would be carried out on the ghat roads leading to both Ooty and Kodaikanal and orders for commencing the work would be issued after the completion of the Labhā polls.

This is a welcome initiative. The two popular hill stations, which are picturesque and boast of a pleasant climate, have been bursting at their seams and struggling to cope with the pressure on their infrastructure for a few decades now. What Ooty and Kodaikanal, which are tourism-dependent economies, urgently need are these measures that will ensure sustainable tourism and enable the protection of the environment.

Indian Americans are the least poor among Asian Americans

Half the Asian Americans who lived in poverty said that their 'American dream' was out of reach

DATA POINT

The Hindu Data Team

Only 6% of Indian Americans lived along or below the poverty line as of 2022 in the United States. This is the lowest share among the various Asian groups that live in the country, according to a recent Pew Research Center report. Most Asian Americans who lived in poverty felt that their 'American dream' was out of reach as they struggled to pay bills and turned to charities, friends, and family for food and employment. Pew's analysis was based on the U.S. Census Bureau's 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) and Pew Research Center's 2022-23 survey of Asian American adults, conducted between July 2022 and January 2023, with 7,006 respondents.

While Asian Americans are considered educationally and financially successful compared to other racial and ethnic groups, there are wide economic and educational differences within the group. As Chart 1 shows, the highest poverty rates were seen among Burmese (19%), Hmong (17%), and Mongolian (16%) Americans, while the lowest poverty rates were seen among Indian (6%), Sri Lankan (6%) and Filipino (7%) Americans. Chinese, Bangladeshi, and Pakistani-origin Americans were in the middle with poverty rates of 11%, 12% and 13%, respectively.

Chart 2 shows the share of Asians living below and above the poverty line across various demographics. Among Asians living along or below the poverty line, 57% were immigrants and 43% were born in the U.S. About 23% of them were teenagers, 26% were aged 18-29, and 21% were aged 30-49. Close to half of them had completed high school or less. The poverty levels among those with college degrees saw a drastic decline. Close to 42% of Asian adults who lived near or below the poverty

line in the U.S. said they had trouble paying bills in the past year, compared with just 17% of those who lived above the poverty line. Similarly, 38% and 33% of those who lived near or below the poverty line had got food from a charity and had problems paying rent/mortgage in the past year, respectively, compared with just 6% and 11% among those above the poverty line, respectively. Moreover, 28% of those near or below the poverty line had trouble paying for medical care in the last year, compared with 14% above the poverty line. Chart 3 shows the share of Asian adults above and below the poverty line who faced a type of financial challenge in the last year.

More than 60% of Asian adults living near or below the poverty line also said they turned to family or friends to help with bills, housing, food, or jobs. Close to 50% sought help from local, state, or federal governments. Nearly 21% said they took help from religious institutions such as churches or temples, while 13% had turned to Asian community groups.

A third of Asian immigrants who came to the U.S. due to conflict or fear of persecution in their home countries said they received help from governments for various expenses and employment. In contrast, a smaller share of Asian immigrants who came for educational opportunities (14%) or economic opportunities (16%) or who migrated to be with family (25%) said the same.

Roughly half the Asian Americans who lived in poverty said their American dream was out of reach. About 36% said they were on their way to achieving it, while only 15% said they had achieved the dream (Chart 4). On the other hand, of those living above the poverty line, a large share was optimistic about their chance of realising their dream. As many as 46% said they were on their way to achieving it, 27% said they had already achieved it, while only 26% said their dream was out of reach.

Between doom and the dream

The charts were sourced from the Pew Research Center's report on Asian Americans living in poverty



Chart 1: The chart shows origin-wise share of Asian Americans who lived along or below the poverty line as of 2022

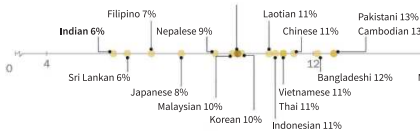


Chart 2: The chart shows the share of Asian Americans living along or below poverty line by their nativity, age, employment status and education level

Chart 3: Share of Asian Americans who faced a financial challenge last year

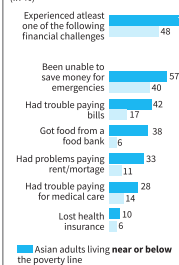
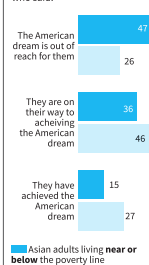


Chart 4: The chart shows the share of Asian Americans who said:



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 3, 1974

War crimes trial issue may be settled at Delhi meet

New Delhi, April 2: The Foreign Ministers of India and Bangladesh will commence their preparatory talks tomorrow for working out a common approach to the tripartite meeting with Pakistan, which begins this week-end amid expectations of a major breakthrough in opening a new era of peace and stability in the subcontinent.

These Indo-Bangla talks were to have been held at the highest level between Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Delhi last week, in view of the great importance being attached by India and Bangladesh to a successful outcome of the dialogue with Pakistan.

But the Sheikh had to cancel the Delhi visit because of his illness which required prolonged treatment in the Soviet Union. So the Bangladesh Foreign Minister, Dr. Kamal Hossain, arrived-to-day for consultations with his Indian counterpart, Mr. Swaran Singh, on how the two countries should proceed during the discussions with Pakistan.

Dr. Hossain, who has come three days ahead of the tripartite meeting - to deliver the Ambedkar Memorial Lectures - stressed, in his talk with pressmen before his departure from Dacca and on his arrival in Delhi, the need for a common approach, policy and strategy between India and Bangladesh in dealing with Pakistan. And it was disclosed to-day that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman himself would be stopping over in Delhi on his way back from the Soviet Union for a detailed review of the results of the tripartite discussions.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 3, 1924

Asiaties on British trade ships

London, April 1: In the Commons to-day replying to Commander Kenworthy, Mr. Kebb said that enquiries had hitherto not confirmed the statement that the number of Asiatics employed on British home trade ships had increased. He was not in a position to propose action in that respect. Earl Winterton declared there was a very strong feeling among Indians against any proposal to exclude from British ships His Majesty's Indian subjects, especially in view of the gallant services they had rendered to Britain in war time.

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Amount raised by MoRTH through asset monetisation in FY24

40,314 in ₹ crore. Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) raised the amount against the target of ₹28,968 crore, according to officials. PTI

The amount collected by main-board IPOs in FY24

62,000 in ₹ crore. Strong participation of retail investors, and robust flows from institutional investors helped 76 companies raise the amount. PTI

People flee Haitian capital in three weeks of gang violence

53,125 people. Between March 8 and March 27, people left Port-au-Prince, according to a report from the UN's International Organization. AFP

Layoffs of employees at troubled edtech firm Byju's

500 Byju's is laying off its staff, amid a financial crunch, sources said, even as the edtech firm maintained that it is in the final stages of business restructuring to streamline operations. PTI

Job openings in the United States in February

8.8 in million. U.S. job openings showed a modest rise in February from 8.75 million in January, staying at historically high levels. AP

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Is the Katchatheevu islet disputed?

How has the Katchatheevu issue been used by political parties in Tamil Nadu, especially during election seasons? What historical events led to the transfer of Katchatheevu from India to Sri Lanka? What has been the stance of the Union government regarding the issue, and how has it evolved over time?

EXPLAINER

T. Ramakrishnan

The story so far:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 31 raised again the controversial matter of Katchatheevu, a few weeks ahead of the Lok Sabha poll in Tamil Nadu. Citing a report and posting it on X, he said: "New facts reveal how Congress callously gave away Katchatheevu..." Subsequently, the State BJP and the AIADMK sharpened their attacks on the DMK and the Congress. The matter comes back to the fore as political parties use it to attack their adversaries. On March 16, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK chief M.K. Stalin contended that Katchatheevu was ceded to Sri Lanka despite strong protests by the DMK. He asked the Prime Minister what steps were taken by the latter to retrieve the islet. About one-and-a-half months ago, Katchatheevu was in the limelight as, in late, February, fishermen associations in Ramanathapuram district boycotted the annual two-day festival, as a mark of protest against the Sri Lanka government's continuing arrests of Indian fishermen on charges of poaching.

When did Katchatheevu become a part of Sri Lanka?

During the year 1974, the then Prime Ministers of India and Sri Lanka, Indira Gandhi and Sirima R.D. Bandaranaike, signed an agreement to demarcate the boundary between the two countries in the historic waters from Palk Strait to Adam's Bridge.

A joint statement issued on June 26 and 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.

The pact brought to a close the talks held between the two sides since October 1921. Initially, the negotiations were held



Echoes of history: A view of Katchatheevu in Sri Lanka.

between the governments of the then Madras and Ceylon.

How important has been Katchatheevu to the fisherfolk? Fisherfolk of the two countries have been traditionally using the islet for fishing. Though this feature was acknowledged in the 1974 agreement, the supplemental pact in March 1976 made it clear that fishing vessels and fishermen of the two countries "shall not engage" in fishing in the historic waters, territorial sea and exclusive zone or exclusive economic zone of either of the countries "without the express permission of Sri Lanka or India."

St. Anthony's Church there holds an annual festival drawing devotees from both sides of the Palk Bay, a tradition which has been going on.

What triggered the negotiations between India and Sri Lanka?

Sri Lanka claimed sovereignty over Katchatheevu on the ground that the Portuguese who had occupied the island during 1505-1658 CE had exercised jurisdiction over the islet. India's contention was that the erstwhile Raja of Ramnad (Ramanathapuram) had possession of it as part of his zamin. According to a news article published by

The Hindu on March 6, 1968, which was based on the interview of the erstwhile Raja Ramanatha Sethupathi, Katchatheevu was under the jurisdiction of the zamin "from time immemorial" and it was the "last post" of the Ramnad estate. He added that the zamin had been collecting taxes till 1947 when it was taken over by the State government following the Zamindari Abolition Act. However, replying to the debate on the matter in Lok Sabha in July 1974, the then External Affairs Minister Swaran Singh asserted that the decision had been taken after "exhaustive research of historical and other records" on the islet.

How was the 1974 agreement received?

The present demand for the Katchatheevu retrieval traces its origin to the opposition that the pact generated in 1974. During the debates in both Houses of Parliament in July 1974, most of the Opposition including the DMK, AIADMK, Jan Sangh, Swatantra and the Socialist Party, staged walkouts in the two Houses. Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who was Jan Sangh's leader, had contended that the decision to transfer the islet had been taken "behind the back" of the people and the Parliament. He was supported by Madhu

Limaye, a veteran socialist leader. The then Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, even in 1973 when the talk of the islet transfer had been doing rounds, had urged Indira Gandhi that the popular feeling was in favour of retaining Katchatheevu which "belonged to India and not to Tamil Nadu alone," according to a report published by *The Hindu* on October 17, 1973. Three months later, he wrote a letter reiterating the stand, a copy of which was released a day after the 1974 agreement was signed. M. G. Ramachandran, founder of the AIADMK, which was a fledgling party then, had criticised Mr. Karunanidhi for "his failure to guide the Centre properly" on the issue and sought his resignation.

When did the issue get a fresh lease of life?

After remaining low nearly for 15 years, the Katchatheevu issue was revived in August 1991 with the then Chief Minister Jayalalitha demanding retrieval during her Independence day address. She later modified her demand to one of getting back the islet through "a lease in perpetuity." The Tamil Nadu Assembly had witnessed a number of debates on the matter. In the last 15 years, both Ms. Jayalalitha and Mr. Karunanidhi approached the Supreme Court on the matter.

What has been the stand of the Union government on the issue?

In August 2013, the Union government told the Supreme Court that the question of retrieval of Katchatheevu from Sri Lanka did not arise as no territory belonging to India was ceded to Sri Lanka. It contended that the islet was a matter of dispute between British India and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and there was no agreed boundary, a matter which was settled through 1974 and 1976 agreements. In December 2022, the Union government, while referring to the two agreements, pointed out in its reply in the Rajya Sabha that Katchatheevu "lies on the Sri Lankan side of the India-Sri Lanka International Maritime Boundary Line." It added that the matter was *sub judice* in the Supreme Court.

THE GIST

Prime Minister Narendra Modi brought up the controversial matter of Katchatheevu ahead of the Lok Sabha elections in Tamil Nadu, accusing the Congress of giving it away.

In 1974, Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi and Sirima R.D. Bandaranaike signed an agreement defining the boundary between India and Sri Lanka, placing Katchatheevu under Sri Lankan control. This ended negotiations dating back to 1921.

Fisherfolk from both countries traditionally used Katchatheevu for fishing, though a 1976 pact restricted fishing in the area without express permission.

Will India experience more heat wave days this summer?

How does the IMD forecast heat wave days across different regions of India? What factors contribute to India's struggle to meet power demand, and how does this relate to falling hydroelectricity output?

