



THE TIMES OF INDIA



INDIA'S LARGEST ENGLISH NEWSPAPER

Mysterious 'Havana Syndrome' symptoms experienced by US diplomats in recent years have been linked to a Russian intelligence unit, according to a joint media probe. Kremlin has dismissed the report, P 14

Pakistan officials say 12 people, including the mastermind, have been arrested in connection with suicide bombing that killed five Chinese nationals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, P 14

Israeli soldiers withdraw from al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza after a two-week raid, leaving widespread devastation. During the raid, 200 Palestinians were killed & hundreds of others were arrested. Israeli Army says 600 soldiers have been killed in the war since Oct 7 terror attack, P 14

Pakistan HC suspends 14-year sentence handed out to jailed ex-PM Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi in the Toshakhana graft case. However, the 71-yr-old won't be released as he is convicted in two other cases, P 14

Adoption rates now return to pre-Covid highs

Latest govt data show 4,009 children were adopted from April 2023 to March 2024 by families in India and abroad. Last time number of adoptions (in-country and inter-country) crossed 4,000 was in 2018-19, just before the pandemic, when it had touched 4,027. Also, in-country adoptions at 3,560 are highest since 2015-16, according to data of Central Adoption Resource Authority. **P 9**

Israel strike kills Iran commander in Syria

Israeli jets flattened a building in Iranian consulate in Damascus, killing Md Reza Zahedi, a top Revolutionary Guards commander who oversaw Iran's covert military operations in Syria and Lebanon. The attack is part of a years-long shadow war between Iran and Israel. **P 14**

Kerala author quits Akademi in protest

Kerala litterateur C Radhakrishnan Monday resigned as member of Sahitya Akademi to protest inauguration of this year's literary festival by Union minister Arjun Ram Meghwal, "a person without any known credential whatsoever in literature". **P 10**

Marginal rise in prices of key meds

National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority has let pharma companies marginally hike prices of scheduled formulations included in list of essential medicines from April 1. They include painkillers, antibiotics, diabetes medications and anti-rabies immunoglobulin. **P 10**

I-T: No coercive action against Cong till polls

Don't Want To Create Problem, Dept Tells SC

AmitAnand.Choudhary @timesgroup.com

HOPE FROM COURT
 > Cong says it got relief after it moved courts against 'tax terrorism'. Says with SC intervention, it can 'now expect a level playing field' for Lok Sabha elections
 > Tax demand on Congress rose to ₹3,567 crore as of Saturday, more than 2.5 times its cash and assets declared as of March 23
 > Cong has accused the govt of crippling it ahead of LS elections and 'rigging' polls. I-T denied freezing accounts

New Delhi: Days after issuing notices to Congress raising demand of around Rs 3,500 crore, income tax department on Monday assured Supreme Court it would not take any coercive steps to recover the amount as it did not want to cause any problem for the party during elections. At the outset of the hearing on Congress's appeal against a Delhi high court order, solicitor general Tushar Mehta told a bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Augustine George Masih that he wanted to make a statement on behalf of I-T department. He said no further action would be taken against the opposition party during the ongoing general elections. He said the case could be posted for hearing after June 4 when the results of Lok Sabha polls would be declared. He said he would oppose Congress's claim then. "Since elections are going

on, we do not want to create any problem for the party. We will not take action for recovery of the amount and the case could be heard in the second week of June," he told the bench. The bench was hearing an appeal filed by Congress in 2018 against a 2016 judgment of Delhi HC. In the appeal, the party had moved an interim application seeking stay of the demand notices issued by I-T department in March. Initially, Mehta said notices had been issued for recovery of Rs 1,700 crore but senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi said the total amount was around Rs 3,500 crore which was accepted by the SG. Singhvi appreciated the I-T department for its gracious approach. The court noted I-T department's stand; the matter has been listed for hearing on July 24.

► 'Election-rigging', P 16

Kerala's plea on borrowing caps with 5-J bench

Observing that Kerala's financial hardship is the creation of its own monetary mismanagement, Supreme Court Monday refused to grant interim relief to allow the state to borrow more money and referred its petition against the Centre's decision to limit borrowing capacity of states to the Constitution bench for adjudication. The SC held that Kerala has failed to establish the three judicial prongs—proving a prima facie case, balance of convenience and irreparable injury. **P 9**

CJI: Probe needs & privacy rights must be balanced

New Delhi: Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud on Monday disapproved of "unwarranted" confiscation of personal devices during raids by law-enforcing and investigating agencies, saying the need for searches and seizures for investigation had to be balanced with an individual's right to privacy, report Dhananjay Mahapatra & Rajshankar Jha. The CJI also praised the newly enacted Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam for built-in safeguards against misuse. Chandrachud was delivering the 20th DP

Instances of raids conducted and incidents of unwarranted confiscation of personal devices highlight pressing need to strike a balance between investigative imperatives and privacy rights... the delicate balance... stands at the cornerstone of a fair and just society
 —CJI D Y Chandrachud

Kohli Memorial lecture, an annual event organised by CBI in memory of its first director.
 ► 'Need to uphold...', P 16

IN THE COURTS

> SC seeks affidavit from CBI on slow progress in cases of alleged quid pro quo and laundering against Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, says one's position as CM mustn't hinder progress of criminal trials | P 9

> SC refuses to stay judicial probe into farmer's death on Hry border during agri stir, turns down plea of Hry govt that such investigation will hit morale of police force | P 9

> Allahabad HC fixes April 4 for hearing a plea regarding maintainability of a suit seeking 'removal' of Shahi Idgah mosque in Mathura that stands adjacent to Krishna Janmasthan temple

> Right to remain silent a fundamental right, probe agency can't seek extension of custody of PFI member due to accused not giving satisfactory replies: Telangana HC

> State can't force everyone to surrender licensed firearms under blanket order ahead of polls: Allahabad HC | P 11

> Pay ₹14L to biker gored to death by stray cow 5 yrs ago: Rajkot court to civic body | P 9

SC declines to stop puja of deities in Gyanvapi cellar

Namaz Will Go On As Usual, Maintain Status Quo: Court

Dhananjay.Mahapatra @timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Supreme Court on Monday declined to interfere with a Varanasi court's order allowing a priest nominated by the Kashi Vishwanath Temple Trust to conduct daily puja at 'Vyas Ji Ka Tehkhana' inside Gyanvapi mosque's cellar and said Muslims would continue to offer namaz as usual inside the mosque. After a one-and-a-half-hour-long hearing on the plea of Gyanvapi mosque management committee, a bench of CJI D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said since carrying out puja and other ritu-

Bhojshala survey will continue: SC

SC on Monday allowed ASI to carry on with a survey of Bhojshala temple-Kamal Maula mosque complex in MP's Dhar but directed that no action would be taken on the basis of the survey report without its nod. It also directed ASI not to carry out any excavation. **P 9**

als by Hindus in the cellar did not interfere with the offering of namaz by Muslims, "status quo as obtained at present shall be maintained till final decision". To Anjuman Intezamia Masjid management committee's objection to the puja, SC said allowing puja had not resulted in obstructions for namaz.

► Final hearing in July, P 16

GST Mar tally 2nd highest at ₹1.8L cr, ₹20L cr+ for yr

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Goods and services tax collections rose 11.5% to Rs 1,78,484 crore in March, the second highest monthly mopup, pushing up 2023-24 collections past the Rs 20 lakh crore mark for the first time. "FY2023-24 marks a milestone with a gross GST collection of Rs 20.2 lakh crore, an 11.7% increase compared to the previous year. The average monthly collection for this fiscal year stands at Rs 1,68,000 crore, surpassing the previous year's average of Rs 1,50,000 crore," the finance ministry said in a statement.

ECO WATCH

> Rlys earns ₹2.6L cr in FY24 from passenger & freight movement, its highest ever
 > March UPI transactions at all-time high of ₹1,344cr
 > Share of SUVs in car sales crosses 50% for first time for a full year in FY24 **P 13**

In March, overall collections during the month were driven by domestic demand as central and state GST collections grew 16.9% and 17.2%, respectively.

► Eco resurgence, P 13

Make economy 'atmanirbhar', take ₹ global, PM tells RBI

Mumbai: PM Modi said on Monday that RBI should take steps to ensure fast, inclusive & sustainable (atmanirbhar) progress even while insulating the economy from problems faced by other nations, & internationalise the rupee.

Speaking at an event to mark RBI's 90th anniversary, the PM asked the central bank to assess the credit needs of emerging sectors and take proactive steps to prepare banks. "RBI will have to think out of the box, and governor Shaktikanta Das is an expert in that. Particularly, in emerging sectors," he said. Modi said the banking sector, which had earlier struggled with NPAs, is now generating profits. **P 13**

Pinarayi hits out at ally Rahul for taking on CPI in Wayanad

Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan on Monday said it was "inappropriate" for Congress to field sitting MP Rahul Gandhi in Wayanad against CPT's Annie Raja. "What is the justification for contesting against LDF, which is part of the INDIA bloc, and that too against Annie Raja, who is a nationally recognised Left leader?" Vijayan said at a presser.

DANCE OF DEMOCRACY PAGES 10 & 11

Vijayan also said Congress played a "key role" in levelling corruption allegations about AAP govt's liquor licence policy in Delhi "that led ED to go after Arvind Kejriwal". **P 11**

Jumla of 2 crore new jobs per year

Jumla of double the income for farmers

Jumla of women security

Jumla of controlling Inflation

Jumla of 15 lakhs in every account

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR PREVIOUS JUMLAS?

MERE VIKAS KA DO HISAAB

HAATH BADLEGA HALAAT

Issued by All India Congress Committee.

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ED: CM Said Nair Didn't Report To Him But To Atishi, Bharadwaj

Nair Made Same Claim 1.5 Yrs Ago, Why Bring It Up Now, Asks AAP

Continued from P1

Since the investigation of the case is stated to be pending qua role of the arrestee, for unearthing further proceeds of crime and identifying other persons who may be involved or connected with the above, the accused is remanded to judicial custody till April 15

WHAT THE COURT SAID

Since the investigation...is stated to be pending qua role of the arrestee, for unearthing the further proceeds of crime and identifying the other person who may be involved or connected, the accused is remanded to judicial custody till April 15

WHAT ED SAID

Kejriwal is highly influential and there is every likelihood he will influence the witnesses and tamper with the evidence, if released, which may hamper the ongoing investigation

Kejriwal told investigators co-accused Vijay Nair reported to AAP ministers Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj, not him

The arrestee has not answered questions posed to him by questioning the authenticity of digital evidence shown to him. The arrestee also did not reveal the passwords of his digital devices, which inhibits the evidence collection and also shows the non-cooperation of the arrestee

It is clear that a senior functionary like Vijay Nair, who closely worked with the arrestee, wouldn't be able to assert himself without the sanction and approval of the head of the party. This is also because the ultimate benefit of these conspiracies/meetings was reaped by the AAP in Goa election campaign

ED told the court that "on being asked about the extent of interaction and reporting of Vijay Nair to the arrestee, he (CM) stated that Nair didn't report to him but to Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj and (that) his interaction with Nair was limited. However, the statements of Nair himself reveal that he stayed in a cabinet minister's bungalow and worked from the camp office of the CM."

When Kejriwal was asked to explain why someone who reported to other leaders of AAP would work from his camp office — which is meant for the CM's work and was not for the party — he said he was unaware of the persons who work at the camp office and "evaded" answering the question, ED claimed.