Privali Prakash

The story so far:

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Monday announced above-average heat wave days for India, impacting southern, central, east, and northwestern regions. The announcement comes even as India is already struggling to keep up with its power demand. A Reuters analysis reported that India's hydroelectricity output fell at the steepest pace in at least 38 years. Hydroelectric output will remain low in the coming months, leading to a greater dependence on coal at a time when India has, in its Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement, promised to reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 45% by 2030, compared to the 2005 level.

What does the forecast say?

The IMD forecast has said most of India will experience above-normal maximum and minimum temperatures.

The El Niño event, which causes weak rainfall and more heat over India, has weakened since the beginning of the year, the forecast noted. However, moderate El Niño conditions still exist over the equatorial Pacific, increasing the sea surface temperature. The heat redistribution affects airflows above the ocean. Since the Pacific Ocean covers almost a third of the earth, changes in its temperature and changes in wind patterns can disrupt weather worldwide. January 2024 was the warmest in 175 years, the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration noted. The average global land and ocean surface temperature was also higher.

The El Niño is, however, likely to weaken during the upcoming season. Some models have even predicted the possibility of La Niña conditions developing during the monsoon, which can intensify rainfall across South Asia.

What is a heat wave?

A period of abnormally high

temperatures is called a heat wave. The IMD declares a heat wave if the maximum temperature of a weather station reaches at least 40 degrees C in the plains and at least 30 degrees C in hilly regions, with a departure of around 4.5-6.4 degrees C from the normal maximum temperature. The IMD can also declare a heat wave if the actual maximum temperature crosses 45 degrees C and a "severe heat wave" if it crosses 47 degrees C. Qualitatively, a heat wave can also occur when the temperature of the air becomes fatal to the human body.

Heat waves in India are typically recorded between March and June and tend to peak in May.

What is causing an increase in heat wave days?

A study published in the journal *PLOS Climate* in April 2023 found heat waves all over the world are getting more "recurrent, intense and lethal" due to climate change. Data from April 2022 used in the study also showed abnormal

temperatures caused due to climate change could have a severe impact on over 90% of India.

An increase in the number of heat-wave days and their intensity can exact steep costs affecting livelihoods, food production, disease spread, and more, the study noted.

Higher temperatures can affect human health by causing heat stress and even death, according to the World Health Organization.

The ongoing El Niño weather condition also contributes to higher-than-usual temperatures, driving an increased occurrence of heat waves.

What measures has the EC advised to manage the impact of heat waves?

Starting on April 19, general elections will be conducted in seven phases until June 1, coinciding with India's summer and possibly several heat waves. The Election Commission (EC) has issued an advisory to manage the impact of heat waves during voting, including carrying a water bottle and protecting oneself from direct sunlight.

The heat itself can be deadly outside a heat wave if the wet bulb temperature crosses 30-35 degrees C. The wet bulb temperature is the lowest temperature to which a surface can be cooled by water evaporating from it. In other words, it's the lowest temperature at which the surface of the skin can be cooled by sweating. Beyond this threshold, even short periods spent idling in ambient conditions can have deadly health effects.

THE GIST

Indian Meteorological Department predicts above-average heat wave days for India, impacting multiple regions.

El Niño event weakens but contributes to warmer temperatures globally, exacerbating heat wave conditions. Climate change is cited as a key factor in the recurrence and intensity of heat waves.

General elections in India coincide with the summer season and potential heat waves, prompting the EC to issue advisories to manage the impact of heat waves during voting.

LOKNITI-CSDS

Price rise dominates concerns of Delhi's urban poor ahead of election

A study conducted by Lokniti-CSDS, among 1,024 respondents, highlights that while the majority of slum dwellers are employed, their incomes are stagnant and fail to keep up with the escalating costs of essentials like food, healthcare, housing, leading to widespread financial strain and hardship

Lokniti Team

In September 2023, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal stated that inflation in Delhi was at its lowest point. He attributed this achievement to the successful implementation of various State government schemes aimed at providing essential services such as education, healthcare, electricity, and water which provided relief to the residents of the national capital. The ruling NDA leadership too has been drawing attention to what it termed as the successful handling of the economic situation in the country. However, the impact of inflation remains a pressing concern, particularly for marginalised population residing in the slums of Delhi.

A study conducted by Lokniti-CSDS in the first week of March, among 1,024 respondents sheds light on the pressing concern of inflation. Its impact on marginalised communities residing in Delhi's slums is strikingly evident. Examining the occupational demographics of the urban poor, the study revealed that close to three-fourths of those surveyed were employed. Less than half the employed were engaged in some kind of a job, around one-third of the employed were running small businesses and the others employed were involved in some part time jobs and work not clearly specified. Close to two of every ten slum dwellers identified themselves as homemakers, and another one of every ten were students or those seeking employment opportunities.

Nearly half of women in the slums (45%) were shouldering the financial responsibility for their families.

Rising prices but stagnant incomes
Despite the majority being employed, the issue of price rise was a major concern for Delhi's urban poor. When asked about the perceived increase in inflation over the last two years, nearly nine out of every ten respondents expressed that it has increased significantly (Table 1).

Additionally, close to one of every ten acknowledged a slight increase, while the remaining stated that there has not been much or any increase at all. This clearly underscores their concerns with the price rise in the capital city.

Upon examining individual commodities, it becomes evident that prices have risen across the board. However, a staggering three-fourths of the urban poor noted a substantial increase in household essentials such as LPG gas, electricity, and food items (Table 2). Six in ten reported a significant rise in healthcare and house rent costs. Over half reported a significant increase in education expenses and public transportation fares. Overall, there is a widespread perception of price hikes across various essentials among the urban poor in Delhi.

Shifting the focus to the financial status of the household, a staggering 84 percent of the urban poor stated that their household income falls short of meeting their needs, resulting in various difficulties. Among this group, six in ten indicated facing significant hardships, while three in ten acknowledged encountering some difficulty (Table 3).

Merely six percent reported that their income adequately covers their family's needs and allows for savings, while nine percent stated that their income fulfils all



Table 1: Opinion on price rise

Increase in price rise in last two year	(%)
A lot	87
Somewhat	8
Not much	2
Not at all	2

Note: Rest did not respond

Table 2: Rise in prices of different commodities

Prices of--	Significant increase (%)
Household essentials like LPG, electricity	75
Ration/ food items	73
Healthcare or medicines	62
House rent	59
Education	54
Public Transport	53

Note: Rest are those who stated somewhat increase, not much increase, not at all increase or did not respond.

Table 3: Assessing household financial condition

Which of these sentences is closest to your household situation	(%)
Our income doesn't fulfill our needs, we face a lot of difficulties	56
Our income doesn't fulfill our needs, there are some difficulties	28
Our income meets all needs without much difficulty	9
Our income meets the needs well and we also save	6

Note: Rest did not respond.

their needs without much difficulty, although they are unable to save.

Additionally, nearly half of the urban poor indicated that there has been no discernible improvement in their lifestyle over the past two years (Table 4).

One in every ten respondents reported minimal improvement, while two in ten noted some positive changes. Only four percent expressed experiencing significant improvement.

When analysing the disparity between income growth and expenses, respondents were asked about the extent to which their household income increased in comparison to their expenses. Over half the respondents indicated that there has been no increase at all and three in ten reported not much increase in their income. Merely three percent reported a

Table 4: Has there been any improvement in lifestyle?

Improvement in life style....	(%)
Not at all	47
Not much	29
Somewhat	20
A lot	4

Table 5: Income growth vs expenses

How much has your income increased in relation to your expense	(%)
Not at all	50
Not much	27
Somewhat	16
A lot	3

Note: Rest did not respond.

Table 6: Who is responsible for price rise?

	(%)
Narendra Modi's Central government	45
Arvind Kejriwal's State government	26
The people themselves	8
Inflation is rising every where	7

Note: Rest did not respond. Responses of only those said inflation has increased a lot or somewhat.

Table 7: Single most important issue while voting in 2024 Lok Sabha election

Which one of these issues will mostly influence your voting decision?	(%)
Inflation	35
Unemployment	18
Narendra Modi's leadership	9
Ram Mandir	5
Corruption	3
Your religious identity	1
Beneficiaries from government schemes	1
No response	28

Note: Rest did not respond. Responses of only those said inflation has increased a lot or somewhat.

substantial increase, while one sixth noted a somewhat increase (Table 5). This emphasises a significant mismatch between income growth and the expenses of the urban poor.

Who is responsible for the price rise?
When asked about the responsible party for the rising prices, over four in ten

placed the blame on the Modi-led Central government, while a quarter held Mr. Kejriwal's State government responsible (Table 6). Eight percent held the people themselves accountable, and seven percent felt that nobody should be blamed as inflation is a widespread phenomenon.

Is price rise a decisive voting concern?

It is evident that price rise poses a challenge for Delhi's urban poor, with the majority struggling to meet their basic needs. But then, does this issue also translate into a voting concern for these individuals?

When asked about various issues individually, price rise and unemployment emerge as concerns for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, followed by corruption. An overwhelming eight of every ten respondents cited price rise and unemployment as very important issues, while six in ten mentioned the issue of corruption.

Four in ten individuals emphasised both the construction of the Ram Mandir and government schemes as significant issues, while three in ten stated that religious identity will play a crucial role in their voting decisions during the upcoming elections.

When asked to identify the single most important issue amongst all while voting in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, although the issue of price rise emerges as the most prominent concern, the proportion of those citing it drops to 35 percent (Table 7). This is followed by unemployment, mentioned by 18% of respondents.

Narendra Modi's leadership is identified as a factor by 9% of the urban poor, while the issue of the Ram Mandir is mentioned by 5%. Other issues received responses from less than 5% of the urban poor. Nearly three in ten respondents did not provide a response to the question.

Even among those who acknowledged a significant price rise over the last two years, only four of every ten consider it a crucial voting issue. It is intriguing that despite 87 percent of the urban poor acknowledging an increase in price rise over the last two years, only one in three perceive it as a crucial voting issue.

This discrepancy highlights a notable gap between the issues that affect people's daily lives and those that ultimately influence their voting decisions.

A study by the Lokniti-CSDS research team which includes Vibha Attri, Sanjay Kumar, Sandeep Shastri and Suhag Palshikar



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

K. Subrahmanian

M R. R. Saravanan, Golden Rock, wants to know the meaning of the idiom 'to paint the town red.'

"To paint the town red" means 'to have an enjoyable, noisy time; to cause some disturbance in town by having a noisy and disorderly spree.' It is a colloquial expression of American origin.

After the final examination, the students painted the town red.

Mr. G. D. Sharma, T. Nagar, Madras, wants to know which is correct: (a) dispossess of or (b) dispossess for. It is 'dispossess of.'

It means 'to deprive.'

Mr. R. Sundar Raman, Anna Nagar, Madurai, wants to know the meaning of 'Man Friday.'

'Man Friday' is a helper or a follower. This expression is from Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe. Crusoe finds a young savage on a Friday on the desert island. The savage becomes his faithful and willing servant and he was called Man Friday.

Mr. L. Krishnaswami Bharati, Anna Nagar, Madras, want to know the exact meaning of 'riches, wealth, and opulence.'

'Riches' means 'abundant means, valuable possession.'

Wealth also means 'riches', 'opulence' means 'very great and splendid wealth.'

Mr. C. Nagananda Rao, Triplicane, Madras, wants to know the origin of 'rightists' and 'leftists.'

In the French National Assembly of 1789, the reactionaries sat on the right, the democrats and the extremists on the left, and the moderates in the middle. The term leftist is applied now to socialists and communists, and rightist to conservatives. The people were against 'far-left hard-line' communists. Are they, therefore, rightists? Mr. Gorbachev has introduced some changes, but his opponents want to conserve communism. Has left become right and right left? Is 'left' equal to 'right'?

Ms. Jayashree Pathak, Bhubaneswar, wants to know whether 'visit' and 'visit with' mean the same.

No. 'Visit with' is an American expression. It is not an alternative to 'visit.' 'Visit with' means 'to chat,' 'to converse.' 'Visit with' has connotations of friendliness.

Visited with him for an hour.

'Visit with' originated in the southern U.S. in the 19th century. Some British writers have criticised 'visit with' without realising that it is an American idiom. Occasionally 'visit with' is used to mean 'to chat' without any visit!

Visited with him over the phone last week.

Mr. R. Narasimhan, Moosa Street, T. Nagar, Madras, writes: "A leap year" is a year of 366 days, an additional day being added to February. Every year exactly divisible by 4, or a century year by 400, is a leap year. Planet earth takes a little more than 365 days, but less than 365.25 days, to orbit the sun. The extra time is approximately computed as one day in a cycle of four years and this is added to the month of February once in four years. The arithmetic thus devised would really result in error in the calendar year vis-a-vis sidereal year. To obviate the anomaly, century years are considered leap years only if they are exactly divisible by 400 and not by 4. Thus the century year 2000 A.D. would be a leap year, though 1700 A.D., 1800 A.D. and 1900 A.D. were not."