The agency pointed out that Nair was not a small-time volunteer of AAP but its head of media and communications.

Addressing a press conference, AAP leader Jasmine Shah said: "Nair had given this statement (that he didn't report to the CM but to Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj) to ED when he was arrested. Why did ED bring up this statement after a year-and-a-half? BJP has understood that putting Kejriwal in jail will not crush the party and it is preparing 2-3 more leaders (to send to jail)."

In its application, ED said that Kejriwal had questioned the authenticity of the digital evidence shown to him and did not reveal passwords, which would hamper evidence collection and also showed his "non-cooperation".

The agency said the CM also

claimed he was unaware when shown evidence of more than 10 meetings Nair had with the other co-accused in the liquor business, including liquor manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers and even middlemen like Dinesh Arora and Abhishek Boinpally. He was asked to explain the authority under which Nair attended these meetings.

"It is clear that a senior functionary like Vijay Nair who closely worked with the arrestee wouldn't be able to assert himself without the sanction and approval of the head of the party. This is also because the ultimate benefit of these conspiracies/meetings was reaped by AAP in the Goa election campaign," ED said.

It claimed that Kejriwal was shown evidence of hawala transfers to the tune of about Rs 45 crore which was corroborated with CDR (call details record) locations, call records, IT-seized data of a hawala firm in Goa, proof of payments being done and WhatsApp (messages) showing this arrangement.

The agency claimed that the CM was also shown multiple statements of witnesses who worked on the AAP campaign in Goa and who had received cash from one Chanpreet Singh who was working for the campaign. He had collected and facilitated collection of Rs 45 crore in cash through hawala and also received Rs 2,20,340 directly in his bank account from AAP, ED claimed.

The agency alleged that Kejriwal said he was unaware of all this and even gave false and contrary evidence vis-à-vis other members of AAP. When confronted with the statements given by his own party leaders, he called them "confused", said ED.

ED gave the example of national treasurer of AAP N D Gupta (Rajya Sabha MP) who had in his statement said that Kejriwal as national convener of the party appoints the state election in-charge/prabhari who is supposed to manage all poll campaign-related matters. In the case of Goa elections, Durgesh Pathak was the man.



Photo: IANS

WHAT KEJRIWAL SAID (OUTSIDE COURT)

Whatever PM (Narendra Modi) is doing is not good for the country

SUNITA KEJRIWAL

He was questioned for 11 days, the questioning is complete. The court has not declared him guilty. Why has he been put in jail? They (BJP) have only one objective -- to put him in jail ahead of Lok Sabha polls. The country's people will give a reply to this dictatorship

WHAT BJP'S VIRENDRA SACHDEVA SAID

If Kejriwal has even a little bit of political dignity and is concerned about public work then he should immediately resign

Meanwhile, Kejriwal

moved applications seeking permission to have a special diet, medicines, books and a religious locket which he was wearing. The court granted these requests. It also asked the jail authorities to provide a table and chair, besides other things as per the jail manual.

Permitting the CM to carry devices, such as sugar sensor and glucometer, the court directed the prison authorities to provide him with laxatives, glucose, toffees and banana, in case of a sudden fall in his sugar levels.

Kejriwal moved another application seeking directions to the jail authorities to allow him to use his own mattress, bed sheet, two pillows and quilt. The court acceded to his request. He was also allowed to bring his own spectacles. The court further directed that the blood pressure and sugar levels of the CM be regularly monitored.

The books Kejriwal sought were Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana and 'How Prime Ministers Decide' authored by senior journalist Neerja Chowdhury.



Sunita Kejriwal

Sunita Kejriwal: Country will give reply to 'dictatorship'

New Delhi: After chief minister Arvind Kejriwal was remanded to 15-day judicial custody by a special Rouse Avenue court, his wife, Sunita, questioned the logic of the ruling. Talking to reporters outside the courtroom, Sunita said, "If the investigation was over, why has he (Arvind Kejriwal) been sent to jail? The people of the country will give answer to this dictatorship." She added: "He was questioned for 11 days and the court did not say he was an accused."

While walking out of the courtroom, Kejriwal said: "Whatever the PM is doing is not good for the country."

Addressing a press conference later, AAP leader Jasmine Shah alleged that Enforcement Directorate had adopted a two-pronged strategy — keep Kejriwal away from campaigning in elections and topple AAP by poaching its MLAs. Shah claimed that ED did not give any statement on what evidence or leads it got from questioning Kejriwal.

"They (ED) questioned him for 11 days and still did not find any evidence against him. They could have released him now. But their aim was never to question him, their main objective was to put Arvind Kejriwal behind bars," Shah alleged. The AAP leader said ED and BJP had been conspiring against Kejriwal to stop him from campaigning so that AAP didn't perform well in the election.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva, however, alleged that Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj were looking after AAP's campaign in Goa during the assembly elections. "We hope that when they are summoned, AAP will not claim that these two ministers were innocent," Sachdeva said. Terming Kejriwal's judicial custody as "the victory of truth", Sachdeva said the CM should immediately resign if he was concerned about the public work.

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AAP govt faces challenge of keeping files moving

Atul Mathur@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: With chief minister Arvind Kejriwal remanded in judicial custody for 15 days by a lower court, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) govt now faces the challenge of running routine governance in his absence.

Though Kejriwal does not hold any portfolio, officials said there are certain files that are moved only through CM. While the ministers concerned have been currently holding up all such files, sources confirmed the party will now have to take a decision on how to process them further to ensure governance does not suffer.

Arrested by Enforcement Directorate (ED) on March 21 in a money laundering case linked to the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy, Kejriwal was sent to judicial custody till April 15 by Rouse Avenue court on Monday.

Though AAP has maintained that Kejriwal will not resign and continue to remain CM despite his incarceration, practical difficulties in running his office would remain. The order of the special judge on Monday did not mention if Kejriwal was permitted to meet his ministers, officers or staff during his judicial custody

Though CM Arvind Kejriwal does not hold any portfolio, officials say there are certain files that are moved only through CM

or was allowed to get official files in his cell to allow him to study and dispose of them.

As per the Govt of NCT of Delhi Act, 1991 and Transaction of Business Rules, all files received or sent to central govt and lieutenant governor are routed through chief minister. CM heads the council of ministers and communicates to LG all decisions of the cabinet, apart from sharing information relating to the administration of the affairs of the national capital.

A senior Delhi govt official said all such files that require chief minister to take a look and give his opinion had been held up by the ministers of the departments concerned since the day Kejriwal had been arrested by ED.

"We are still contemplating how to go about with the governance aspect. We hope to get permission from the court to send the related files

and documents to CM on need basis," said an AAP functionary, requesting anonymity.

"We are also expecting to get permission for video-conferencing with chief minister," the functionary added.

No major decisions are likely to be taken in cabinet meetings due to the model code of conduct in the country in view of the Lok Sabha elections. The National Capital Civil Service Authority has also not met since Sept last year and several proposals related to transfer and postings and disciplinary action against Group 'A' officers are pending with the panel.

According to an official, since Kejriwal does not hold any portfolio, routine work of any department was unlikely to be affected in the short run. While the law has no issues, there could be restrictions on Kejriwal meeting specific number of people within the stipulated period.

"As per the Constitution, CM has to take calls on critical issues related to governance and policies. How he will deal with these while being in jail will have to be seen. There is nothing like work from jail as there is a cap on persons who can meet an inmate and the time allowed for it," he said.



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CHANGE Begins Here

'Non-release of DJB funds': SC seeks finance secy's response

Dhananjay Mahapatra
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Supreme Court on Monday sought the Delhi finance secretary's response by Friday to the AAP gov't's allegation that of a budget of Rs 6,505 crore approved by the assembly for Delhi Jal Board, only Rs 4,578 crore, including Rs 760 on March 31, had been released for the 2023-24 financial year.

For the AAP gov't, senior advocate A M Singhvi and advocate Sadan Farasat said ever since Parliament enacted a law to nullify an SC five-judge bench's ruling giving full control over bureaucracy to the Delhi gov't, secretaries were not heeding the elected gov't's orders for release of funds. This was causing serious problems in maintaining water supply and the pipeline network in the capital city, they said.

A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said it would ask the finance secretary on Friday why the funds approved in the budget were not released to DJB.

Appearing for the lieutenant governor, senior advocates Mukul Rohatgi and Abhinav Mukerji told the bench that the LG had nothing to do with release of funds as the finance secretary worked under the Delhi gov't and the minister for water was the chairperson of DJB.

"Please delete LG from the array of parties," they requested. However, the bench said the LG would continue to be a party even though it issued notice only to the finance secretary of Delhi gov't.

When Rohatgi mentioned that the financial year had come to an end, Farasat said this was the precise reason why Delhi gov't had wanted early hearing of its plea and that the SC had assured that even if the financial year came to an end, if the Kejriwal gov't's plea was found genuine, it would order release of funds for DJB.

Farasat said Rs 1,927 crore had not been released and told the court that Rs 760 crore was released on the last day of the financial year on March 31. He said a meeting was called by the minister concerned to sort out problems, if any, on release of funds but because of the legislation taking away Delhi gov't's control over bureaucracy, secretaries of the water department did not attend the meeting.

ASI Plans To Dig Deeper For More Historical Legacy At Purana Qila

GOING BACK IN TIME: Last Excavated Remains At Site From Kushan Period

Anuja Jaiswal@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has planned to further excavate the Purana Qila site near the Kunti temple which has so far revealed historical legacy over 2,500 years old.

The last excavated remains were from the Kushan era. The excavated site has been open to visitors and is protected with a bamboo shed. The shed has been lined with tarpaulin to protect the site from rain.

On Sunday, many visited the site to see the 2,500-year-old historical remains and clicked pictures. This was the special attraction of an event organised by Sabhyata Foundations.

According to officials, the plan is to expand the area for excavation to expose different cultural layers and showcase these to visitors.

Experts say that there are possibilities of getting evidence of Sunga, Mauryan, and pre-Mauryan periods. The excavation is likely to start soon.

Selected artefacts — gold foil, ivory sealing, copper coins, a tortoise amulet of the Kushan period, copper wheel, Gajalakshmi plaque of the Gupta period, ivory locket of the Sultanate period — were also displayed on the occasion to show the rich cultural legacy of the site.

The fort on Mathura Road was once the residence of the Mughal ruler Humayun. The fort is popularly known as



Purana Qila, located on Mathura Road, is popularly known as Indraprastha or Pandavon ka Qila

Indraprastha or Pandavon ka Qila. The excavations that have happened under the direction of Dr Vasant Kumar Swarnkar have spanned over three seasons — 2013-2014, 2017-2018 and 2022-2023 — and have yielded a plethora of structures, antiquities and pottery.

The structural evidence that has been found include a Mauryan period ring well which consists of 22 rings of terracotta along with two post holes, a Mauryan period industrial set-up along with debitage including slag, raw material and beads made with semi-precious stones.

Sunga and Kushan period house structures with brick walls and clay floors were also found. Rajput period structures — a guard cell and a post hole — have also been found.

Kushan period kilns, which were used by potters, have also been found.

Apart from these structures, painted grey ware which is associated with Mahabharata sites have been found. It was used as tableware. Its colour ranges from ash grey to slate. The pottery has geometrical patterns in black paint.

Northern black polished ware is as-

The structural evidence that has been found include a Mauryan period ring well which consists of 22 rings of terracotta along with two post holes, a Mauryan period industrial set-up along with debitage including slag, raw material and beads made with semi-precious stones

sociated with the second urbanisation. The pottery has a range of polishes which can be gold-coloured as well. It is considered to be deluxe ware. Black slipped ware and grey ware were also found during the Sunga period.

The excavation in recent times has yielded a multitude of antiquities with a wide range of variety in it.

Some of the antiquities include Vairakuntha Vishnu — this sculpture was in the Rajput period. It is made of stone.

There are three faces of Vishnu, holding a chakra, shankh, and mace. There is a depiction of a Gadadevi as well.

The Gajalakshmi plaque dates to the Gupta period. It is made of terracotta. Lakshmi is seated and is flanked by two elephants on either side. Also, various types of beads made of semi-precious stones such as Jasper, Carnelian, Agate, Aquamarine, Amethyst, Crystal, Jade — were found as well.

HC seeks details of land DDA earmarked for developing forest

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Delhi High Court on Monday asked Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to furnish details of the land parcel the agency said it has earmarked for developing a 50-acre forest in the capital.

Justice Jasmeel Singh asked DDA to file an affidavit, pointing out that such land should be "sustainable" after the agency said it had identified a 50-acre land in Madanpur Khadar of Yamuna Pushta zone.

"How can it be on a riverbed? It will all wash away. You have earlier taken the stand that such land can't be used. It should be sustainable even for a once in a decade flood situation," the court said.

It asked DDA to share details of the land and remarked that "it should be able to withstand the fury of the river", after lawyers Gautam Narayan and Aditya N Prasad, appearing as amici curiae to assist the court, said the land proposed for afforestation fell on the Yamuna riverbed and therefore cannot be used for this purpose.

They maintained that accountability must be fixed on the authority for admittedly felling trees without permission and those concerned should not go "scot free". The court was dea-

ling with contempt proceedings against DDA over cutting down of several trees in the Southern Ridge without due permission for constructing an approach road near South Asian University in Maidan Garhi.

The DDA counsel apologised and said although the trees were cut down, there was no "wilful disobedience" as the field staff "misconstrued" a Delhi gov't notification exempting around 4.9 hectares of the land from taking approval of the tree officer as the final permission for felling. The amici also said that instead of DDA's proposal for afforestation at an alternative plot, the agency must be directed to carry out plantation at the spot where the felling took place.

The high court, however, disagreed. "Right or wrong, the trees are gone. Restoring the status quo ante will take six-seven years for trees to come up. Today, they are giving land for the development of a forest. Those trees would be kept there. We will give directions to the user agency. Unfortunately, the trees are gone," the bench added.

The court said DDA did not "inspire confidence" and made it clear that "nobody can touch the ridge. Not even Ridge Management Board. It cannot grant permission to cut the trees."

Time for India to seek cultural rebalance in world: Jaishankar

Anuja Jaiswal@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: After establishing its place in the global political and economic arena with a successful G20 presidency, the time has come for India to project its rich heritage, civilisation and way of life and bring about a cultural rebalancing to undo the distortion of an era dominated by a few countries or regions, said Union external affairs minister S Jaishankar.

He was speaking at an event organised at Purana Qila on Sunday by Sabhyata Foundation, which took charge of four of Delhi's historic monuments under the 'Adopt a Heritage 2.0' initiative. Sabhyata Foundation has been entrusted with the upkeep and promotion of Purana Qila, Humayun's Tomb, Safdar-

jung's Tomb and Mehrauli Archaeological Park.

Citing India's G20 presidency as an example of 'political and economic rebalancing' in which India established itself as a world leader, Jaishankar said, "The battle today is for cultural rebalancing — how we recognise and present our diversity to the world..." He added that there was much talk about a "rising Bharat" but it was crucial for Indians to know themselves. "If we are really to become a self-confident nation seeking to project our civilisation's power to the world, we have to develop a unique mindset, our own metaphors, our own situation and, in fact, become more aware of our own history," he said.

Jaishankar added that to someone like him, who has spent a large part of his life



(From left) Meenakshi Lekhi, S Jaishankar and Puneet Dalmia at Mahabharata musical play at Old Fort

abroad and was, therefore, familiar with many other traditions and cultures, there was

nothing that could really compare with the epic Mahabharat, not just for its

complexity but also its relevance to today's world. Sabhyata Foundation, as

'Smarak Saarthi', will undertake the responsibility of enhancing visitor experience at the four heritage sites, positioning them as must-visit destinations. Its primary goals will include increasing tourist footfall, enhancing amenities and creating memorable experiences while focusing on hygiene, accessibility, safety and knowledge at the spots.

Puneet Dalmia, MD and CEO, Dalmia Bharat, said monuments and cultural sites are the heart of a nation's identity, shaping its history and heritage. "I have heard a lot of criticism about our heritage infrastructure. Look how well things are presented overseas. We have so much, but don't know how to tell the story well". This must change. Citizens shouldn't

have to criticise but collaborate with gov't and be part of the solution," said Dalmia, ASI and Union culture ministry selected Dalmia Bharat as 'Monument Mitra' for Red Fort in public-private partnership mode. "The Red Fort experience is proof of concept and needs to be scaled up," he said.

Junior culture minister Meenakshi Lekhi said, "The place where we are sitting today is Indraprastha, capital of the Kuru kingdom. Professor BB Lal, who was the first director general of ASI, tried to do research on the archaeology of our epics and today they can be seen in their true form. The excavated sites show 10 layers of different civilisations." Lal excavated the Purana Qila site in 1951 and 1952.

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Crucial Test For AAP Ahead As Mayoral Elections Near

Polls Likely At April-End Even As CM Is In Judicial Custody

Vibha.Sharma@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: The upcoming MCD mayoral election will be a litmus test for AAP, which is facing crises of all sorts with the arrest of chief minister Arvind Kejriwal.

The election for mayor and deputy mayor will happen at the first House meeting in April. This time, elections are expected in the last week of April. The mayor's post will be reserved for an SC member.

At a time when Kejriwal is in judicial custody until mid-April and two former ministers facing a similar fate, it might be a challenge for AAP to keep its flock together.

AAP MLA and MCD in-charge Durgesh Pathak said the party has a clear majority and will definitely win the mayoral election this time too. "I don't think there is any confusion over proving majority in the House. Ever since we took over MCD, the situation has drastically changed, such as for sanitation, dis-



The mayor's post will be reserved for an SC member

bursement of salaries, and our commitment to attend to residents' complaints on the 311 app. People have witnessed drastic changes in comparison to BJP's tenures for 15 years. In the coming years also, we are committed to continuing development work," Pathak said.

During the first mayoral election in Feb 2023, AAP claimed it held 151 councillor seats, including 134 elected co-

uncillors along with 13 MLAs, 3 MPs, and one independent councillor supporting its candidate. The BJP had 113 seats in MCD, including 104 councillors, one independent, 7 MPs, and 1 MLA.

AAP's Shelly Oberoi bagged 150 votes, while the BJP's mayoral nominee Rekha Gupta got 116 votes. In the case of the deputy mayor's election, AAP's Aaley Mohammad Iqbal got 147 votes, followed by

Geotagging property date now June 30

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has extended the deadline for geotagging of properties on its portal till June 30. The move is aimed at giving an opportunity to taxpayers to submit all specifications of their properties.

"In continuation to the office order dated Feb 29 vide which instructions were issued by the assessment and collection department of MCD regarding geotagging of all properties under the jurisdiction of MCD by March 31... it has been decided to extend the last date of geotagging of properties by taxpayers till June 30," a notification read.

So far, 3.5 lakh taxpayers have geotagged their properties out of the nearly 13.3 lakh people who paid their taxes last time.

"It has come to the notice of the corporation that a large number of taxpayers were unable to geotag their properties on MCD portal due to various technical glitches or other reasons... If a taxpayer fails to geotag their property, they cannot avail the rebate on the lump sum payment of tax by June 30 in the current financial year 2024-25," the notification added.

THE CMO IS CURRENTLY AHEAD OF THE CFO. BUT SHE'S GOT 14 ACROSS WRONG.

The ET Crossword Cult

Are you one of us?

Offered ₹25 crore to cross over, says AAP MLA; BJP hits back

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Aam Aadmi Party's Kirari MLA Rituraj Jha on Monday accused BJP of offering him Rs 25 crore and ministership if he agreed to join the saffron fold with 10 other MLAs.

Jha made the allegation during a special session of the Delhi legislative assembly. He claimed the BJP was trying to "crush" the AAP-led govt in the capital by resorting to such tactics.

Responding to the allegations, BJP MLA Vijender Gupta asked if Jha had filed a police complaint. "The AAP MLAs have alleged a dozen times before that money was offered to them. Levelling such baseless charges using the sanctity of the House is not acceptable. How long will you tell lies?" Gupta said.

Speaking in the Assembly, Jha alleged that he was attending a wedding in Bawana on Sunday when he was approached by BJP.

"There were some people who were trying to approach me over the phone for the last 3-4 days. When I reached the

re at 9.15 pm, 3-4 people took me to one side and said if I did not agree to their offer, President's Rule would be imposed. You bring 10 MLAs and we will give Rs 25 crore to each one of you. You will be made a minister in the BJP govt," he alleged, adding that BJP's Operation Lotus was on the roll again.

"Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal is the only leader who has defeated PM Narendra Modi four times in Delhi — in 2013, 2015, 2020 Assembly elections and 2022 MCD polls. They (the BJP) have started their cheap trick once again," he said.

AAP legislator Somnath Bhatti said he will "tonsure" his head and go house to house telling people how PM Modi and the BJP had murdered democracy if President's Rule is imposed.

"A chief minister was arrested on the statement of a person who in his previous six statements said nothing against him. It was the duty of the Election Commission to ensure free and fair elections but it kept mum," Bhatti said.

The Malviya Nagar MLA said the BJP wanted Kejriwal to resign but all of Delhi was saying that he should not quit.

The Assembly session was adjourned till April 8 amid slogan-shouting by AAP and BJP members. AAP MLAs accused the BJP of "extorting" Rs 60 crore through electoral bonds from an accused in the excise policy case and sought a reply from the BJP.

The BJP MLAs, in response, raised slogans against AAP, following which the proceedings were adjourned. At a press conference later, AAP MLA Dilip Pandey alleged that Kejriwal was arrested only because BJP's attempts to run Operation Lotus had failed repeatedly. AAP leader Jasmine Shah levelled the same charges in a separate press conference. He alleged that those who had made the offer to the Kirari MLA were not senior leaders of the BJP but the "lower-level functionaries".

Delhi BJP chief spokesperson and MLA Abhay Varma called Jha's allegation a "conspiracy to divert attention" from Kejriwal's arrest. "Either MLA Rituraj should disclose the name of the person offering bribes or be prepared to face legal action."

Bad air hits mental health, causes anxiety, NGT told

Kushagra.Dixit@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Delhi health department has said that while air pollution impacts mental health, causing anxiety and other problems, more India-centric studies were needed.

Govt said this in a reply submitted to the National Green Tribunal. The reply came after the tribunal took a suo motu cognisance of the matter based on the TOI news titled "Feeling anxious? Toxic air could be to blame," published in Oct 2023.