Thank you for the additional information.

Published in The Hindu on June 18, 1991

THE DAILY QUIZ

A quiz on the occasion of Rakesh Sharma becoming the first Indian citizen to go to space on this date 40 years ago

V. V. Ramanam

QUESTION 1

From where did Rakesh Sharma and the two Russian cosmonauts blast off into space, aboard the Soyuz T-11, on April 3, 1994?

QUESTION 2

What was the name of the orbital station where they docked and for how many days did they stay in space?

QUESTION 3

Who was the backup Indian cosmonaut to Rakesh Sharma?

QUESTION 4

Rakesh Sharma shared Indian

food like Halwa, Aloo Chole, Vegetable Pulao, Tamarind rice, etc. with Yuri Malyshev and Gennadi Strekalov while in space. Who prepared these items?

QUESTION 5

After retiring from the Indian Air Force, where did Rakesh Sharma put his skills as a pilot to use, till retirement?

QUESTION 6

Fill in the blank: India became the _____ nation to send a person to space.

QUESTION 7

Rakesh Sharma was honoured with the highest awards in India and the then USSR. Name the awards.



Visual Question: This visual shows Rakesh Sharma conversing from space with PM Indira Gandhi. How did he describe India as when she asked him how it looked from above?

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. He was the head of the Roman Catholic Church from 1978 and was the first non-Italian pope in 455 years. **Ans: John Paul II**
2. He was the first recognised emperor to rule in the West after the fall of the Western Roman Empire approximately three centuries earlier. **Ans: Charlemagne**
3. This Portuguese filmmaker died on April 2, 2015, at the age of 106. Known for his artistic films, in March 2008, he was reported to be the oldest active film director in the world. **Ans: Manoel de Oliveira**
4. This science fiction film noted for its scientifically accurate depiction of space flight, pioneering special effects, and ambiguous imagery premiered on this day in 1968. Name the film and director. **Ans: 2001: A Space Odyssey by Stanley Kubrick**
5. This German artist was born on this day in 1891. He was a primary pioneer of the Dada movement and Surrealism in Europe. **Ans: Max Ernst**

Visual: Identify this character from a very popular TV show that premiered for the first time on this day in 1978. Name the show. **Ans: J.R. Ewing, from Dallas**
Early Birds: Prashant Nain | Rajmohan. V | K.N. Viswanathan | Jahnvi Taak | Abhay Krishnan

IN BRIEF



'Institutional investments in realty cross \$1 bn in Q1 CY24'

Institutional investments in the Indian real estate sector crossed \$1 billion in the first quarter of 2024, signalling a steady and positive start to the year, Colliers India reported on Tuesday. "Domestic investors were increasingly gaining more ground in Indian real estate, they captured a 45% share in Q1 2024 investments, a marked surge from prior years. Within domestic institutional investments, office and residential assets formed about 66%," the company said.

BMW, Tata Tech plan JV to set up automotive software hub

BMW Group and Tata Technologies Ltd. have signed an agreement to form a joint venture to establish an automotive software and IT development hub in Pune, Bengaluru and Chennai. The execution of the JV agreement is subject to review and approval by the relevant authorities. The main development and operations activities will be established at Bengaluru and Pune. In Chennai, the focus will be on business IT solutions, the companies said.

Serum Institute arm, Bharat Biotech to make, supply OPVs

Bharat Biotech and Bithoven Biologicals B.V. (Bbio), the Netherlands-based subsidiary of Serum Institute of India, have signed an agreement to produce in India oral polio vaccines (OPVs) made with drug substances sourced from the Dutch firm. They will jointly obtain regulatory approvals and licenses required to commercially manufacture OPVs in India for supply to domestic as well as global markets, the two companies said in a release.

'Tech spend may get leg up on macros'

Mini Tejaswi
BENGALURU

Global enterprises may turn positive on technology spending with signs of improvement in macro-economic indicators, BNP Paribas India said.

The comment comes in the backdrop of IT service providers remaining cagey about the macro-economic outlook on constrained discretionary demand.

"The industry seems to have 'booted out'," observes Kumar Rakesh, IT and Auto Analyst at BNP Paribas India, the Indian arm of the Paris-based financial services firm. "There are signs of improvement in the global economy. The macro indicators and strong deal wins in recent quarters should



translate into revenue growth acceleration in FY25, in our view."

The firm, quoting investors and analysts, said the U.S. economy was heading to a Goldilocks phase. "It is a consensus view," as reflected in upgrades in the U.S. real GDP forecast.

"We think FY25 is a critical near-term catalyst, along with U.S. macro-economic indicators in the coming months," said Mr. Rakesh.

Eaton India begins testing EV chargers for passenger vehicles

N. Anand
CHENNAI

Eaton India has begun producing electric vehicle chargers at its Pudukcherry plant, said its MD Electrical Sector Syed Sajjad Ali. The move follows Eaton's \$100 crore expansion-commodification plan. "As the industry moves towards digital transformation and energy transition, we thought of adopting it to stay ahead of the curve," Mr. Ali said.

The company has begun making EV chargers of 30 and 60 kv for passenger vehicles. The prototypes are being evaluated at the company's Technical Testing Centre in Pune and will

be rolled out this year. Eaton also plans to make EV chargers of 120 and 240 kv for buses and trucks.

"The Pudukcherry based unit of the global power management company produces a range of low and medium range voltage switch and fuse gears, circuit breakers, and AC chargers."

Mr. Ali said Eaton is aligning to serve customers in the industrial, residential, utilities, infrastructure and data centres and

'India risking demographic dividend'

World Bank says from 2000-2022, India's employment ratio fell by more than in other South Asian nations except Nepal; India's robust economic expansion has, however, kept the region's output growth stronger than in other emerging markets

The Hindu Bureau
LONDON

The World Bank has warned that the South Asia region including India was not making use of its demographic dividend as the pace of job creation in the region fell short of growth in the working-age population, even as it projected a strong 6.0-6.1% growth for 2024-25 for the region in its South Asia regional update, *Jobs for Resilience*, released on Tuesday.

Observing that India's employment growth was "well below" the average

Jobless growth

World Bank warns South Asia, India risk squandering the demographic dividend if pace of job creation is not improved

Bank projects strong 6.0-6.1% growth for 2024-25 for the region in its regional update

Region could have 16% higher growth if share of its working-age population with jobs was on par with other EMDEs



Weak employment concentrated in non-agricultural sectors, notes lender

growth in its working age population for the 2000-23 period, the multilateral lender said consequently the country's employment ratio had declined more

than in any other country in the region except Nepal till 2022. However, preliminary data suggested a 3-percentage point rebound in 2023, which had

partially reversed the decline.

Noting that India's economy was expected to post a "robust growth" of 7.5% in FY23/24, the lender said this growth coupled with recoveries in Sri Lanka and Pakistan, was largely driving the strong numbers for the South Asian region.

Still, the region could have 16% higher output growth if the share of its working-age population that was employed was on a par with other EMDEs, stressed Franziska Ohn-sorge, World Bank Chief Economist for South Asia. "South Asia is falling

right now to fully capitalise on its demographic dividend," said Ms. Ohn-sorge. "This is a missed opportunity," she added.

The weak employment trends in the region were concentrated in non-agricultural sectors, the World Bank said, reflecting challenges in the institutional and economic climate, which had stifled the growth of businesses.

To encourage job growth the Bank recommended supporting the participation of women in the economy, increasing openness to trade, and improving education.

March manufacturing PMI survey signals a 16-year peak

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

India's manufacturing sector activity surged in March with new orders and output rising at the fastest pace since October 2020, lifting the HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) to a 16-year high of 59.1 from 56.9 in February.

Export orders also grew at the fastest pace since May 2022, and though pressures on current capacity remained mild for producers, they resumed job creation after a two-month pause. While the scale of new jobs created



was mild, it marked the best uptick in six months, with firms hiring mid-level and full-time employees.

While output growth quickened across consumer, intermediate and investment goods sectors, the steepest growth in pro-

duction and new orders was seen at investment goods makers, as per the survey's findings.

Inflation weighs

Input costs rose at the highest pace in five months. Firms stocked up on inputs at the second-sharpest pace since the survey's broadly.

Despite broadly positive trends, the overall outlook for manufacturing was mixed, with sentiment slipping to a four-month low. Just 28% firms expect output to grow in FY24, while 1% expect a contraction, as worries about inflation dampened confidence.

'Growth momentum attracting investors despite high PE ratio'

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch on Tuesday said despite high price-to-earnings (PE) ratio, overseas investors were being drawn to the Indian capital markets on account of the velocity the economy was experiencing after years of high growth rates.

"Yes, at 22.2 ratio of PE multiple we have an expensive market; but still why is the investment coming? Because this is a reflection

'Investments are a reflection of the optimism and faith the world has in India today'

of the optimism and the trust and faith the world has in India today we are commanding these kind of multiples in our markets," she said at a CII event.

"Look at the hockey-stick effect. This is the velocity that we speak about. This is the momentum of India, the new India," she further added.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	TUESDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	73,904	-0.15
US Dollar	81.42	-0.23
Gold	68,370	-0.07
Brent oil	80.44	0.62

NIFTY 50

Stock	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ent	3,808.15	16.65
Adani Ports	1,404.15	28.25
Apollo Hosp	6,419.75	97.50
Asian Paints	2,874.20	3.20
Auro Bank	1,047.20	-5.90
Bajaj Auto	5,075.10	223.55
Bajaj Finance	1,656.55	10.55
Bajaj Finserv	2,077.40	-43.55
Bharat Ratn	1,338.55	-6.10
BPLCL	615.80	15.10
Britannia Ind	4,899.95	-4.25
Cipla	1,889.40	9.20
Coal India	443.20	1.15
Dixons	2,822.20	54.55
Dr Reddy's Lab	5,237.55	-12.80
Endur Motors	3,922.20	-24.45
Grainmill Ind	2,266.50	12.75
HCL Tech	1,528.20	-28.40
HFCL Bank	1,480.15	9.65
HFCL Ltd	2,286.70	0.80
Hera NeoCorp	4,650.80	-119.95
Hindalco	571.20	2.60
Hind. Indus. Serv	2,286.70	0.80
ICICI Bank	1,081.20	-18.45
IndusInd Bank	1,109.40	17.00
Infy	1,492.85	-12.60
ITC	425.95	-0.85
J&F Steel	379.25	-7.30
KOCL	1,757.40	-33.30
L&T	3,807.40	30.60
LTIMindtree Ltd.	3,909.75	18.15
M&M	1,871.95	56.00
Maruti Suzuki	12,552.45	-17.15
Nestle India	2,822.20	37.70
NTPC	344.80	2.45
Oswal	272.50	2.60
PowerGrid Corp	279.50	-0.60
Reliance Ind	2,973.50	4.35
SBI	1,175.55	31.25
State Bank	766.40	8.10
Sriram Finance Ltd	246.95	34.20
Sun Pharma	1,422.25	-7.00
Tata Consumer Pro	1,133.15	44.25
Tata Motors	1,004.65	12.40
Tata Steel	104.65	1.50
TCS	3,883.80	-32.95
Tech Mahindra	1,236.80	-7.75
Titan	1,755.55	17.55
UltraTech Cement	1,008.15	33.75
Wipro	481.20	-8.75

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicate direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	81.39	83.53
Euro	89.38	89.73
British Pound	104.53	104.93
Japanese Yen (100)	54.85	55.06
Chinese Yuan	13.50	13.54
Swiss Franc	91.56	91.91
Singapore Dollar	61.49	61.74
Canadian Dollar	63.31	63.55
Malaysian Ringgit	17.50	17.57
Australian Dollar	54.69	54.90

Source: Reserve Bank

Zomato gets penalty order, tax demand for ₹184 crore

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Online food delivery platform Zomato said it has received a service tax demand and penalty order aggregating over ₹184 crore. The demand order has been received for non-payment of service tax for the period October 2014 to June 2017 determined on the basis of certain sales made by the foreign subsidiary and branches of the company to its customers located outside India, the company said in a late night regulatory filing.

The company said it had clarified on the allegations along with supporting documents and judicial precedents.

'Sugar output beats seasonal estimates'

The Hindu Bureau
COIMBATORE

Sugar production in the first six months of the current season (October 2023 to September 2024) is 302.02 lakh tonnes against 300.77 lakh tonnes in the same period the previous season, according to estimates by the Indian Sugar and Bio-Energy Manufacturers Association (ISMA).

Output in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra is higher than last year so far. With 210 sugar factories in operation compared with 187 last season, net sugar production (after diversion for ethanol) in the current season is expected to be 320 lakh tonnes, ISMA said.