Delhi govt quoted several studies stating how adverse pollution impacts mental health, it sought more India-oriented research.

"In India, where rapid industrialisation and urbanisation have led to increased pollution, understanding mental health implications is particularly crucial... Exposure to various (types of) environmental pollution, including air pollutants, heavy metals, and noise pollution, is associated with an increase in mental health disorders, such as anxiety, mood, and psychotic syndrome, with both direct biological effects and stress related im-

YOU READ IT HERE Feeling anxious? Toxic air could be to blame



A study from researchers at Harvard, published in March 2023, adds to the evidence connecting exposure to air pollution (small particulate matter) with mental health issues. The report cited several studies in various journals where findings suggested that people living in areas with high-level of air-pollution were twice as likely to be diagnosed with depression or more likely to experience symptoms of anxiety, irritability and restlessness.

"... Exposure to air pollution can increase level of stress hormones... can lead to problems with thinking, memory, and learning... A study published in the journal Environmental Health Perspectives found that people living in areas with high level of air pollution were most likely to be diagnosed with psychosis, a mental disorder that causes a loss of contact with reality," the report said, adding that factors such as living in high-rises, poor quality housing, and loud exterior noise can increase psychological distress and indirectly affect mental health. It stated that air pollution

Love, date, dhokha: Man falls victim to extortion plot, 5 held

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: A 29-year-old east Delhi resident was seemingly living a happy married life until recently when he decided to explore his sexuality and downloaded a dating app. He was soon swiped right by a profile in the name of "really relationship". After a few conversations, the chats turned intimate and soon the man began to think he had met the love of his life. However, he had little idea what he was in for.

The incident happened on March 29. The man reached a metro station at 9pm to meet his date. When they were in a dingy lane at a faraway spot, four people barged into their car and started filming the man nude.

After weeks of sexting, Rahul got his first date who was supposed to meet him at a metro station in east Delhi. The date came in a shining red car and they went for a long drive. Later, Rahul's date parked the car in a dingy lane and put a cover on it. The act in the car was recorded and soon Rahul found himself in the midst of an extortion ring. After being blackmailed for days, he finally approached police, who filed an FIR and arrested five people in the case.

The incident happened on March 29. The man reached Nirman Vihar Metro Station at 9pm to meet him. When they were in the dark lane at a faraway spot, four people barged into their car and started filming the man nude.

"After making the video, one of the boys snatched my phone from me. As soon as I got out of the car, the boy I came with asked me to give him Rs 20,000 and said that if you don't give me the money, I will make your video viral on social media," the complainant added. They forcefully asked him for his phone's password and said they would return his phone after he gave them the money.

The man later called the blackmailers using his wife's phone and tried to strike a deal. He eventually approached the cops who then tracked the location of his snatched cellphone besides the location of the phone which was being used by the man's date. The accused were located and arrested, said a senior cop. They were identified as Himanshu Gupta (31), Gaurav Kashyap (31), Shadab Anjum (23), Deepsant Kumar (22) and Shishant Kumar (25).

The accused told cops that they used to target unsuspecting people through the app by making attractive profiles and luring the prospective victims. The cops are probing the number of people they have targeted.

Eight held for murder in north Delhi

New Delhi: A 26-year-old man was murdered and two people were injured after they were stabbed by a group over objecting to abuse in north Delhi's Burari. Police have arrested six people and

apprehended two juveniles in the case.

The accused were identified as Umesh (23), Lala (22), Chintu (23), Mohit (19), Rohita (19), Sumit (20) and two boys aged 17 years. They are the residents of Bhalwa Dairy.

Police received a call at 6pm on March 26 regarding the incident. One of the victims identified as Akhilesh Kumar (26), who worked as a labourer, was declared brought dead at a hospital. He was stabbed three times whereas the injured were identified as Chandan Kumar and Mantu Sharma.

Chandan told police that they were working on a construction site in Hari Vihar when two intoxicated boys on a motorcycle approached them. The boys confronted the workers with abusive language, questioning why they were mixing cement and dust by the roadside.

"Akhilesh and the other labourers requested the boys to stop using offensive language and leave the premises. The boys then left, threatening retaliation. Shortly after, the two boys returned with more people and launched an attack on the labourers," said deputy commissioner of police (north) Manoj Meena. "A case was registered and following an inquiry, six people were arrested and two persons apprehended," the officer added. TNN

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused (1) Mobin (2) Mohd. Danish, S/o Zakir Hussain, R/o H.No.377, Dhorrah, Mafir Medical Hospital Ke Paas, Chaaand Ki Chakki, Aliggarh, UP has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in Case Reg. No. FIR No.851/20215 U/s 498-A/406/34 IPC P.S. Jyoti Nagar, Delhi, and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said accused (1) Mobin (2) Mohd. Danish cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused (1) Mobin (2) Mohd. Danish has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused (1) Mobin (2) Mohd. Danish of Case Reg. No. FIR No.851/20215 U/s 498-A/406/34 IPC P.S. Jyoti Nagar, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before 02.05.2024

By Order Nidhi Bala Metropolitan Magistrate (Mahila Court-03) Room No. 08, Karkardooma Courts, Delhi DP/3797/NE/2024

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Frank, S/o Emal, R/o Anambra State Nigeria, has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in FIR No. 376/2022 U/s 21 NDPS Act and 14A Foreigner Act., P.S. Mohan Garden, Delhi, and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said accused Frank cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Frank has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Frank of FIR No. 376/2022 U/s 21 NDPS Act and 14A Foreigner Act., P.S. Mohan Garden, Delhi, is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before 02.05.2024.

By Order Bhavna Kalita Spl Judge (NDPS) Court No.610 Dwarka Court, Delhi DP/3805/DW/2024

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person namely Prem Singh S/o Sher Singh R/o H.No. R-102, Gali No. 1, East Vinod Nagar, Delhi has committed the offence vide FIR No. 294/16 u/s 323/341 IPC P.S. Madhu Vihar, Delhi and it has been shown to my satisfaction that Prem Singh has been absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation u/s 82 Cr.P.C. is hereby made that the Prem Singh accused of FIR No. 294/16 u/s 323/341 IPC P.S. Madhu Vihar, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said FIR on or before 20.07.2024.

By Order: Sh. Udbhav Kumar Jain Metropolitan Magistrate-04, Room No. 37, Shahdara, Karkardooma Court, Delhi DP/3695/ED/24

दक्षिणांचल विद्युत वितरण निगम लि० कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता विद्युत वितरण मण्डल, इटावा ई-निविदा विस्तारीकरण सूचना विद्युत वितरण मण्डल, इटावा के अन्तर्गत सत्कालीन अधीक्षण अभियन्ता द्वारा विज्ञापन प्लान 2024-25 में निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु आमंत्रित निम्न ई-निविदाओं के खुलने की निर्धारित अर्थात् तक सम्बन्धित खण्ड कार्यालयों द्वारा कार्य कराये जाने हेतु प्रकल्पन एवं कार्य का बीडोपयोग्य उपलब्ध न कराये जाने के फलस्वरूप निविदा अपलोड करने एवं निविदा खुलने की तिथि को निम्न विवरणानुसार विस्तृत किया जाता है:- 1. ई-निविदा सं०:- 164/EDCE/2023-24 निविदा खुलने की तिथि 15.04.2024 2. ई-निविदा सं०:- 178/EDCE/2023-24 निविदा खुलने की तिथि 15.04.2024 3. ई-निविदा सं०:- 179/EDCE/2023-24 निविदा खुलने की तिथि 15.04.2024 4. ई-निविदा सं०:- 205/EDCE/2023-24 निविदा खुलने की तिथि 15.04.2024 5. ई-निविदा सं०:- 206/EDCE/2023-24 निविदा खुलने की तिथि 15.04.2024 6. ई-निविदा सं०:- 207/EDCE/2023-24 निविदा खुलने की तिथि 15.04.2024 7. ई-निविदा सं०:- 208/EDCE/2023-24 निविदा खुलने की तिथि 15.04.2024 8. ई-निविदा सं०:- 209/EDCE/2023-24 निविदा खुलने की तिथि 15.04.2024 उक्त ई-निविदा दिनांक 15.04.2024 को 01:00 बजे तक ऑनलाइन अपलोड की जा सकेंगी एवं अंतिम कार्यदिनांक 16.04.2024 को 02:00 बजे खोली जायेगी। ई-निविदा प्रारंभ तिथिदा सूक्त / ई-प्रणाली घनराशि एवं अन्य विषय व शर्तों से सम्बन्धित समस्त विवरण उ०प्र० शासन के ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट पोर्टल https://etender.up.nic.in पर उपलब्ध किया जायेगा। पत्र संख्या:- 1143 वि०वि०म०/ई-निविदा विज्ञापन अधीक्षण अभियन्ता दिनांक:- 30.03.2024 विद्युत वितरण मण्डल, इटावा "सुनहरा भविष्य बनाये, राष्ट्रहित में बिजली बनाये"

Office of the Superintending Engineer, Construction Circle Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam, Haldwani, Nainital, District- Nainital-263139 E-mail- sepeyal_ntl@yahoo.co.in Letter No. 875/613/49 Corrigendum Date: 01/04/2024 Online tenders are invited on the website http://www.uktenders.gov.in, vide this office's letter No. 711/613/37 dated 14.03.2024 & Corrigendum letter No. 815/613/46 dated 23.03.2024 for Construction of Source and Treatment Augmentation Works of Haldwani-Kathgodam Water Supply Scheme in Haldwani-Kathgodam Nagar Nigam Area under SPA Programme. Due to some unavoidable reasons, the key dates of the above tender is modified as under-

S.No.	Particulars	Key Dates as Published	Key Dates (Modified)
1	Date of Online Publication	01.04.2024 at 17:00 hrs	10.04.2024 at 17:00 hrs
2	Document download Start Date	02.04.2024 at 17:00 hrs	11.04.2024 at 10:00 hrs

Other terms & conditions shall remain unchanged. Superintending Engineer

NATA2024 NATIONAL APTITUDE TEST IN ARCHITECTURE Council of Architecture (A Statutory Authority of Government of India under the Architects Act, 1972) NOTIFICATION FOR CONDUCT OF NATA-2024 THE REGISTRATION FOR NATA 2024 HAS COMMENCED FROM 01.03.2024 AT WWW.NATA.IN. THE CANDIDATES DESIROUS TO TAKE ADMISSION INTO 1ST YEAR OF 5-YEAR B.ARCH. DEGREE PROGRAMME BASED ON NATA SCORE IS AVAILABLE ON WWW.NATA.IN