285 lakh tonnes is likely to be consumed domestically and the season is ex-



pected to close with a stock of 91 lakh tonnes.

Exports sought

The government restricted sugar exports and ethanol production "to ensure sufficient availability of sugar for domestic consumers at reasonable price throughout the year."

With output likely to exceed estimates at the beginning of the season, ISMA has sought permission to export 10 lakh tonnes.

'India's new EV policy allows imports from any country, including China'

Reuters
NEW DELHI

India has no restrictions on the import of electric vehicles from any country, in-

cluding China, under a new EV policy, a senior government official told a TV channel on Tuesday. Last month, India announced lowering import taxes on

certain electric vehicles produced by carmakers who commit to invest at least \$500 million and start domestic manufacturing within three years.

Adani Green Energy to raise \$4-4.5 bn in overseas dollar bonds

Janaki Krishnan
MUMBAI

Adani Green Energy intends to raise about \$4-4.5 billion through overseas dollar bonds over the next three-four years to fund its expansion and reach its stated target of 45 GW renewable energy capacity by 2030, sources said.

The company is effectively looking to raise around \$1 billion a year, sources said.

The Gautam Adani-controlled company had already spent more than \$2.5 billion and envisaged spending another \$8 billion on setting up power generation capacity.

Of this, about 20% would be funded through equity, and the remaining through debt, mostly as dollar borrowings, and with a small component of domestic debt. The domestic debt will be mostly vanilla loans from banks and issue of debt securities.

With regard to the equity portion, sources said that it would be contributed by promoters, flagship Adani Enterprises and private equity placements to strategists. Pilot sources have also flagged 'malpractices' in rostering.

'Govt. working on green steel policy'

Abhishhek Law
NEW DELHI

The Steel Ministry has begun work on formulating a comprehensive green steel policy that includes defining the manufacturing process, the skill-set required and availability of funding support, sources told *businessline*.

A complete decarbonisation strategy (policy) is in the works, a senior official of the Ministry said. In layman's terms, green steel refers to steel made with low-carbon emission.

Previously, some 13-odd task forces had been formed to determine the various modalities around green steel-making, including a definition of the offering. Quite recently, the 14th task force was set up to explore the option of using biochar or biomass (as an alternative to blast furnace) in steel-making, thereby bringing down carbon emissions during the manufacturing process.

"The Steel Ministry is working on a detailed decarbonisation strategy. The reports of the committees are at various stages of discussions. We are synthesising these documents into a coherent report," the official said, adding it will "soon" start consulting across Ministries, post which this report (green-



steel policy) will be put up in the public domain.

According to official data, the domestic steel sector accounts for 12% of India's greenhouse gas emissions with an emission intensity of 2.55 tonne of CO₂ per tonne of crude steel produced, compared with the global average of 1.9 tonnes of CO₂.

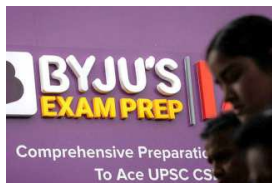
Pilot projects

India is also exploring the process of having its own pure-hydrogen based DRI (direct reduction of iron) technology and the detailed project report so prepared "is under scrutiny".

"A consortium-based pilot for hydrogen based DRI facility is also being explored," the official added.

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has allocated ₹455 crore for piloting the use of hydrogen in steel-making and already formulated a scheme. (The writer is with *The Hindu businessline*)

Byju's lays off 500 staff sans notice period



Cup of woes: The situation is due to litigation with four foreign investors, says a spokesperson. REUTERS

Ivoti Banthia
BENGALURU

Embattled edtech major Byju's has handed pink slips to almost 500 people without notice period or without putting them on a performance-improvement plan, according to sources.

Some employees alleged the human resource (HR) executive informed them the company had decided to terminate employment immediately. "The HR went on to initiate the exit process immediately and I was informed my last working day was that very day," said one of the employees who spoke to *businessline*.

Business restructuring
Byju's spokesperson confirmed the development. "We are in the final stages of a business-restructuring exercise announced in October 2023 to simplify operating structures, reduce the cost base and better cash flow management. As you are also aware, we are going through an extraordinary situation in the company because of the ongoing litigation with four foreign investors, where every employee and the ecosystem is going through tremendous stress, given the present circumstances," said the spokesperson.

"We regret the unfortunate situation the company has been forced into. Still, it is something that we will put behind us soon with majority investor support for the \$200-million rights issue. We request understanding of the individual and collective stress on the system." (The writer is with *The Hindu businessline*)

With Brazil's Pix payments killing cash, are credit cards next in the line?

The instant payments system designed by Brazil's central bank is a boon to online retailers, helping with cash flow in a sector with tight margins, while undercutting legacy business of banks and fintechs built on existing credit-card infrastructure; Pix use surged 74% last year to 42 bn payments

NEWS ANALYSIS

Reuters
BRASILIA

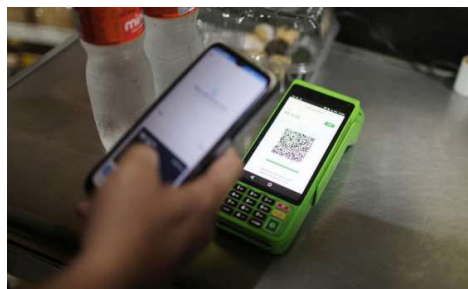
In just three years, Brazil's hugely popular Pix payment system has become the country's favourite way to pay, replacing cash and wire transfers in many cases and now, threatening the dominance of credit cards in the booming e-commerce sector.

The instant payments system designed by Brazil's central bank is a boon to online retailers, helping with cash flow in a sector with tight margins, while undercutting the legacy business of banks and fintechs built on existing credit-card infrastructure.

"I think credit cards will cease to exist at some point soon," central bank chief Roberto Campos said nearly two years ago, discussing the potential for open finance and the Pix platform. "This system eliminates the need to have a credit card." Market trends have since added weight to his forecast.

Surging use

Use of Pix surged 74% last year to nearly 42 billion payments across the Brazilian economy — surpassing credit- and debit-card charges combined by about 23%, according to central bank data and industry group Abec.



More in offing: Central bank is preparing to roll out new features boosting Pix's appeal for P2B. REUTERS

For buyers, the switch to Pix has been nearly seamless, as they simply scan a QR code with any banking app instead of reaching for their wallet.

But for sellers, it has turned the tables on the traditionally lucrative card payments industry. In online retail, orders paid with Pix surged 22 percentage points in two years to about a third of all purchases in December, according to e-commerce research firm Neotrust. Credit-card orders slipped 5 percentage points to 51% in the period.

That trend is likely to pick up as the central bank teases new Pix innovations starting this year such as recurring payments and purchases in instalments,



The success of Pix in Brazil, which moved over 17 trillion reais (\$3.4 trillion) in 2023, has quickly expanded into payments between people and businesses

which one official said is likely to boost the system's role in retail.

Discount fee

Although Brazilian consumers rarely notice, paying with a debit or credit card requires sellers to pay discount fees divided between card networks such as Visa, Mastercard and American Express; payment processors such as

Cielo, Rede and PagBank, as well as card issuers, which are typically less reliant on the traditional business of connecting retailers to credit cards. "BB and Bradesco opted to carry out Cielo's public offering as a way to make the company's governance more aligned with the new configuration of the sector," Banco do Brasil said in response to questions, adding the industry had become more competitive amid recent "transformations." Bradesco declined to comment.

"Pix has been and will continue to be the most disruptive technology in the financial segment in the country for the next few years," said Eduardo Lopes, public policy director at Nubank, Latin Amer-

ica's largest digital bank. Nubank launched in Brazil a decade ago, offering one product: an iconic purple credit card without fees — but it has now diversified into a range of other segments, including an embrace of Pix seen at several leading banks and fintechs.

The lender ended the fourth quarter with 13.6 million customers using Pix on credit, which lets customers borrow for Pix transfers up to their Nubank credit card limit. Customers using it grew 166% from a year before.

Berkshire Hathaway, the investment firm of U.S. billionaire Warren Buffett, which has a 2% stake in Nubank, said it had totally divested its position in Stone.

Bradesco central bank launched the Pix protocol in November 2020, mandating banks to integrate their accounts with instant digital transfers that are free for individuals. Users embraced the alternative to cash and slow, costly wire transfers. The success of Pix in Brazil, which moved more than 17 trillion reais (\$3.4 trillion) in 2023, has quickly expanded into payments between people and business (P2B).

Now, the central bank is preparing to roll out new features boosting the appeal of Pix for P2B use, said Mayara Varo, senior advisor to the Pix management and operations department at the central bank.

Time to recharge



Lossing power: Tesla posted a quarterly fall in deliveries for the first time in nearly four years and missed Wall Street estimates, a sign that the effects of its price cuts are waning as the automaker battles rising competition and softer demand. REUTERS

Study shows as much as 82% EU farm subsidies boost high-emission foods

Agence France-Presse
PARIS

More than 80% of EU agriculture subsidies support polluting livestock and animal-product farming, undermining the bloc's climate targets, a study published Monday found.

With global food systems accounting for about a third of greenhouse gas emissions, the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) currently "presents an economic disincentive for transitions" to more sustainable practices, the study in the journal *Nature Food* said.

"We found that the CAP disproportionately supports animal-based products over plant-based al-



Incentivising emissions: Direct payments to livestock farmers accounted for half of the subsidies. REUTERS

ternatives," said lead author Annie Kortleve from Leiden University in The Netherlands.

Feed subsidies

"It came as a little bit of a surprise. It was a little bit

higher than other studies reported before, and this is because of the proper inclusion of feed subsidies," she explained.

Direct payments to livestock farmers accounted for half of the subsidies — of which €57 billion (\$62 billion) was budgeted in 2013 — funding high-emissions agriculture, researchers found. The rest was largely made up by subsidies supporting livestock, particularly for animal feed production, it said.

For beef, the study reported subsidies of about €0.71 per kg swelled to €1.42 once feed was factored in. While focused on 2013 figures, "not much has changed" in the distribution of the subsidies up until 2020, the latest data the researchers reviewed, co-author Paul Behrens said. Researchers said the subsidies challenge the bloc's goals to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Trump-and-dump: speculators bet on Truth Social stocks

NEWS ANALYSIS

Reuters

Mohammed Al Shalloudi, a 21-year-old graduate data analyst in the United Arab Emirates who invested in Donald Trump's social-media company, has little in common with the former U.S. President's political supporters.

Mr. Al Shalloudi bought shares in Trump Media and Technology Group (TMTG), but not because he believes in the business of its app Truth Social or because he is a Trump fan. He is part of an army of speculators seeking a quick lucrative trade whose bets on TMTG have made it one of the most overvalued and actively-traded U.S. stocks.

Mr. Al Shalloudi said he bought at \$37 per share and cashed out late last week at \$65 per share, clinching a 76% return on his \$4,000 investment in just a few days.

TMTG's stock closed on Monday at \$48.66 after listing on Nasdaq last week in a deal that valued it at just \$10 per share.

"It was a no-brainer. You buy the stock, wait for Trump's fan base to hear about it, and enjoy your profit," he said.

Reuters interviews with more than a dozen investors that posted about their positions on social-media platforms such as Reddit and X found most were looking to score a quick profit. They bet Mr. Trump's supporters' fascination with the stock was



No stopping: TMTG's \$6.6 bn valuation is equivalent to 1,600 times of the firm's 2023 revenue. REUTERS

untethering TMTG's stock price from the company's business fundamentals. TMTG's current valuation of about \$6.6 billion is

equivalent to about 1,600 times the loss-making firm's revenue in 2023 of \$4.1 million, according to ISEG data.

No other U.S. company of similar market capitalisation has such a high valuation multiple, the ISEG data shows. This is despite

TMTG warning investors in regulatory filings that its operational losses raise "substantial doubt" about its ability to remain in business.

The stock is also among the most actively traded, according to Trade Alert data. While social media posts indicate some of Mr. Trump supporters have bought TMTG shares, a lot of the trading volume is coming from speculators looking for a quick flip.

"I invested \$10,000 last Tuesday because MAGA is crazy and they will pump the stock," said Sarah, a 21-year-old software developer from Pennsylvania who asked for her last name not to be published. MAGA stands for Trump's campaign slogan, 'Make America Great Again'.

The appeal of TMTG to speculators helps explain the stock's volatility. The shares have risen as much as fivefold in the last two months and are currently valuing Mr. Trump's majority stake in the company at about \$3.8 billion.

Bout of volatility

The bout of volatility came on Monday, as the stock lost more than fifth of its value. It remained unclear whether hedge funds and other Wall Street firms will get comfortable with such risks to join the speculation. Big investment firms will be required in a few weeks to disclose what, if any, their position in TMTG was at the end of March.