दक्षिणांचल विद्युत वितरण नि० लि० (उ०प्र० सरकार का उपक्रम) (कर्म भवन, 220 के०वी० सबस्टेशन आगरा-सदर, वाई पास रोड, आगरा-282007) विज्ञापन समस्त सम्मानित उपभोक्ताओं को सूचित किया जाता है कि उपभोक्ता व्यथा निवारण फोरम विनियमवली 2022 के प्रावधानानुसार ज्ञाप सं० 56 दिनांक 09.02.2024 के निर्देशानुसार कम्पनी (दाविडिनि०) स्तर के सी०जी०आर०एफ० का गठन किया जा चुका है। जिसके पत्राचार का पता एवं दूरभाष संख्या निम्नवत् है। अध्यक्ष, कम्पनी उपभोक्ता व्यथा निवारण फोरम 220 के०वी० सबस्टेशन ऊर्जा भवन, आगरा। मधुरा बाईपास रोड, सिकन्दरा आगरा-282007 ईमेल:- dvvnlcgrf@gmail.com दूरभाष:- 0562-2605699 दाविडिनि० के समस्त विद्युत उपभोक्ताओं से अनुरोध है कि उपभोक्ता व्यथा निवारण फोरम विनियमवली, 2022 के प्रस्तर 3.11 के अनुसार रूपये 1 करोड़ व उससे अधिक तक के विद्युत बिल और ऑनकलन से संबंधित विवाद के सम्बन्ध में किसी प्रकार की शिकायत के लुप्तप्राय उपभोक्ता व्यथा निवारण फोरम विनियमवली, 2022 के प्रस्तर 3.11 के अनुसार निर्धारित शुल्क जमा कर अपनी शिकायत कम्पनी उपभोक्ता व्यथा निवारण फोरम को प्रस्तुत कर सकते हैं जिनका उपभोक्ता व्यथा निवारण फोरम विनियमवली, 2022 के प्रावधानानुसार निस्तारा किया जायेगा। पत्र संख्या- 214/प्रनि०/आगरा,दाविडिनि०/विज्ञापन दिनांक 31.03.2024 अधिशारी अभियन्ता (सम्पन्न-जनसुनवाई) दाविडिनि०, आगरा "सुनहरा भविष्य बनाये, राष्ट्रहित में बिजली बनाये"

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL Notice Inviting Quotation 1st Corrigendum to e-NIT No. 15 of 2023-24 vide Memo No. 275/e_NIT dated 07.03.2024 of the Executive Engineer, Kolkata North I Division vide Tender ID: 2024/EE/N/EO/183/23-24. Details may be had from the Notice Board, O/o the undersigned on all working days within office hours. Bid Submission closing (Online): 12.04.2024 up to 11:00am. (website:https://wb-tenders.gov.in) Sd/- ARJUNENDU SAHKA, Executive Engineer, Kolkata North-I Divn, HD., ICA-17705(3)/2024

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL PWD TENDER NOTICE Executive Engineer, P.W.D, North 24 Prgs Electrical Division invite online e-Tender for the work of :- "Temporary Electrical Infrastructure arrangement for Commissioning and RC for 118, 119, ACs and Strong Room & Counting Hall for 100, 101, 115, 116, 118, 119, 120 ACs at the campus of the Barasat Government College and Piyari Charan Sarkar Govt. High School FOR PARLIAMENT GENERAL ELECTION 2024". NIT No : WBPWD/EE/N24/EL/NIC/183/23-24. Tender id: 2024_WBPWD_687849_1. Bid Submission start date (Online): 29.03.2024. Bid Submission Closing date (Online): 06.04.2024. Corrigendum if any will be published website only. Details of NIT & tender documents may be downloaded from http://wb-tenders.gov.in Sd/- Exe. Engineer, P.W.D., North 24 Prgs EI Division. ICA-17702(3)/2024

CORRIGENDUM e-tender no. 02/Infra (2nd Call) of 2023-2024 In tender ad published on 01.04.2024 vide e tender no. 02/Infra (2nd Call) of 2023-2024, please read Temporary IT Infrastructure Work CCTV, Internet, PA System and projector with screen and laptop etc in place of erection of Pandal and other Civil works etc. For details visit wbtenders.gov.in and the office Notice Board. Sd/- For District Magistrate & District Election Officer Paschim Bardhaman

Leopard Enters North Delhi Village, Attacks Residents

8 Injured, Claim Police; Animal Later Locked In A Room And Tranquillised

Priyangi Agarwal & Abhay | TNN

New Delhi: A male adult leopard created panic in Jagatpur village in north Delhi on Monday morning when it entered a few houses and attacked some people. Police claimed that eight persons sustained injuries. The animal was later locked in a room it had entered and then tranquillised by forest department personnel.

The leopard is suspected to have strayed into the village from the nearby Yamuna Biodiversity Park, according to forest department officials. Manoj Meena, DCP (North), said police received a call about the cat being spotted on street No. 3 in Jagatpur at 6.14am and a team reached the area and cordoned it off. They also warned people not to venture out of their houses.

The cops named the injured people as Mahender, 35, Nitin, 31, Pankaj, 20, Nasir, 20, Vipin, 36, Aakash, 25, Satish, 61, and Nishu, 30. They were taken to hospital by the cops and received treatment for deep claw wounds.

Several videos of the incident surfaced on social media, and in one of them, the leopard was seen jumping onto the terrace of a building.

Five hours after it was first sighted, the leopard was tranquillised in the house of Vipin Dedha. Nisha, Dedha's wife, narrated, "Around 6.20am, I left home to visit a temple. I had heard that a leopard was seen in the village, so I locked the room in which four children were sleeping. I also closed the door of the verandah. But when I was at the temple, I learnt that the leopard had entered my house."

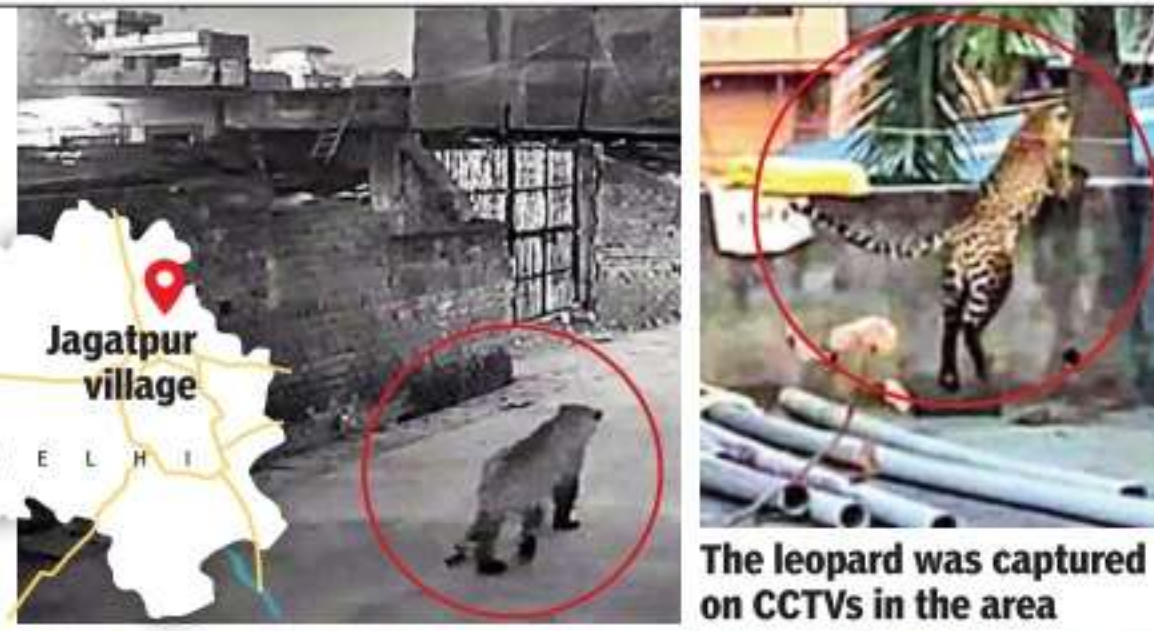
The leopard had gone into the room next to the one in which the children were sleeping. "My husband and brother-in-law, Nitin, were both injured by the leopard. We panicked about the children. Thankfully, the rescue team locked the door of the room that the leopard had entered and we brought the children out," said Nisha.

According to a forest official, "The leopard entered a house after injuring a few people in the village, which has a high population density." The plan to

SPOTS OF BOTHER

THE RESCUE OP

- ▶ Leopard entered one of the rooms of a house in Jagatpur village after injuring a few people in the area, which has a high population density
- ▶ The room, which opened into another space with two smaller rooms on either side, was latched from outside by the rescue team
- ▶ One veterinary doctor with dart gun stationed in each of the two small rooms
- ▶ The open space was cordoned off and a thick net was laid on the ground. The net was being controlled by a team stationed on the sunroof of the house
- ▶ When the door was opened, the leopard ran out and was successfully darted by one of the vets
- ▶ The animal has been shifted to a rescue facility of the forest department



The leopard was captured on CCTVs in the area

Past sightings

- Dec 2023** ▶ A juvenile leopard killed in north Delhi's Wazirpur after being hit by a vehicle while crossing NH-44
- ▶ A leopard strayed into Sainik Farms and was sighted several times, injured one
- 2022** | Forest department confirmed eight leopards as permanent residents of Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary
- Jan 2021** | Leopard caught on CCTVs in Najafgarh
- Feb 2019** | Locals reportedly spotted a leopard at Tilpath Valley Biodiversity Park
- April 2018** | A leopard spotted near Air Force station in Narela
- March 2017** | A leopard family of three sighted at Asola, pugmarks recorded
- Dec 2016** | Leopard sighted several times at Yamuna Biodiversity Park, pictures taken through camera traps, rescued and later released into a forest in Uttarakhand
- Dec 2015** | Leopard sightings in Usmanpur

rescue the leopard from the inside house was chalked out with chief wildlife warden Sunesh Buxy who was at the spot. "The room in which the leopard was trapped opened into another room with two flanking smaller rooms on either side," explained Anamika, divisional conservator of forests (Central). "Dr Abhijit Bhawal of the National Zoological Park and Dr Sumit Nagar of the South forest division were stationed in each of the flanking rooms, equipped with double-and single-barrel dart guns. The open room was cordoned off and a thick net was laid on the ground and controlled by a te-

am stationed on the sunroof of the house for protection." Upon opening the door of the locked room, the leopard ran out into the open room and was successfully darted by the veterinarians. The cat is currently at a rescue facility of the forest department and will be handled further in accordance with the standard guidelines and protocols.

Though the forest department claimed the big cat might have wandered into the area from the nearby Yamuna Biodiversity Park, an official of the park said that wasn't probable. The official said, "We haven't found any pugmark of leopard

on the pressure impression pad in the entire winter season, including the last few days."

When a TOI team entered the room where the leopard had been trapped for a few hours, there was a strong stink in the air. There were pugmarks on the walls. An LED screen and small temple were found broken.

A forest official said, "Keeping in mind the growing number of man-wildlife conflicts because we share the landscape with these big cats, the forest department will take proactive steps to help mitigate conflicts through community immobilisation and training programmes."

SC: No pro-strike lawyer can ask colleagues to stop work

Dhananjay Mahapatra
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Maintaining the judiciary's allergy to strike by lawyers, the Supreme Court on Monday said no advocate can enter a courtroom and ask colleagues or judges to stop work in the name of a strike by bar association members.

During the suo motu proceedings initiated against Gautam Budh Nagar bar association president and secretary for manhandling senior advocate Gaurav Bhatia and lawyer Mushkan Gupta for appearing in a court on March 20 when the lawyers' association had called a strike, a bench of Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and manoj Misra said, "No one can enter a courtroom and tell advocates 'chalo niklo yahan se (get out of here).'"

"Advocates have a right to protest but not by stopping other lawyers from arguing their cases or by preventing a judge from discharging his judicial work," the bench said.

Intervening in the matter, SCBA president Adish C Aggarwala said the office bearers of the GBN bar association were apologetic when he spoke to them and requested for putting an end to the proceedings.