Most rallies of stocks that trade based on hype

among individual investors — so-called "meme" stocks such as GameStop and AMC Entertainment — have faded after a few weeks or months. Mr. Trump is not allowed to sell or borrow against his TMTG stake for six months, so the rally must last at least that long if he is to capitalise on the euphoria by cashing out.

A TMTG spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment on the impact speculators are having on the company's market value.

James Angel, an associate finance professor at Georgetown's McDonough School of Business, said it would be risky to predict when TMTG's valuation will drop to more accurately reflect its business prospects.

HELSINKI

One killed and two injured by 12-year-old Finnish school shooter



A 12-year-old opened fire on Tuesday at a school north of the Finnish capital Helsinki, killing a fellow student and seriously injuring two others before being taken into custody. The Viertola school in Vantaa, Finland's fourth-largest city, has around 90 staff and 800 pupils in grades one to nine, or aged seven to 15. AFP

ISLAMABAD

Imran Khan claims wife Bushra Bibi was poisoned in sub-jail



Pakistan's jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday said his wife and former first lady Bushra Bibi was poisoned while incarcerated at his private residence here which was turned into a sub-jail, emphasising that the Army chief should be held responsible if she is harmed. PTI

ISTANBUL

Apartment block in Istanbul catches fire, killing 29 people



A fire killed at least 29 people in a 16-storey residential building in Istanbul on Tuesday, the governor of Turkey's economic capital said, updating an earlier toll of 15 dead and eight hurt. The blaze had broken out during construction work in the first and second floors below ground, which housed a nightclub. AFP

SEOUL

In latest flex, North Korea fires medium-range ballistic missile



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 said the missile flew around 600 km before splashing down in the waters between South Korea and Japan. AFP

Sharp rise in newborn deaths in Gaza: WHO

Agence France-Presse
GENEVA

Newborn mortality is rising sharply in the Gaza Strip, with babies being born underweight, the World Health Organization said on April 2, citing medical records from the ground. "From different doctors, particularly in the maternity hospitals, they are reporting that they are seeing a big rise in children born with low birth weight, and just not surviving in the neonatal period because they are born too small," WHO spokeswoman Margaret Harris said at a briefing in Geneva.

She said that at Kamal Adwan, the only paediatric hospital in northern Gaza, "at least 15 malnourished children are coming in per day, and the needs are just getting ever more severe".

Iran vows to punish Israel for attack on embassy complex

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei says Tehran will make 'Tel Aviv regret this crime'; two Generals among the seven Revolutionary Guards killed in the attack Russia requests UNSC meet to discuss the strike

Agence France-Presse
TEHRAN

Iran warned its arch-enemy Israel on Tuesday that it will retaliate for an air strike 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 West Asian tensions already inflamed by the Gaza war and violence involving Iran-backed groups in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

Iranian state media said 13 persons were killed in the strike in which, according to Tehran's Ambassador, Israeli F-35 fighter-jets



Seething anger: Iranians attend an anti-Israel and anti-U.S. protest at Palestine square in Tehran on Monday. AFP

fired six missiles that levelled the five-storey consular building adjacent to the embassy. Iran said the strike killed seven Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps members, including two commanders of its Quds Force foreign opera-

tions arm, Brigadier Generals Mohammad Reza Zahedi and Mohammad Hadi Haji Rahimi.

The building was reduced to a mountain of rubble by the blasts which blew out windows in nearby buildings and incinerat-

Russia working to remove Taliban from terrorist list

Reuters
MOSCOW

Russia said on Tuesday it had important matters to discuss with Afghanistan's Taliban leaders and was working to remove the Taliban from its list of banned terrorist organisations.

"This is a country that is next to us, and one way or another we communicate with them," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"We need to resolve pressing issues, this also requires dialogue, so in this regard we communicate with them like practically everyone else - they are the de facto authority in Afghanistan."

Concert hall attack

Mr. Peskov did not elaborate on the "pressing issues", but Russia suffered its deadliest attack for 20



Priority matters: In the wake of the Moscow concert hall attack, Russia said it had 'pressing issues' to discuss with the Taliban. AFP

years last month when gunmen stormed a concert hall outside Moscow, killing at least 144 people.

Conflicting claims

Islamic State militants claimed responsibility and U.S. officials said they had intelligence that it was the network's Afghan branch, Islamic State Khurasan, that was responsible. Rus-

sia has said it is also investigating a Ukrainian link, something Kyiv and the United States have strongly rejected.

The Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan in 2021 after the withdrawal of U.S.-led foreign forces, but have remained until now on a list of organisations that Russia designates as terrorist.

Biden, Xi discuss AI, Taiwan, fentanyl in bid to resume talks

Associated Press
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping discussed Taiwan, artificial intelligence and security issues on Tuesday in a call meant to demonstrate a return to regular leader-to-leader dialogue between the two powers.

The call, described by the White House as " candid and constructive," was the leaders' first conversation since their November summit in California produced renewed ties between the two nations' militaries and a promise of enhanced cooperation on stemming the flow of deadly fentanyl and its precursors from China.

Mr. Xi told Mr. Biden that the two countries

Xi said the two countries should adhere to the bottom line of 'no clash, no confrontation.'

should adhere to the bottom line of "no clash, no confrontation" as one of the principles for this year.

"We should prioritise stability, not provoke troubles, not cross lines but maintain the overall stability of China-U.S. relations," Mr. Xi said.

The call kicks off several weeks of high-level engagements between the two countries, with Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen set to travel to China on Thursday and Secretary of State Antony Blinken to follow in the weeks ahead.

Hardly a summer 'fan'



A student uses a portable fan outside a school in Manila on Tuesday. More than a hundred schools in the Philippine capital shut their classrooms during the day as the tropical heat hit 'danger' levels, education officials said. AFP

Russia says it seized 400 square km of Ukrainian land

Agence France-Presse
MOSCOW

Russia said on Tuesday its forces had captured 400 square km of Ukrainian territory this year.

Moscow secured its first territorial gains in almost a year in recent months, as Kyiv struggles with manpower and ammunition shortages amid delays to vital Western aid.

"Since the start of the year, 403 square km... have come under our control," Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said, referring to gains in the Donetsk, Kherson, Lugansk and Zaporizhzhia regions that Moscow claimed to have annexed in 2022, despite not fully controlling them. Meanwhile, an Ukrainian drone strike on Rus-



Sergei Shoigu

sia's central Tatarstan region - hundreds of miles from the countries' shared border - wounded over a dozen people, health officials said on Tuesday.

Deep strike

The attack hit a building in a business park in the town of Yelabuga and targeted an oil refinery in Nizhnekamsk, both some 1,100 km from the border.

Former Opposition figure Diomaye Faye to be sworn in as new Senegal President

Associated Press
DAKAR

Senegal prepared to inaugurate Bassirou Diomaye Faye as its new President on Tuesday, completing the previously little-known opposition figure's dramatic ascent from prison to the palace in recent weeks.

Mr. Faye was released from prison less than two weeks before the March 24 election, along with popular opposition figure and mentor Ousmane Sonko, following a political amnesty announced by outgoing President Macky Sall. It will be the former tax inspector's first time in elected office.

"It's the culmination of a long struggle for democracy and the rule of law," said Aissata Sagna, a 39-year-old factory worker who worked on Mr. Faye's campaign. "This is a day of celebration for us, even if we have lost young people killed during the demonstrations."

Test of reputation

The election tested Senegal's reputation as a stable democracy in West Africa, a region that has experienced coups and attempted coups. It followed months of unrest ignited by the arrests last year of Mr. Sonko and Mr. Faye and concerns that the Pre-

sident would seek a third term in office despite constitutional term limits. Rights groups said dozens were killed in the protests and about 1,000 were jailed.

Mr. Faye, 44, campaigned on promises to clean up corruption and better manage the country's natural resources. His victory was seen as reflecting the will of young people frustrated with widespread unemployment and former colonial ruler France, used by critics to enrich itself.

Such frustrations are common across many



Crowning moment: Senegal's newly elected President Bassirou Diomaye Faye takes the oath of office in Dakar on Monday. REUTERS

countries in Africa, home to the world's youngest population, where a number of leaders have clung to power for decades. In his first speech as President-elect, Mr. Faye pro-

posed to fight corruption and reform the economy. A practicing Muslim from a small town, Mr. Faye has two wives, both of whom were present on Tuesday. Ahead of the elec-

'First challenge'

"I think the first challenge is the formation of his (Faye's) government," said Alioune Tine, founder of the Senegalese think tank Afrikajom Center. "This will be the first concrete message he sends to the Senegalese people. The size, diversity and profiles will be analysed with a

fine-tooth comb, to see if they meet the demand for a break with the past."

The new President was little known until Mr. Sonko, a popular opposition figure who came third in the previous election in 2019, named him to run in his place after being barred from the election for a prior conviction.

While Mr. Sonko's future role in the new administration is unclear, he is expected to have a prominent role. Mr. Faye was arrested for alleged defamation last year, while Mr. Sonko faced a number of charges, including a prolonged legal battle that started when he

was accused of rape in 2021. He was acquitted of the rape charges but was convicted of corrupting youth and sentenced to two years in prison last summer.

Mr. Sonko's supporters say his legal troubles were part of a government effort to derail his candidacy.

While Sall eventually ruled out running for a third term, he then abruptly postponed the election in February with only weeks to go, triggering another wave of protests. That move was blocked by the country's constitutional court and the election was eventually held weeks later in March.



Rowling made controversial remarks the day the crime of 'stirring up hatred' came into effect in Scotland. FILE PHOTO

U.K. backs Rowling in Scottish hate crime law challenge

Reuters
LONDON

The British government said writer J.K. Rowling should not be arrested for her transgender views after the *Harry Potter* author challenged Scotland's new hate crime law with social media posts asserting that a number of transwomen were men.

Ms. Rowling, a prominent gender critical campaigner, made the comments on Monday, the day that the crime of "stirring up hatred" relating to age, disability, religion, sexual orientation and transgender identity came into effect. She tested the law by listing 10 transwomen, including a convicted rapist, sex abusers and high profile activists, on X saying they were men.

Scottish ministers have previously said misgendering people would not be an offence under the new law. However, Minister for Victims and Community Safety Siobhan Brown told BBC radio on Monday that it would be a matter for police to decide.

Scotland's First Minister Humza Yousaf said the new Bill was about "protecting people from a rising tide of hatred". "Unless your behaviour is threatening or abusive and intends to stir up hatred, then you have nothing to worry about in terms of the new offences being created," he said.

Women are not protected as a group, but the Scottish National Party-led government in Edinburgh is looking at separate reforms to target misogyny. Scotland has been at the forefront of extending rights to the transgender community but a previous attempt to make it easier to change a legal gender was blocked by London over concerns it would impinge existing equality legislation.

Republicans strive to win over Black voters as support for Biden wanes

Strong turnout from Black voters in handful of States was crucial in Biden's victory in 2020 and those States are expected to help decide the 2024 election as well: while polls show a fall in the President's approval ratings among the demography, the scenario is not too different for Trump either

Reuters
MILWAUKEE

Randolph Owens, a rare Republican activist in a majority-Black district of Milwaukee in Wisconsin State of the U.S., had hoped this election season would be different.

With national polls showing waning enthusiasm for Democratic President Joe Biden, especially among Black voters who say they are frustrated with his performance on the economy and other issues, State Republican party officials and activists saw an opening. Wisconsin holds its primary on Tuesday, where voters will weigh in on the presidential race, weeks after Biden and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump clinched their respective nominations.

Wisconsin Republicans hosted a Black History Month event in February at the party's community engagement centre in the historically Black Bronzeville neighbourhood. Mr Owens, the Republican party representative for the city's six majority-Black wards, is planning a roundtable of Black business and church leaders this month and a door-knocking campaign aimed at undecided voters.

But the voter engagement drive was thrown into confusion when the Republican National



Reaching out: The Republican effort to win over Black voters started in 2020 with the opening of a community centre in the predominately Black neighbourhood of Bronzeville in Milwaukee. REUTERS

Committee (RNC) last month announced it was axing plans for 40 community centres aimed at organising Black, Hispanic and Asian American voters – underlining the challenges the party faces in persuading Milwaukee's Black voters that they are committed to the community, beyond November's presidential election.

"Our commitment has always been questioned – but regardless of a building, we are going to be here even if we have to work out of satellite offices or garages," Mr Owens said.

The State party said it will keep the Bronzeville community engagement centre open. Reuters spoke to nearly 30 Black voters in majority-Black neighbourhoods of Milwaukee, about

half of whom said they remained undecided about voting for Mr Biden in November or voting at all.

'Unhappy and skeptical' About 10 of the 15 residents who are unhappy with Mr. Biden also expressed skepticism about Republicans' long-term commitment to the area and to issues of concern to Black voters.