Senior advocate Vikas Singh, who had brought the unsavoury incident to the court's notice leading to the drawing up of suo motu proceedings, said there was no remorse or apology expressed by the bar body and contended that man-

TIMES VIEW: Protests are fundamental to democracy. But they should not devolve into bullying and badgering. The apex court's observations are pertinent. One hopes they are taken seriously.

handling of a lawyer, appearing for a litigant, is unacceptable. The bench agreed and said, "Even if they have apologised, we will take a serious view of this incident. No lawyer can enter the courtroom and ask advocates to desist from presenting the case of a litigant or the judge from discharging his duties."

When Aggarwala said the striking lawyers can request other advocates not to appear in court, the bench said, "The lawyers have no right to make such a request. The district judge in his report says that lawyers entered his courtroom and asked other lawyers to leave. Lawyers have other legitimate ways to protest without disrupting judicial work."

The bench took note of the DJ's report that the CCTV footage of the ugly incident could not be preserved as none of the cameras were functional.

The district judge said that despite repeated letters written by the Allahabad HC to the state govt for providing funds to maintain the CCTVs, no grant for this has been sanctioned. The bench sought the UP govt's response as to why funds for maintaining the CCTVs in the district courts of the state had not been sanctioned. It posted the matter for further hearing on April 8.

BJP: System to register property docs 'big scam'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor on Monday alleged that National Generic Document Registration System introduced by Delhi govt to streamline the system of registering property documents was turning into a "big scam". Kapoor alleged that with the implementation of NGRS, govt allowed people to book a slot at the sub-registrar office for registration of sale deeds, wills and 25 other such documents.

"Now, one can book a slot for the registry of documents online. Since there are a limited number of slots, the waiting list has gone up to 1-2 months at some sub-registrar offices," Kapoor explained.

"Misusing the system, some people book slots for registration of will. In case somebody has to urgently register a sale deed, the slot is sold for thousands of rupees. The man who originally booked the slot just has to use the revert button on the portal to change all details of the applicant including name, address and the document that needs to be registered," BJP leader alleged.

Delhi govt didn't react to the allegations.

Gang of burglars busted, 3 arrested

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: With the arrest of three people on Monday, a gang was busted and a series of burglary cases across South Delhi were solved. The accused were identified as Ranjeet Soni (27), Sonu (25) and Sourabh (24). Around 80 articles of gold, silver and diamond ornaments valued at over one crore rupees were recovered from their possession and 12 cases of house burglaries were solved with their arrest.

According to Rohit Meena, deputy commissioner of police (South-West), they had received a complaint on Feb 9 regarding the theft of several ornaments from a residence. Another similar complaint was lodged on March 16. During investigation, a striking similarity in the modus operandi of both the incidents indicated the involvement of the same gang.

Over 400 CCTV footage from nearby areas were subsequently examined. Police then cross-referenced the profiles of all men previously arrested in burglary cases across various districts and matched them with the CCTV images. The breakthrough came on March 28, when the suspects were identified and subsequently nabbed from a rented apartment in Dwarka where they had concealed the stolen jewellery. "Our team recovered the stolen goods, along with burglary tools and a gold-melting machine from the apartment," cops added.

Interrogation revealed that Soni was a drug addict, gambler and seasoned criminal who served as the ringleader of the gang. "He had acquired a smelting machine to immediately process stolen jewellery, which was then disposed of in small trenches to evade detection. He had recruited men with whom he had been incarcerated in various prisons, integrating them into his criminal network. Sonu had previously been involved in more than 13 cases related to arms and burglary. Sourabh had a history of criminal activity in Faridabad," another officer said.

NORTHERN RAILWAY	
NOTICE INVITING TENDER	
Name of work and its location:-	30-ELECT-01-T-2024-25-E3 Electrical work in connection with provision of RGM/Track machine siding over Delhi Division.
Approx cost of the works in:-	Rs. 122.92 lacs
Address of the office:-	Sr. Divl. Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi.
Bid Security:-	Rs. 211500.00
Date & time of submission of tender:-	30.04.2024, 12.00 Hrs.
Opening of tender:-	30.04.2024, 12.00 Hrs.
Website & notice board:-	www.ireps.gov.in & Sr. Divl. Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi. 960/2024

योजना तथा वास्तुकला विद्यालय, विजयवाड़ा
School of Planning and Architecture, Vijayawada
An Institute of National Importance, Ministry of Education, Govt. of India
Survey No. 4/4, ITI Road, Vijayawada - 520 008, AP, India.

No. F-01/SPAV/ Acad./PG-DA/2024-25/03 Date: 02/04/2024

EXTENSION OF DATES FOR DIRECT ADMISSION TO MASTERS DEGREE PROGRAMMES FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2024-25

In supersession of the "Important Dates" mentioned in the General Instructions of the Notification of Direct Admission to Masters Degree (PG) Programmes for the Academic Year 2024-25 declared on 06 March 2024, the Competent Authority has extended the last date for receipt of applications to 12th April 2024, 5 PM. All other aspects of the admission process including other deadlines and dates, as notified earlier shall remain same. For details please visit <https://spav.ac.in/spavadmissions.html> Sd/- Registrar

BAISAKHI LUNCH
SIKH Regimental Officers' Fraternity get together is being organised over Lunch
On 15 April 2024
at
KOI, Annexe, Chandimandir
Time - 1200hr
Dress - Shirt & Regt Tie
Ladies are cordially invited
Request Maximum Attendance and Early Confirmation
Contact No.
Mob No - 8288983041
8195956997

'It all happened within seconds, I saw it jump over houses, then grab a villager'

Priyangi Agarwal@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: It was a second encounter with a big cat for Satish Kumar, who received several injuries after being mauled by a leopard in north Delhi's Jagatpur village on Monday. "I first saw a leopard from a distance in 2016 when it was on the outskirts of the village. But this time, I was staring it right in his eyes," said Kumar, showing the bloody claw marks on his body.

Kumar, 61, claimed to have heard crows making a racket near his brother's house and so sensed something was wrong. "My brother told me on the phone that a leopard was hiding behind the bushes in front of his house. When a motorcyclist stopped to have a look, the leopard followed him and entered a house," said Kumar.

"It all happened within seconds," continued Kumar. "I saw the leopard jumping from one house to another. Then it grabbed Leelu, a villager. When I tried to free him by hitting the leopard with a lathi, the cat turned on me."

Villager Aadesh Dedha claimed that the leopard first entered his brother's house. "My brother Naresh spotted a leopard near his cattle. Though the animal injured many villagers, it did not touch the cattle. We were standing on the terrace to see the leopard when it suddenly appeared and attacked my 25-year-old nephew, Aakash," said Dedha. The leopard then jumped to the terrace of another house.



SCARRED: Nishu and Satish Kumar were among those injured in the leopard attack

Nishu, 30, who too was wounded by the spotted cat, was on a morning walk when he heard about the presence of a leopard. "I was curious and went to the house where it had been spotted. There were a few other villagers gathered there. The leopard suddenly emerged from a room and caught me by my neck," said the farmer. "Some fellow villagers freed me by beating the animal. I am thankful that I am alive."

After the leopard strayed into Jagatpur, people shut themselves inside their houses, children did not go to school and the women refrained from conducting the community village prayer. As farmer Shrawan Kumar recalled, "When the news spread



that a leopard had been sighted in the village, the residents locked them inside their houses. A prayer was scheduled on Monday morning at the village temple, but no one turned up."

Though the situation improved after the leopard was tranquillised and taken away, the villagers feared that another cat might come. Rinku said after some people managed to lock the door of the room that the leopard had entered, a small crowd gathered outside the house. "People felt relieved after the big cat was taken by the forest officials, but there is a fear among people about a recurrence in the future," said Rinku.

LG seeks time-bound revamp of heritage

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Lieutenant governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Monday visited Sanjay Van and Mehrauli Archaeological Park to review the progress of the ongoing restoration and beautification work undertaken by Delhi Development Authority (DDA).

Raj Niwas officials said this was the LG's seventh visit since Feb last year to the two sites. In his last visit on March 4, the LG had directed DDA to start filling Anang Tal and Lalkot Baoli Qila Rai Pithora in Sanjay Van with water and to conserve and restore Balban's Tomb, Jamali Kamali Mosque and Rajon ki Baoli in Mehrauli Archaeological Park under the supervision of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

"These monuments will be developed as new public assets for the capital and will help Delhi emerge as a heritage city. Most of the works at both sites have been completed and are already drawing a huge footfall since Oct last year when the LG had inaugurated the renovated Mehrauli Archaeological Park," said a Raj Niwas official.

The two sites were handed over to DDA by ASI, which is assisting in the protection



LG Saxena reviewing the progress made by DDA

of the monuments and their restoration. The Union culture ministry, too, had recently agreed that DDA will use its resources to execute the conservation works while ASI, with all its expertise, will supervise it.

Spread across around 200 acres, Mehrauli Archaeological Park is known to have more than 100 historical monuments and ruins. The nearby Sanjay Van also houses several monuments, including Qila Rai Pithora, on-

RAJ NIWAS OFFICIAL SAYS

These monuments will be developed as new public assets for the capital and will help Delhi emerge as a heritage city

ce the capital of Prithviraj Chauhan of the Tomar dynasty. At Sanjay Van, the LG visited the baolis (stepwells) and directed the officials to ensure that the entire area must be protected and the drains and wells are restored. Spots were also identified where cultural programmes and events can be held.

While appreciating the progress at Mehrauli Archaeological Park, the LG sought a time-bound plan for restoration, preservation and encroachment removal. The LG also directed the two agencies to preserve carved stones and relics that are scattered all over for a potential museum display. The LG had in Oct last year unveiled the restored Quli Khan's Tomb and Metcalfe's boathouse, a guest house, and a circular house, which is now running as a successful café alongside a rejuvenated water body.

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Applications are invited for Entrance Examination for Admission to the Post-Graduate programmes in 44 Teaching Departments of the University. The final list of the eligible candidates will be published on the basis of the marks obtained in the Entrance Examination.

ELIGIBILITY

- Bachelor's degree with the required minimum marks specified.
- Relaxation of marks will be given to SC/ST candidates.
- Students appearing for final year/semester exam may also apply.
- Supernumerary seats for foreign students and students from other states
- Last Date for Online Application: 30-04-2024
- Dates of Entrance Examination: 18-05-2024 to 24-05-2024



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<https://admissions.keralauniversity.ac.in/css2024>

EXAMINATION CENTERS

Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, Munnar and Kozhikode (Kerala).
Optional Centers outside state: Chennai, Bengaluru, Delhi

PG PROGRAMMES

M.A. (Master of Arts): Arabic Language and Literature, Archaeology, Economics, English Language and Literature, Financial Economics, German Language and Literature, Hindi Language and Literature, History, Islamic History, Linguistics, Malayalam Language and Literature, Malayalam Sahitya Keralapadanangalum, Manuscriptology & Palaeography, Music, Philosophy, Political Science, Public Administration, Politics International Relations and Diplomacy, Russian Language and Literature, Sanskrit General Language and Literature, Sociology, Tamil Language and Literature, West Asian Studies

M.Sc. (Master of Science): Actuarial Science, Applied Psychology, Aquatic Biology and Fisheries, Applied Aquaculture, Biochemistry, Botany with specialization in Biodiversity Conservation, Biotechnology, Chemistry, Chemistry with Specialization in Renewable Energy, Chemistry (Functional Materials), Computational Biology with Specialization in Machine Learning, Computational Biology with Specialization in Computer Aided Drug Design, Computational Biology with Specialization in NGS Data Analytics, Computer Science, Computer Science with Specialization in Artificial Intelligence, Computer Science (Machine Learning), Data Science, Demography & Biostatistics, Electronics (Optoelectronics), Electronics (Artificial Intelligence) Environmental Sciences, Climate Change and Disaster Management, Geology, Genetics & Plant Breeding, Zoology with Specialization in Integrative Biology, Mathematics, Mathematics with Specialization in Finance and Computation, Physics (Specialization in Applied Electronics), Physics (Specialization in Nanoscience), Physics (Specialization in Space Physics), Physics (Specialization in Renewable Energy), Statistics, Applied Statistics and Data Analytics, Zoology (Pure & Applied).