Strong turnout from Black voters in Wisconsin and a handful of other States helped propel Mr. Biden to the White House in 2020 and those same States are also expected to help decide the 2024 election.

The Democrat won Wisconsin by fewer than 21,000 votes, but carried Milwaukee by roughly 146,000 votes with 53%

of those votes cast in majority-Black wards, according to an analysis of election and census data by John Johnson, a public policy research fellow at Marquette Law School Lubar Center.

"It's fair to say that without Milwaukee, Biden would've lost Wisconsin," Mr. Johnson said.

A Pew Research Center poll showed Mr. Biden's approval rating among non-Hispanic Black adults fell from a peak of 89% in April 2021 to 48% in January 2024.

The Republican effort to win over Black voters started in 2020 with the opening of the Bronzeville community center. It ramped up in 2022 when the RNC selected Milwaukee to host the party's convention.

In the early 20th century, the neighbourhood thrived as a center for entertainment and commerce. But the construction of a freeway through the heart of the neighbourhood in the 1960s resulted in the demolition of over 8,000 homes and the displacement of businesses.

"Obvious tactic" "It seems pretty obvious on its face they are trying to go into the most Democratic part of Wisconsin to plant a flag," said Jon Fleischman, a Republican strategist. "I think the party sees Donald Trump's candidacy as an opportunity to create new constituency groups."

The Republican party office, located on Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, is decorated with a distinctive white starburst on a red and blue backdrop of the June 19th flag, commemorating the emancipation of the last enslaved people at the end of the civil war.

Inside, a collage features Black Republican congressional members, portraits of civil rights leaders – and an image of Mr. Trump, a polarising figure who has employed racist rhetoric.

Brian Schimming, the state party chairman, acknowledged that consistent engagement will be crucial to winning over Black voters.

"What's happened to Republicans in past years is that you spend money

where your most loyal voters are – cities and places you don't pay much attention to, you start doing worse," Mr. Schimming said. "I'm all about being there and listening to people. If we don't do that, frankly we shouldn't win."

A person familiar with the matter said that Mr. Trump's team, now in control of the RNC, did not like the community centres and believed the money would be better used on hiring people in the community to engage with voters.

A poll conducted by left-leaning political action committee BlackPAC, in partnership with Democratic polling firm, Brilliant Corners, found Black support for Mr. Trump among likely voters in seven swing States, including Wisconsin, slipped from 9% in November last year to 8% in February 2024.

Wisconsin Republicans plan to hire neighbourhood canvassers this spring to step up its door-to-door campaign efforts, purchase radio ads aimed at Black audiences and eventually staff the office in Bronzeville full-time, Mr. Schimming said.

Party officials said their voter outreach efforts will highlight resident concerns including inflation, rise in robberies and car-jackings and the Biden administration's handling of migration at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Norway plans to increase number of conscripted soldiers

Associated Press
COPENHAGEN

Norway is to increase the number of conscripted soldiers from the present 9,000 to 13,500, the Norwegian government said on Tuesday.

"We must have enough people with the right skills at the right time," Defence Minister Bjorn Arild Gram said. "We will need more people with professional military expertise going forward."

The country's armed forces will see a gradual increase in the number of conscripts for initial service each year, Mr. Gram said, adding that several billion kroner (several hundred million dollars) will be invested in the Norwegian Armed Forces' facility at Terningmoen, north of Oslo, where the NATO member will gather all new recruits. He did not specify precisely how much oil-rich Norway will spend.

Norwegian news agency NTB said the aim was to reach 13,500 conscripts by 2036.

The move by the Scandinavian NATO member comes after neighbouring Denmark last month said it wants to increase the number of young people doing military service by extending conscription to women and increasing the time of service from four months to 11 months.

The Danish government wants to increase the number of conscripts by 300 to reach a total of 5,000.

Both Denmark and Norway are staunch supporters of Ukraine in its war against Russia's invasion.

Festive cameo



Special brief: The Easter bunny makes a guest appearance in the White House briefing room in Washington on Monday. REUTERS

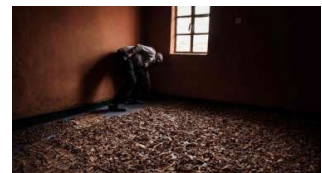
Pursuing leaders of Rwanda genocide 'urgent', says HRW

Agence France-Presse
NAIROBI

Human Rights Watch (HRW) said on Tuesday that there was an "urgent need" to pursue the remaining leaders of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, five days before commemorations begin marking its 30th anniversary.

Instigated by the Hutu extremist regime in Rwanda at the time, the United Nations estimates that around 800,000 people, mostly from the Tutsi minority, were killed over 100 days in an ethnic pogrom.

HRW said in a statement that "a significant number of individuals responsible for the genocide, including former high-level government officials and other key figures behind the massacres, have since been brought to justice."



A worker stands near victims' bones recovered from pits which were used as mass graves during 1994 Rwandan genocide. FILE PHOTO

But it added that "in recent years, several high-level alleged genocide masterminds have died, or, in the case of one alleged planner, been declared unfit to stand trial, highlighting the urgent need to continue the quest to deliver justice."

In June, a UN court in The Hague declared that a presumed founder of the genocide now in his 80s

could not be tried because of his deteriorated mental state.

International prosecutors determined in November that Aloys Ndimbaty, one of the last remaining fugitives suspected of playing a major role in the killings, had in fact died in Rwanda in 1997.

Two senior genocide suspects are still on the run.

Abortion legal in many African countries, but few women know their rights

Associated Press
ACCRA

When Efua, a 25-year-old fashion designer and single mother in Ghana, became pregnant last year, she sought an abortion at a health clinic but worried the procedure might be illegal. Health workers assured her abortions were lawful under certain conditions in the West African country, but Efua said she was still nervous.

"I had lots of questions, just to be sure I would be safe," Efua said, on condition that only her middle name be used, for fear of reprisals from the growing anti-abortion movement in her country. Finding reliable information was difficult, she said, and she didn't tell her family about her procedure. "It comes with too many judgments," she decided.

More than 20 countries across Africa have loosened restrictions on abortion in recent years, but experts say that like Efua, many women probably don't realise they are entitled to a legal abortion. And despite the expanded legality of the procedure in places like Ghana, Congo, Ethiopia and Mozambique, some doctors and nurses say they've become increasingly wary of openly providing abortions. They're fearful of triggering the ire of opposition groups.

found that people are OK with our clinic providing abortions, as long as we don't make it too obvious what we are doing."

The Maputo Protocol, a human rights treaty in effect since 2005 for all 55



The Maputo Protocol, in effect for all African Union members, gives women the right to medical abortion in certain cases. FILE PHOTO

countries of the African Union says every nation on the continent should grant women the right to a medical abortion in cases of rape, sexual assault, incest, and endangerment for the mental or physical health of the mother or fetus.

Yet to pass laws Africa is alone globally in having such a treaty, but more than a dozen of its countries have yet to pass laws granting women access to abortions. Even in those that have legalised the procedure, obstacles to access remain. And misinformation is rampant in many countries, with a recent study faulting practices by Google and Meta.

"The right to abortion exists in law, but in praxis, the reality may be a little different," said Evelyn Opondo, of the International Center for Research on Women. She noted that poorer countries in particular, such as Benin and Ethiopia, may permit abortions in some instances but struggle with a lack of resources to make them available to all women. Many women learn of their options only through word of mouth.

MSI Reproductive Choices – which provides contraception and abortion in 37 countries worldwide – reports that staff have been repeatedly targeted by anti-abortion groups across Africa. The

group cites harassment and intimidation of staff in Ethiopia. And in Nigeria, MSI's clinic was raided and temporarily closed after allegations that staffers had illegally accessed confidential documents.

"The opposition to abortion in Africa has always existed, but now they are better organised," said Mullah Tabot, of the International Planned Parenthood Federation in Kenya. She noted that a significant amount of money backing anti-abortion efforts appears to have come from conservative American groups – and several reports – reports that staff have been repeatedly targeted by anti-abortion groups across Africa. The

group cites harassment and intimidation of staff in Ethiopia. And in Nigeria, MSI's clinic was raided and temporarily closed after allegations that staffers had illegally accessed confidential documents.

DATES SWAPPED

BCCI announces rescheduling of KKR-RRR and GT-DC matches



DEBASISH BHADURI, K.R. DEEPAK

KKR's IPL game at the Eden Gardens against RR has been advanced by a day to April 16, while the GT-DC fixture at the Narendra Modi Stadium has been postponed by a day to April 17. The Kolkata police had expressed its inability to provide adequate security cover for what will be KKR's third home game this season.

157.4

Coetzee clocks fastest delivery of the IPL 2024 season



AP

Mumbai Indians' Gerald Coetzee bowled the fastest delivery of IPL 2024 (157.4kmph) in the last ball of the match against Rajasthan Royals, which Rryan Parag top-edged for a four that sailed over the wicketkeeper's head. Coetzee eclipsed 21-year-old Mayank Yadav's 155.8kmph-ball clocked against Punjab Kings.

UNITED BUNCH

Hardik is the captain and Rohit bhaiya is also a captain: Madhwal



VJAY SONEJI

Mumbai Indians pacer Akash Madhwal, who had an impressive outing against Rajasthan Royals (4-0-20-3) on Monday, said he was not worried about the crowd going after MI skipper Hardik Pandya. "We are not bothered about all of it, for us Hardik is the captain and Rohit bhaiya is also a captain," he said.

EVOLVED AGAIN

Never write off your champions like Kohli, says David Hussey



K. MURALI KUMAR

Virat Kohli seems to have "evolved again" avowed David Hussey, who warned against writing off the champion player after a debate ensued on the Indian batter's strike rate. "If you see the strike rate in this IPL, he seems to have taken his game to a new level, he's evolved again. You never write off champions."

Mayank sizzles as Super Giants force Royal Challengers into submission

Young speedster breathes fire to rip through the hosts' top-order after de Kock and Pooran's lusty hitting propel the visitors to a decent total

IPL-17

Ashwin Achal
BENGALURU

Mayank Yadav was too hot to handle. The Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) pacer cranked it up, going as high as 156.7 kmph, forcing Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) to back away from the fight.

The Mayank fire was lit in his first over, when he pinned Glenn Maxwell with a quick, short ball. Mayank then created magic, when he castled Australian Cameron Green when sheep pace.

Rajat Patidar was Mayank's third victim — another short ball doing the trick. The home team, out for the count after Mayank's blows, lost by 28 runs.

RCB's hopes rested on Impact Player Mahipal Lomror G3, 13b, 3x4, 3x6), who kept the crowd interested with some big hits. But when he fell in the 18th over, RCB's fate was sealed. RCB would have believed it gained a big advantage by winning the toss and opting to chase.

On a sticky M. Chinnaswamy Stadium pitch, it was left to Quinton de Kock (81, 56b, 8x4, 5x6) and Nicholas Pooran (40 n.o., 21b, 1x4, 5x6) to take LSG to a respectable total. Opener de Kock waged a lone hand at the top of the order. de Kock received a life on 32, when Maxwell failed to hold on to a tough catch at mid-off.

LSG skipper K.L. Rahul, cleared to play after recovering from an injury, was tentative in his 14-ball 20.



Lighting it up: Mayank proved too hot to handle, while de Kock showcased his repertoire of strokes. K. MURALI KUMAR

De Kock received a life on 32, when Maxwell failed to hold on to a tough catch at mid-off. LSG skipper K.L. Rahul, cleared to play after recovering from an injury, was tentative in his 14-ball 20. Devdutt Padikkal (6) was sent back through an excellent catch from wicket-keeper Anuj Rawat. de Kock cut loose in the 13th over, when he hammered a wayward Green for two sixes and a four.

RCB was quickly back on top, as LSG limped to 148 for five in 18 overs. Pooran sprung into action against left-arm seamer Reece Topley, who in search of the wide yorker,

erred with full tosses. Pooran hit it into the point stands for two sixes, and then smashed a short ball onto the stadium roof. Pooran hit two maximums in the final over, bowled by Mohammed Siraj, to give LSG a crucial late fillip.

Next assignment

RCB: April 6 vs RR
Jaipur, 7.30 p.m.
LSG: April 7 vs GT
Lucknow, 7.30 p.m.