M. Tech. (Master of Technology): Computer Science with specialization in Digital Image Computing, Technology Management, Electronics & Communication (Optoelectronics & Optical Communication) (AICTE approved).

MCJ (Master of Communication and Journalism), MSW (Master of Social Work), LLM (Master of Laws), M.Ed (Master of Education).

M.Com Finance and Accounting, M.Com (Global Business Operations), M.Com (Rural Management), M.Com (Blue Economy and Maritime Law), M.Lib.I.Sc. (Master of Library and Information Science).

MBA (General), MBA (Travel and Tourism), MBA (Shipping & Logistics) - see separate Notification in the Admission Portal.

For more information, Contact:
CSS Office, University of Kerala, Karyavattom P.O., Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala- 695581, India
+91 471 2308328, csspg@uok2024@gmail.com
<http://css.keralauniversity.ac.in>
(for prospectus, model question papers and other details)

THE RESEARCHER
WAS STUCK ON SLIDE 27.
I WAS STUCK ON 7 DOWN.

The **ET** Crossword Cut

Are you one of us?

PWD hands over maintenance of CCTVs to BEL

Siddhanta Mishra
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: The Public Works Department (PWD) has handed over the maintenance of CCTV cameras to Bharat Electronic Limited (BEL), a senior official said.

A control command centre has been established at the headquarters to oversee the functioning of the cameras. This move is crucial for the upkeep of the surveillance system, which includes approximately 2.4 lakh cameras set up under Delhi govt's initiative.

Launched in 2018 by chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, the CCTV camera scheme aims to enhance safety in the city. Their installation was a significant step towards deterring crime and providing a sense of safety to residents.

However, there have been multiple reports of damage to and theft of these cameras, officials said. These reports highlighted the need for regular maintenance and prompt repair of the devices to ensure that surveillance does not suffer.

BEL is a public sector unit under the ministry of defence that manufactures electronic products and systems for the forces.

In 2021, Kejriwal said Delhi ranked highest across the world in CCTVs per square mile. The govt CCTV scheme was hailed as significant in terms of women's safety.

Govt has claimed that all CCTV feeds are secure, with hardware monitored by the community, feeds accessible authorised users and the system capable of automatic health checks.

Man Dies After 3 Hosps Deny Entry

Came To City For Better Cancer Treatment, Kin Tried For 9 Hrs To Get Him Admitted

Ridhima Gupta@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Almost a fortnight ago, Sapna Sharma of Kashipur in Uttarakhand came to the capital hoping that her husband, Punit Sharma, who was diagnosed with cancer of the tongue with metastasis, would receive treatment that would save his life. On Saturday, 46-year-old Punit died, allegedly after nine hours of desperately trying to get treatment at three govt hospitals.

Punit, who is survived by his four children and wife, ran a small agriculture shop in Uttarakhand. Sapna said, "We are not from an affluent family, so we couldn't even think of taking my husband to a private hospital. We gathered our savings and came to Delhi hoping for proper treatment at a govt hospital." Punit was admitted to the Delhi State Cancer Institute (DSCI) Hospital on March 16. Sapna stayed at a private lodge near the hospital.

On March 28, the hospital referred the patient to AIIMS and GB Pant Hospital because "intensive care is not available at DSCI". On March 29, the family took Punit to AIIMS at around 8pm. "The doctors did not see my husband even once and we were told



Delhi govt said an inquiry would be conducted on why Punit Sharma (46) was denied admissions in the hospitals

that AIIMS did not have a bed and ventilator for the patient and so couldn't admit him," alleged Sapna. "The doctors asked me to take my husband to Safdarjung, where they said he could get a bed."

At Safdarjung, Sapna was asked for a referral, which she did not have. She requested the hospital to provide a bed and ventilator support to her husband, but claimed they were denied this. "I had to quickly knock on the doors of GB Pant Hospital, but no help was provided to my husband there too," the 34-year-old woman said. Tired and lost, the family called the

police control room around 12.30am for help to get Punit admitted.

"Despite the PCR intervention, GB Pant refused to admit my husband claiming not to have ventilators and beds," said Sapna. "For around seven hours, I was made to go from one department to another at the hospital. During this time, my husband's health deteriorated and we decided to take him back to DSCI." So around 3am on March 30, Punit was taken back to DSCI.

After having sought admission in three hospitals over nine hours, Punit died around 5am on March 30 at DSCI. A weeping Sapna said, "Injustice has been done to a poor family, whose lives seem to have no value. This is an institutional death." Having exhausted her savings and received no help, she worries about how to look after her family now.

While the hospitals denied to comment on the case, Delhi govt acknowledged that admission was denied to the patient and accepted that its hospitals have "poor infrastructure". A statement said, "It is unfortunate that a patient was denied admission by two state govt hospitals and two central govt hospitals in Del-

hi. The chief secretary has been directed by the health minister several times to improve the deteriorating condition of these two specific (state govt) hospitals. However, the situation remains the same." Delhi govt also said it was "extremely surprising" that hospitals like AIIMS and Safdarjung, run by the central govt, were also repeatedly denying admission and treatment to critical patients.

Blaming the lieutenant governor for "stalling the development work at Delhi govt-run hospitals", it claimed, "LG had been informed multiple times that the health secretary and chief secretary are deliberately stalling the works in the health department and are responsible for deterioration of health facilities in Delhi. However, LG hasn't initiated any enquiry or action against these two officers. As the power to take any action against these officers or to transfer them is solely with LG, the elected govt can only request LG to take action."

There was no response to TOI's query on the matter from LG's office. Delhi govt added that an inquiry would be conducted on why the patient was denied admission in the hospitals.

'Fill 15% of vacant posts at hosps within 30 days'

Anuja Jaiswal@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: A committee constituted by Delhi High Court to assess medical infrastructure of state-run hospitals in the city and propose ways to optimise existing resources on Monday submitted its interim report. Identifying shortage of staff and faculty as one of the main deficiencies, the panel recommended at least 15% of all vacant posts should be filled within 30 days.

Other key recommendations included maintaining medicine inventory of at least two months, setting up trauma accident centres in district hospitals and doubling ICU beds.

The report also recommended introducing emergency services in Delhi Arogya Kosh. Delhi residents should be allowed to use their Aadhaar in all private hospitals and get cashless facilities at CGHS rates in emergency situations in any nearby facility, the panel added.

The committee prioritised

the recommendations for implementation in a phased manner. The timelines for completion of tasks were—immediate within 30 days (subject to model code of conduct), short term within 31-90 days, intermediate term within 91-365 days, and long term within 1-2 years.

The panel identified major deficiencies requiring urgent remedial action, including filling vacancies on high priority for faculty, resident doctors, nurses, technicians, biomedical engineers, physiotherapists and pharmacists. "Radiologists, anaesthesiologists, critical care and emergency medicine specialists, neurosurgeons are not available during regular working hours and during emergency hours," the 266-page report stated.

A trauma and accident emergency centre in each district and on the premises of major and moderate-size hospitals is needed, it said.

"There is an urgent need to have ICU facilities to admit pati-

ents who present to the emergency service. Hospitals with less than 500 beds should have at least 5-10% of total beds as ICU beds, and larger hospitals with more than 500 beds or tertiary care hospitals should have at least 20% of total beds as ICU beds," the report stated.

At present, Delhi govt hospitals have 1,058 ICU beds, which should be enhanced immediately to 2,028 by adding 1,046 beds to fulfil the minimum basic norms, the panel said.

The committee also pointed to an "inadequate" number of quality operation theatres and pre-and post-operative facilities, as well as non-availability of essential equipment, ultrasounds, CT/MRI scans, anaesthesia machines and a perpetual shortage of medicines.

Moreover, the report said, there is no "structured referral system" in the govt health sector for Delhi citizens. This leads to overcrowding in referral hospitals and suboptimal care for

patients. "There is no centralised and coordinated control room and helpline for appropriately directing patients to the nearest healthcare facility and expertise to handle emergencies," it added.

Recommending immediate measures for optimisation of existing resources, the panel suggested redistribution of consultants, wherein non-teaching experts who are not optimally utilised due to lack of machines or infrastructure may be allowed to visit on designated days other institutions where they may be required. Extending tenure/reappointment of specialists and hiring of consultants from the private sector was also recommended.

Another suggestion is the setting up a centralised command and control room by the IT department, which should be manned round-the-clock by trained executives and medical professionals. It should have a live screen showing the location of available emergency and ICU hospi-

tal beds and medical services (CT, MRI, OT) in the patient's vicinity and availability of ambulances. There should also be a screen showing region-wise mapping of all Delhi hospitals, the panel said.

The panel also recommended a public-private partnership (PPP) model for CT scan and MRI services by identifying successful bidders. PPP or leasing models can also be considered for procuring equipment like ultrasound and dialysis machines, ventilators and cardiac monitors, it stated.

Regarding medicines and consumables, the committee recommended that hospitals should have readymade rate contracts to meet up to 50% of the annual demand so that the tendering process may be initiated in due time, ensuring a secured supply line for the next six months. The panel also recommended a Jan Aushadhi Kendra should be opened in each hospital so that medicines may be procured in

emergencies.

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I Dharamveer kumar S/o Tildhari paswan R/o paura madan singh, hajipur, vaishali, Bihar has changed my name from Dharamveer kumar to Dharmveer kumar for all future purposes

I, K.I. Iqbal S/o K. Ismail R/o Qr. No. 50, Sec-1, R.K. Puram, N. Delhi has changed my name from Iqbal, K. I. to K.I. Iqbal for all future purposes vide oath affidavit on 29.03.24

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Request for Proposal for Empanelment of Merchant Banker(s) for undertaking valuation of unlisted equity shares for Disinvestment of Non-Core Assets of Union Bank of India, from interested merchant bankers as per terms specified in process letter TRB 322 dated 30.03.2024. For details please log on to www.unionbankofindia.co.in or send an email to treasury.compliance@unionbankofindia.com / 91-22-2289212. The last date for submission of bids is 20.04.2024 (15:00 hours IST).