Points table

	M	W	L	PTS	NRR
Rajasthan Royals	3	3	0	6	1.249
Kolkata Knight Riders	2	2	0	4	1.047
Chennai Super Kings	3	2	1	4	0.976
Lucknow Super Giants	3	2	1	4	-0.483
Gujarat Titans	3	2	1	4	-0.738
Sunrisers Hyderabad	3	1	2	2	-0.204
Delhi Capitals	3	1	2	2	-0.016
Punjab Kings	3	1	2	2	-0.337
Royal Challengers	4	1	3	2	-0.876
Mumbai Indians	3	0	3	0	-1.423

SCOREBOARD

LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS

Quinton de Kock c Dagar b Topley 81 (56b, 8x4, 5x6), K.L. Rahul c Dagar b Maxwell 20 (24b, 2x6), Devdutt Padikkal c Rawat b Siraj 6 (11b), Marcus Stoinis c Dagar b Maxwell 24 (15b, 1x4, 2x6), Nicholas Pooran (not out) 40 (21b, 1x4, 5x6), Ayush Bodiuni c du Plessis b Dayal 0 (3b), Krunal Pandya (not out) 0 (8b); Extras (w-10; lb-0); Total (for five wks. in 20 overs): 181.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-53 (Rahul, 5.3 overs), 2-73 (Padikkal, 8.5), 3-129 (Stoinis, 13.5), 4-143 (de Kock, 16.4), 5-148 (Bodiuni, 17.6).

RCB BOWLING

Topley 4-0-39-1, Dayal 4-0-24-1, Siraj 4-0-47-1, Maxwell 4-0-23-2, Dagar 2-0-22-0, Green 2-0-25-0.

ROYAL CHALLENGERS

Virat Kohli c Padikkal b M. Siddharth 22 (16b, 2x4, 1x6), Faf du Plessis run out 19 (12b, 3x4), Rajat Patidar c Padikkal b Mayank Yadav 29 (21b, 2x4, 2x6), Glenn Maxwell c Pooran b Mayank Yadav 0 (2b), Cameron Green b Mayank Yadav 9 (9b, 1x4), Anuj Rawat c Padikkal b Stoinis 11 (21b), Mahipal Lomror (Impact Player in place of Dayal) c Pooran b Yash Thakur 33 (13b, 3x4, 3x6), Dinesh Karthik c Rahul b Naveen 4 (8b), Mayank Dagar run out 0 (1b), Reece Topley run out 3 (6b), Mohammed Siraj c Pooran b Naveen 12 (8b, 2x6); Extras (lb-3, w-8); 11; Total (in 19.4 overs): 153.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-40 (Kohli, 4.2), 2-42 (du Plessis, 5.3), 3-43 (Maxwell, 5.4), 4-58 (Green, 7.4), 5-94 (Rawat, 12.5), 6-103 (Patidar, 14.2), 7-136 (Karthik, 16.5), 8-137 (Dagar, 17.1), 9-138 (Lomror, 17.5).

SUPER GIANTS BOWLING

M. Siddharth (Impact Player in place of de Kock) 3-0-21-1, Krunal 1-0-10-0, Naveen 3-4-0-25-2, Mayank Yadav 4-0-14-3, Bishnoi 3-0-33-0, Yash Thakur 4-0-38-1, Stoinis 1-0-9-1.

TOP SCORERS

PoM: Mayank.
LSG won by 28 runs.

Confident Capitals take on high-flying Knight Riders

Star seamer Pant and his men, fresh off a victory against Super Kings, will be wary of the Knight Riders challenge. K.R. DEEPAK



Different ball game: Pant and his men, fresh off a victory against Super Kings, will be wary of the Knight Riders challenge. K.R. DEEPAK

S. Prasanna Venkatesan
VISAKHAPATNAM

Today's match
VISAKHAPATNAM
Chennai Super Kings vs Delhi Capitals
Visakhapatnam, 7.30 p.m.
HEAD-TO-HEAD
PLAYED: 31
DC 15 | KKR 16
PREVIOUS MEETING
DC won by four wickets, 2023
LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 (SD & HD) & JO CINEMA

The 20-run win against Chennai Super Kings is an indicator of where Delhi Capitals was, is, and can be. The squad on paper and its performance in the first two matches was uninspiring. But, according to assistant coach Pravin Amre, it is inspired now and can do better. "That establishes that DC isn't complacent, having just outplayed the defending champion. What changed the turnaround needn't be examined ferociously. For it may easily be attributed to its familiarity of its home ground. "We were here for two weeks (pre-season), and I think the first couple of weeks, there was a dew. "But we were aware that there won't be that much (dew) that day in particular, because it was windy. And I think that was an important decision to go there and bat first," said Amre on the eve of his team's clash against Kolkata Knight Riders here. It's with this kind of fa-

military and the wind-supported swing that Khaled Ahmed generates with the new ball that DC will take on the Knight Riders. On the other hand, it might just be the right vee and match for Mitchell Starc to come good for the visitor. Starc versus the Capitals openers would make for an interesting contest; so would be the Capitals bowlers trying to contain Andre Russell from muscling shots of mayhem. Overall, it's whether the newly confident DC can ground a high-flying KKR.

Royals' investment in Parag starting to pay dividends, says Bond

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

Ever since he made his Indian Premier League debut as a 17-year-old in 2019, Rryan Parag has hit the headlines for his unwarranted reasons. While sections of the mainstream media have questioned whether the Assamese cricketer was a worthy investment, he was found to be a target for vicious trolls on social media.

Come 2024, and Parag has been the story of the IPL's 17th edition. A promotion in the batting order to No. 4 has worked wonders for Parag, who showcased his prowess on Monday at the Wankhede Stadium with an unbeaten 51 — his second on a trot to take Rajasthan Royals home against Mumbai In-



Optimisation of resources: Bond said that trading out Padikkal was a move to promote Parag to the No. 4 slot. EMMANUEL YOGINI

dians. RR bowling coach Shane Bond paid Parag a huge compliment after the game. "He reminds me of Surrya (Suryakumar Yadav), who came to Mumbai a few years ago (in 2018). He looks like that — he has extreme talent. He has just matured as a cricketer, even though he is only 22,"

Bond said. "He has had an outstanding domestic season, obviously, batting up the order. The trade we made with Devdutt (Padikkal), bringing Avesh (Khan) in, was to put Parag up into a position which was probably better suited for him." The plan to switch Parag from a finisher's role has paid rich dividends early on in the tournament. "We are getting the best out of him. The investment that RR has made in him is starting to reap the rewards. It is pretty exciting what he could offer for the rest of the season for us," Bond said.

Having started the new financial year on a wealthy note, the Royals will be hoping for Parag's form to continue to be bullish for the next eight weeks.

Mukesh and Hangargekar out on the sidelines but are ready to roar

S. Dipak Ragav
CHENNAI

Mukesh Choudhary has had a roller-coaster ride for the last two years. The left-arm pacer made a mark in his debut season for Chennai Super Kings in 2022, finishing as the team's highest wicket-taker with 16 scalps.

He impressed with his ability to swing the new ball and even travelled to Australia as a net-bowler for the T20 World Cup. Just when he thought he could press ahead, he suffered two injuries — a rib fracture and then a lower back issue that kept him out of the game for 15 months. Having recovered, the Maharashtra pacer is now ready, but knows he must bide his time before he can return to on-field action. "Coming from an injury,



Raring to go: Mukesh and Hangargekar are waiting to get into the playing XI. SPORTSPICS/IBFL

it is difficult to get into the team. We have eight fast bowlers this year, so being in the eleven is difficult. When you are back from an injury, you have to start from zero," said Mukesh during a recent media interaction. "Tushar (Desh-

pande) and Deepak (Chahar) bhai have bowled well, so they should get a chance before me. It's frustrating when you sit out but, I am waiting for my chance," he added.

Like Mukesh, his Maharashtra teammate Mahargekar, too, has had to contend with warning the benches. CSK got the pacer in 2022 after his exploits in the under-19 World Cup that year and has played only two matches so far (in 2023). The 21-year-old said that while he needed the first year to get used to the format, he was ready now. When asked how he was handling being on the bench, the U-19 World Cup winner said that reassurance from coaches helps. "It's never easy to be out when you are doing well in domestic cricket. You never know; it might take a few days or a few years for that one opportunity. As a professional, you have to be very patient. I talk with coaches and they give us the clarity as to why one is not playing," said Hangargekar.

IN BRIEF



Mauricio's brace helps Odisha overcome Punjab FC

Odisha FC beat Punjab FC 3-1 at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar in the Indian Super League on Tuesday to sustain its challenge for the League Winners Shield this season. The Juggernauts displaced Mohun Bagan Super Giant at the second spot in the table, with both teams level at 39 points. With this result, Kerala Blasters FC became the fifth team to qualify for the playoffs.

The result: Odisha FC 3 (Mauricio 34, 68-pen, Isak 61) bt Punjab FC 1 (Talal 38).

Sri Lanka closes in on victory against Bangladesh

Sri Lanka closed in on victory and another Test series sweep in Bangladesh after reducing the hosts to 268 for seven in an improbable chase of a 511 in the second match at Chittagong on Tuesday. Pacer Lahiru Kumara, left-arm spinner Prabath Jayasuriya and Kamindu Mendis took two wickets each to put Bangladesh in survival mode on day four. At stumps, Mehidy Hasan was on 44 and Tajjir Islam on 10.

The scores: Sri Lanka 531 & 157/7 decl. (Mathews 56, Hasan 4/65) & Bangladesh 178 (Zakir 54, Fernando 4/34) & 268/7 in 67 overs (Mominul 50, Mehidy 44 batting).

Shiny nominated member of Asian Athletic Commission

The Asian Athletic Commission has nominated 58-year-old Shiny Wilson, a former multiple Asian Games medalist in 400m & 800m, as one of its members. At a virtual meeting on Monday conducted by the chairman of the commission Mohd. Suleiman (Qatar) and attended by president of the Asian Athletics Association Dahlan Jaman B. Al-Hamad (Qatar), competition director C.K. Valsan (India) and secretary general A. Shuggumarran (Singapore), the calendar was discussed. The period of appointment is four years.

Bindyarani lifts 55kg bronze in IWF World Cup

Bindyarani Devi claimed a bronze in the 55kg in the IWF World Cup, an Olympic qualifying event, in Phuket on Tuesday. Bindyarani lifted 83kg in snatch and 113kg in clean and jerk for a total of 196kg. Kang Hyon Gyong (223kg) of North Korea and Mihaela Cambei (201kg) of Romania won gold and silver respectively.



Olympic gold-winning swimmer Schooling retires

Associated Press
SINGAPORE

Joseph Schooling, who defeated Michael Phelps in the 100m butterfly to win Singapore's first and only Olympic gold medal at Rio de Janeiro in 2016, announced his retirement on Tuesday.

It was the American legend Phelps' last individual race of his career and came after he won a record eight golds at the 2012 London Olympics. "A time comes when everyone has to flip the page, turn a new chapter. This is my time to do that, this is my official retirement," the 28-year-old Schooling told local media. "There are no regrets," he added at a later media conference. Schooling holds eight Singapore records, six in individual events and two in relays.

What the heck – more humour, less uniformity, please!



BETWEEN WICKETS
Suresh Menon

Every year the IPL gives rise to many non-stories and irrelevancies. This year (so far) it is the saga of Hardik Pandya versus the fans of Rohit Sharma (and the fans of his own earlier team). Perhaps it's seen as a change from all that six-hitting which can get tiresome. It has the advantage too of taking the conversation away from the stuff like which Bollywood star was seen at which match.

But the 'booming' strategy lacks imagination. It is too generalised. As many have reported, Sunil Gavaskar and Sachin Tendulkar are among those who have had the experience. But surely in the thousands of spectators across the country, there is someone with a sense of humour, someone who can raise a heckle without raising a hackle.

Reports that suggest Pandya is the first Indian to be subjected to such treatment are wrong. In his playing days, Ravi Shastri was greeted at virtually every ground in India with

Stokes pulls out of T20 World Cup

England star says opting out will hopefully be a sacrifice that will allow him to be the all-rounder he wants to be for the foreseeable future

CRICKET

Press Trust of India
LONDON

England's star player Ben Stokes on Tuesday pulled out of the upcoming T20 World Cup, saying the "sacrifice" will help him focus on regaining his fitness to bowl full throttle and be the "all-rounder I want to be for the foreseeable future".

The country's Test captain informed the England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB) about his decision, two months ahead of the showpiece that will be held in the USA and West Indies.

"I'm working hard and focusing on building my bowling fitness back up to fulfil a full role as an all-rounder in all formats of cricket. Opting out of the IPL and the World Cup will hopefully be a sacrifice that allows me to be the all-rounder I want to be for the foreseeable future," Stokes said in a statement issued by the ECB.



Main focus: Stokes says he wants to regain fitness to bowl full throttle. FILE PHOTO

Stokes, 32, was in charge of the team that suffered a 1-1 Test series loss to India earlier this year and said the four made him realise that he is not quite up to it when it comes to bowling.

"The recent Test tour of India highlighted how far behind I was from a bowling point of view after my knee surgery and nine months without bowling. I'm looking forward to

playing for Durham in the County Championship before the start of our Test summer. I wish Jos (Buttler), Motty (Matthew Mott) and all the team the best of luck in defending our title."

England will be defending the title in the Caribbean having triumphed in the last edition in Australia in 2022, with Stokes hitting the winning run in the final for a five-wicket victory over Pakistan at the MCG.

Indian men's hockey team heads to Australia

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Indian men's hockey team left for Australia late on Monday to compete in a five-match Test series beginning on April 6, a crucial assignment ahead of the Paris Olympic Games in July and August.

The Harmanpreet Singh-led side has been in good form and won three of its four matches in the FIH Pro League in Bhubaneswar recently.

After the opener on April 6, matches will be played on April 7, 10, 12 and 13.

The team:
Goalkeepers: Krishan Bahadur Pathak, P.R. Sreejesh, Suraj Karkera.
Defenders: Harmanpreet Singh (capt.), Jarnanpreet Singh, Amit Rohidas, Jugraj Singh, Sanjay, Sumit, Amir Ali.
Midfielders: Manpreet Singh, Hardik Singh (vice-capt.), Vivek Sagar Prasad, Shamsher Singh, Nilakanta Sharma, Rajkumar Pal, Vishnukant Singh.
Forwards: Akaandeep Singh, Hardeep Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Abhishek, Dilpreet Singh, Sukhjeet Singh, Gurjant Singh, Mohammed Raheel Mousene, Bobby Singh Dhali, Aranjit Singh Hundal.



Unnecessary extra: Erasmus said England should have been awarded only five runs, not six, as the batters hadn't crossed.

Erasmus admits to a blunder that cost the Kiwis the World Cup

Press Trust of India
LONDON

Marais Erasmus, who recently retired from the Elite panel, admitted to making a "massive" mistake in the 2019 ODI World Cup final that England won in controversial fashion at Lord's.

England won its maiden ODI World Cup title by edging New Zealand on the now-scrapped boundary countback rule after both teams were tied following a Super Over.

However, the game could have ended in regulation time if on-field umpire Erasmus and Kumar Dharmasena did not award England six runs for an

overthrow in the 50th over with the hosts needing nine runs from three balls. It was later realised that England should have been awarded only five as the batters had not crossed for the second run. "The next morning I opened my hotel room door on my way to breakfast and Kumar opened his door at the same time and he said, 'did you see we made a massive error?' That's when I got to know about it," Erasmus told *The Telegraph*.

"But in the moment on the field, we just said six, you know, communicated to each other, 'six, six, it's six' not realising that they hadn't crossed, it wasn't picked up. That's it."

Nagal advances in Marrakech event

TENNIS

Sports Bureau

Sumit Nagal beat Corentin Moutet of France 4-6, 6-3, 6-2 in the first round of the €651,865 ATP tennis tournament in Marrakech, Morocco, on Tuesday. In the pre-quarterfinals, Sumit will challenge fourth seed Lorenzo Sonego of Italy.

In the \$742,355 ATP event in Houston, USA, Anirudh Chandrasekar & Vijay Sundar Prashanth beat wild card entrants Michael Mmoh and Frances Tiafoe 6-3, 6-4 in the doubles

pre-quarterfinals.

The results:
€651,865 ATP, Marrakech, Morocco: Singles (first round): Sumit Nagal bt Corentin Moutet (Fra) 4-6, 6-3, 6-2.
\$742,355 ATP, Houston, USA: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Anirudh Chandrasekar & Vijay Sundar Prashanth bt Michael Mmoh & Frances Tiafoe (USA) 6-3, 6-4.
\$40,000 ITF women, Kashiwa, Japan: Singles (first round): Ya-Hsuan Lee (Tpe) bt Anikita Raina 7-6(1), 4-6, 7-6(1).

Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Anikita Raina & Chia Yi Tsao (Tpe) bt Yu-Yun Li (Tpe) & Hong Yi Gody Wong (Hkg) 6-2, 6-1.

AIFF cracks the whip, suspends HPFA general secretary Deepak

FOOTBALL

Sports Bureau
CHENNAI

The All India Football Federation on Tuesday suspended Deepak Sharma, the general secretary of the Himachal Pradesh Football Association, from all football-related activities with immediate effect.

"The AIFF is determined to promote women's football in a safe and enabling environment and will take all necessary steps

to ensure this," Kalyan Chaube, the president of AIFF, said in a statement.

Deepak, accused of physically assaulting two women footballers of Khad FC in an inebriated state, was released on bail by the Mysore Police, Goa, on March 31, a day after he was arrested, following an FIR lodged by the girls.

The AIFF Executive Committee, after an emergency meeting on April 2, has also dissolved the ad hoc committee it had formed to investigate the incident and has referred

the matter to an independent disciplinary committee. The federation has also taken necessary steps to ensure the safe return of the complainants to their hometowns and has offered to "provide any support that might be necessary" to aggrieved players.

"The incident in Goa during IWL 2, should not be amplified to undermine the AIFF's developmental efforts in women's football.

The particular case has now been referred to the disciplinary committee and will be taken up emergency," the AIFF president added.

Reiterating the Federation's commitment to women's football, Chaube said: "There are currently 27,030 registered women players in the country. Between September 2022 and March 2024, 15,293 women footballers have been registered in the AIFF Central Registration System portal. The increase in the number of women footballers in various age groups is one of the most encouraging trends in Indian football."

Inter closes in on title after going past Empoli

EURO LEAGUES

Reuters
MILAN

Runaway leader Inter Milan continued its seemingly unstoppable march to the Serie A title after an early goal from Federico Dimarco and a late effort from Alexis Sanchez secured a 2-0 win at home against Empoli on Monday.

Inter is on top of the table with 79 points, 14 ahead of city rival AC Milan with eight matches left to play. Empoli is 18th with 25 points. The result pushed Empoli into the relegation zone, level on points with Frosinone in 17th and one point ahead of 19th-placed Sassuolo.

Dimarco broke the deadlock for Inter in the sixth minute when he fired the ball left-footed into the bottom corner from the edge of the box.

The rest of the first half ebbed and flowed, with Inter pressing to extend its lead, and Empoli goalkeeper Elia Caprile standing firm to deny. Yet, Empoli gained momentum towards the end of the half, creating chances that were narrowly off target.



Game-changer: Alexis Sanchez's goal in the 81st minute sealed the contest in Inter's favour. AP

newed vigour after the break and Nicolo Barella was inches away from scoring after beating three Empoli defenders.

Substitute Sanchez was left unmarked to tap home Denzel Dumfries' cross and double Inter's lead in the 81st minute after a flowing passing move from the host. Davide Frattesi almost grabbed a third for Inter with the last kick of the match, but the ball slipped just past the post.

In LaLiga, substitute Saul Niguez scored a late winner to give Atletico Madrid a hard-fought 2-1 vic-



GETTY IMAGES

Grigor Dimitrov rolls back the time

The 32-year-old Bulgarian returns to the top-10 after nearly five and half years and has also rehabilitated the one-handed backhand following a brief exile

N. Sudarshan

Ever since Grigor Dimitrov broke out as a teenager by winning the junior Wimbledon and US Open back to back in 2008, he has carried a crushing and frankly unbearable burden. He burst on to the scene playing a style that bore an uncanny similarity to Roger Federer's, and in no time, he was nicknamed 'Baby Fed' and pushed to the front of that imaginary queue of tennis' next great champions.

Over the next decade and a little more however, as the two travelled the world and crossed paths at many a tournament, they represented two divergent strands. Their game mechanics matched, but not fortunes. If the service motion, fluid on-court movement, the crisp and snappy forehand and the one-handed backhand mirrored each other's, results were chalk and cheese. Federer raked up more than 100 Tour titles and 20 Slams; Dimitrov barely touched double-digit trophies and didn't reach a single Major final.

It is only now, well into the third decade of his life and with Federer's shadow no longer looming large, that the Bulgarian is running his own race. Last week, en route the Miami Masters final, Dimitrov, soon to be 33, came roaring back into the top-10 (No. 9) for the first time since October 2018. And marching into town was the one-handed backhand – a purist's last-remaining link to the tennis of yore – which was exiled for the first time in ATP rankings history when Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas slipped out of the top-10 in February.

"Whatever I say will not do justice [to the achievement]," Dimitrov told the press in Miami about the feat. "I'm on a very different path in my life and my career. I kept believing and having faith in myself. When I didn't, the team around me was constantly pushing me in the right direction. I had very good discipline. My family was by my side, and all the close friends. It's all love at the end of the day. This is just a cherry on the cake."

Rising to the top again

This journey of Dimitrov back into the upper echelons of men's tennis is a story of diligence and rigour. Last May in Geneva, he made it to his first Tour-level final in more than five years and followed it up with semifinal runs at Washington 500 and Shanghai Masters. He ended 2023 on a high, felling Daniil Medvedev and Tsitsipas at the Paris Masters before finishing a worthy runner-up to Novak Djokovic.

At the 2024 season-opener in Brisbane, Dimitrov secured his first trophy since the ATP World Tour Finals way back in 2017. And in Miami, he beat three top-10 players in Hubert Hurkacz, Carlos Alcaraz – for a second straight time – and

Back in business

Longest gaps between stints in ATP top-10 (since 1973):

Weeks between	Players	Period
308 weeks	Gilles Simon	[Oct. 2009 to Sept. 2015]
264 weeks	Albert Costa	[May 1997 to June 2002]
260 weeks	Grigor Dimitrov	[Nov. 2018 to Apr. 2024]
252 weeks	Gael Monfils	[Nov. 2011 to Sept. 2016]
239 weeks	Stan Wawrinka	[Oct. 2008 to May 2013]



Alexander Zverev consecutively. The red-hot Italian Jannik Sinner eventually stopped Dimitrov in his tracks, but nobody could deny him his space under the beachside sun, as he conjured the same mystery and magic that had made him a tennis beloved a decade-and-a-half ago.

It was particularly evident against Alcaraz, who appeared to have rediscovered his mojo with the title in Indian Wells – the Spaniard's first since Wimbledon 2023. But Dimitrov bamboozled the 20-year-old two-time Major champion with a silken, virtuoso display.

"He made me feel like I was 13," Alcaraz said, with a shake of the head and a wide grin. "You know, it was crazy. I was talking to my team saying that I don't know what I have to do. I don't know his weakness. I don't know anything."

According to Daniel Vallverdu, one of Dimitrov's coaches, the key has been a certain stability in results. "Grigor, over the last 12 months, has really been consistent with building his base level and not having many ups and downs," he told tennis writer Christopher Clarey. "That builds the right groundwork, so when you go into these bigger matches, you trust

your base level more and don't feel you have to overplay.

"In the matches against top-10 players, he's been a little more aggressive. He's been utilising his weapons, which are his serve, forehand and variety on the backhand. He's probably the fittest he's been in his career and also in a good place mentally.

"He is looking forward to pushing himself for the next few years of his career, because he knows he's coming to the later stages and wants to put it all on the table," added Vallverdu, who has coached Grand Slam champions such as Andy Murray, Stan Wawrinka and Juan Martin del Potro in the past.

The churn

Dimitrov's current stirring of the pot comes at a time when another golden generation is taking shape with Alcaraz and Sinner looking to lead the way. Djokovic is still there, perched at the top of the rankings and set to soon become the oldest World No. 1, surpassing Federer (36y 320d). Dimitrov, incidentally, is the second oldest man in this week's top-10.

There is every chance that Dimitrov – the present good run notwithstanding – may get ambushed at a time when tennis is increasingly power-driven and relies heavily on explosive athleticism. But the three-time Major finalist is determined to be more than just a minor irritant.

"The toughest player I have ever played, at his prime, has been Roger," Dimitrov said. "At Wimbledon once, I wanted to dig a hole and disappear. I haven't had that feeling yet against anyone. Personally, it starts to get more interesting now. Like how can I make it more difficult for these guys. Slowly and surely I am starting to understand and learn that. Since I have played against so many different generations, I always had to adapt or learn. At the moment, Jannik is playing outstanding tennis. Can he play better, I don't know.

"I, for one, also want to thank myself for the work that I have been putting in, for the discipline, for the hard hours, for the pain and for everything that we've gone through behind the scenes. You need to embrace and cherish them. Those are things that make you a better person.

"My mom always used to say, 'before being a great champion you have to be a great person.' This is the thing I have always focused on since I was a kid. At some point, all the trophies kind of paled in comparison to everything else. That's why I feel like right now I'm on a very interesting and different path."

THE GIST

▼ The three-time Major semifinalist has had a year of consistent results. Starting May 2023, he has reached five finals and won one title

▼ In this period, he has beaten Alcaraz, Rune, Zverev, Medvedev and Tsitsipas, showing that he is up for the inter-generational battle

▼ At the Miami Masters, Dimitrov overcame three top-10 players consecutively for the first time since his victory at the 2017 ATP Finals