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Email: moderncgshd@gmail.com
Dated: 02.04.2024
NOTICE INVITING BIDS:
In compliance of the order of "Hon'ble SUPREME COURT OF INDIA", for construction of ADDITIONAL 9 STORED TOWER CONSISTING OF 18 FLATS IN "THE MODERN CO-OPERATIVE GROUP HOUSING SOCIETY LTD", situated at Plot No. 05, SCETOR-15, NEAR YAMUNA CANAL ROHINI, DELHI - 110089, sealed lump sum BIDS are invited from the Contractors of repute and having adequate expertise, skill and experience in the execution of similar projects of comparable size and nature, for carrying out the said work.
• Nature of work: ADDITION OF 9 STORED SINGLE NEW TOWER in fully occupied running society named "THE MODERN CGHS Ltd", where the approval/sanctioning of this new tower is already done.
• Time for completion of entire project: 16 (Sixteen) months from the date of Letter of Entry (L.O.E) by the Society to the Contractors. The entire project shall mean and include the construction of New Tower only consist of 18 flats up to the height of 9 stories / as per the Architectural drawings / BOQ provided by the Appointed Firm only.
• Validity of offer: 15 (Fifteen) days from date of bid opening. However, the validity may be extended by mutual consent.
• Cost of bid documents: Rs. 5,100/- (Five Thousand One Hundred only/-) leaves as applicable, per set payable in name of The Modern CGHS Ltd. by pay order / demand draft (non-refundable) payable at Delhi.
• Bid period & availability: Bid documents will be available from Employer's office at FLAT No. 13, THE MODERN CO-OPERATIVE GROUP HOUSING SOCIETY LTD", situated at Plot No. 05, SCETOR-15, NEAR YAMUNA CANAL ROHINI, DELHI-110089 up to 5.00 pm on or before 13/04/2024.
• Place & date for submission: Sealed bid document shall be submitted at Society office "FLAT No. 13, THE MODERN CO-OPERATIVE GROUP HOUSING SOCIETY LTD", situated at Plot No. 05, SCETOR-15, NEAR YAMUNA CANAL ROHINI, DELHI-110089 up to 5.00 pm on or before 13/04/2024.
• Opening of bids: All the technical bids received shall be duly opened, at 3.00 p.m., on 14/04/2024 at the Employer's office. Date of opening of Financial Bids of technically qualified bidders shall be informed separately.
• The right to revise or amend this notice and or the bid document fully or partly, prior to the last date notified for submission of offers or on any subsequent date is reserved by the Owner/Employer of the Society.
• The owner/ employer of the Society reserves the right to reject any or all the bids/offers and/or accept the lowest, highest or any other bids/offers without assigning any reason whatsoever. The decision of the owner of the Society will be final & binding on all.
(Administrator / Owner)
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KERALA CM CRITICISES RAHUL GANDHI'S CANDIDACY, ACCUSES CONG OF UNDERMINING ANTI-BJP BLOC | 11

RAHUL HAS NO RIGHT TO TALK ABOUT DEMOCRACY, HIS GRANDMA IMPOSED EMERGENCY: SHAH | 11

Transplant NOC racket busted in Raj, 3 hospital employees held

Jaipur: Busting a major racket involving sale and purchase of fake no-objection certificates (NOCs) for organ transplant, Jaipur anti-corruption bureau (ACB) has arrested three persons, including an administrative officer of govt-run Sawai Man Singh Hospital (SMSH) and transplant coordinators of two leading private hospitals. An ACB team caught SMSH assistant administrative officer Gaurav Singh selling fake NOCs to Anil Joshi, organ transplant coordinator of one of the private hospitals, on Sunday. ACB officials said they caught the duo red-handed and seized from them Rs 70,000 and three fake NOCs that were to be further sold to patients from Nepal and Bangladesh. Their questioning led to the arrest of Vinod Singh, transplant coordinator of another private hospital, on Monday. While the state govt suspended Gaurav Singh, a press statement issued by the hospital where Joshi worked said he has also been suspended and a probe initiated. Govt has tasked a high-level committee to investigate the matter and submit a report within 15 days. The trio was produced at a court, which handed ACB their custody for four days. **TNN**

Kin of man killed by stray cow get ₹14L in damages

Rajkot: A court ordered Rajkot Municipal Corporation to pay Rs 13.7 lakh to the bereaved family of a biker who lost his life due to stray cattle menace. Mukesh Rathod was gored to death by a stray cow after he fell following his bike's collision with the animal in Aug 2018, said the FIR. Rathod later succumbed to his injuries. Even as Rathod lost his life, police registered a case of rash driving against him. Rathod's wife, Meena, then filed a suit demanding compensation of Rs 15 lakh, alleging that she lost her husband due to the negligence of municipal body, police, and district administration. She alleged that cops filed the FIR against the deceased to cover up the negligence of authorities. Senior civil judge IM Shaikh ordered the municipal body to pay the amount with 6% interest from the date of filing of the suit. "I argued the case under Article 21 which gives the right to life. When the administration fails to adhere to its responsibility, they are liable to pay the compensation," said Meena's lawyer KB Rathod. **TNN**

SC blames Kerala for financial trouble, refuses interim relief

Refers Plea Against Centre's Borrowing Cap To Constitution Bench

AmitAnand.Choudhary
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New Delhi: Observing that Kerala's financial hardship is the creation of its own monetary mismanagement, Supreme Court Monday refused to grant interim relief to allow the state to borrow more money and referred its petition against Centre's decision to limit borrowing capacity of states to Constitution bench for adjudication. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and K V Viswanath held that Kerala has failed to establish the three judicial prongs — proving a prima facie case, balance of convenience, and irreparable injury — and the state was not entitled to the interim injunction on borrowing cap. "If the state has essentially created financial hardship because of its own financial mismanagement, such hardship cannot be held to be an irreparable injury that would necessitate an interim relief against the Union. There is an arguable point that if we were to issue an interim mandatory injunction in such cases, it might set a bad precedent in law that would enable the states to flout fiscal policies and still successfully claim additional borrowings," the bench said. The apex court also noted in its order that the state



SC noted in its order that the state had already got substantial relief as the Centre agreed to release Rs 13,608 crore after the petition was filed

SC ruling a setback to Kerala govt
Kochi: Supreme Court's decision has come as a setback for the LDF govt. Going into Lok Sabha polls, one of the main planks of LDF has been the allegation that Centre has been slowly strangulating Kerala by denying it loans and much-needed funds earmarked for development, a claim that has fallen flat with SC pointing out that there has been economic mismanagement on the part of the state and that there is no proof of "irreparable damage" to the state due to Centre's alleged actions. If Supreme Court had granted interim relief, it would have given political mileage to LDF besides helping the state govt clear long-pending dues and arrears to pensioners and others. **TNN**

had already got substantial relief as the Centre agreed to release Rs 13,608 crore after the petition was filed. SC said several questions of significant importance impacting the Federal Structure of Governance arise for consideration and it should be adjudicated by a five-judge Constitution bench and framed four questions to be decided by the larger bench. "Is fiscal decentralisation an aspect of Indian federalism? If yes, do the impugned actions taken by the defendant purportedly to maintain the fiscal health of the country violate such principles of federalism? Are the impugned actions violative of Article 14 of the Constitution on the ground of 'manifest arbitrariness' or on the basis of differential treatment meted out to the plaintiff vis-à-vis other states?" the bench said

No stay on judicial probe into agitating farmer's death

New Delhi: Supreme Court on Monday refused to stay a judicial probe into the death of a protesting farmer at the Haryana border on Feb 21, during the recent agitation for legal guarantee of MSP, and turned down Haryana govt's plea alleging that such investigation would affect the morale of the police force, reports **Amit Anand Choudhary**. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and K V Viswanath said that it was a peculiar case as homicidal death took place in Haryana where no FIR was filed and the case was registered by Punjab Police which virtually means that one state agency would probe against another state agency. The bench said probe under the supervision of a retired judge was needed. Opposing the Punjab and Haryana HC's order, solicitor general Tushar Mehta told the bench that 67 state police personnel got injured in scuffles and protesters were heavily armed and it would be demoralising for the police force if its action was put under scanner.

For 1st time since 2018-19, adoptions cross 4k-mark

Ambika.Pandit@timesgroup.com

33K ON WAITLIST

Adoption Statistics	In-country	Inter-country	Total
2023-24	3,560	449	4,009
2022-23	3,010	431	3,441
2021-22	2,991	414	3,405
2020-21	3,142	417	3,559
2019-20	3,351	394	3,745
2018-19	3,374	653	4,027
2017-18	3,276	651	3,927
2016-17	3,210	578	3,788
2015-16	3,011	666	3,677

(Source: Central Adoption Resource Authority; Financial Year: April to March)

TIMES VIEW: Adoptions create a win-win situation for both foster parents and the adopted. Which is why it is heartening that such cases are rising. However, in a country of about 1,400 million people, the numbers are still extremely low. The govt should put in place a more adoption-friendly but rigorous process to further promote this progressive social trend. abroad adopted 18 children. A key factor contributing to increase in adoptions can be attributed to focus on promoting adoption within the country. One of the major shift under the law was that the power to pass an adoption order was given to district magistrate instead of court. Officials also point to simplification of adoption process to cut down delays.

Swedish national in Nagpur in search of biological mother

Crisscrossing continents, a 41-year-old Swedish woman hit the streets of Nagpur in search of her biological mother who gave her up for adoption four decades ago, reports Soumitra Bose. Patricia Eriksson, born to a 23-year-old unwed mother in Daga Hospital in Feb 1983, was adopted a year later from an orphanage by a Swedish couple. On her second visit to Nagpur in search of her mother, Patricia returned to her hotel Monday without success, but unwilling to give up on her mission. She visited anganwadis, schools, police stations and old neighbourhoods of Shantinagar. She knocked at red-light district enquiring about "a woman named Shanta". "I just want to meet her once, hug her and shower kisses on her before leaving this planet," said Patricia. Mother of three sons, she said, "I am not here to judge anyone." Thanking her Swedish parents Patricia said, "They brought me up well and I have no words of gratitude." But she hoped they had authentic data about her mother or her photo. Patricia nurtured a longing to meet her mother since her childhood and would run towards any dark-skinned woman in her city. After growing up, she began scrutinising her adoption documents.

SC: Political reasons, AP CM's stature mustn't delay his trial

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@timesgroup.com



Questioning prolonged trials concerning instances of 'quid pro quo and money-laundering' against Andhra CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy (left), SC sought an explanation from CBI within 4 weeks

Vijayawada: The Supreme Court observed on Monday that the position of an individual as chief minister should not hinder the progress of criminal trials. Questioning the prolonged trial of cases concerning instances of alleged quid pro quo and money-laundering against Andhra Pradesh CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, SC expressed displeasure with CBI for poor progress in the matter. Narasapuram MP K Raghunath Reddy approached SC with a plea to revoke Jagan's bail. Claiming that several adjournments taken by the accused were nothing but an abuse of the process of law, he contended that because of the

delay in starting trial there was every chance that witnesses may turn hostile as the accused hold a very influential office. SC previously issued notices in this regard. During Monday's hearing, a bench comprising Justices Sanjeev Khanna and Dipankar Datta questioned the CBI about the prolonged trial period. The CBI, represented by additional solicitor general SV Raju, attributed the delay to multiple discharge petitions filed by the accused. Reiterating that neither political considerations nor the accused's high rank should slow down the trial, the SC bench directed the central agency to file an affidavit within four weeks explaining the reasons for the prolonged trial. The bench also mentioned that a separate petition by Raghunath Reddy requesting transfer of the trial to another state would be considered alongside the bail cancellation plea. Next hearing of the matter has been scheduled for the week commencing Aug 5.

Accused has right to stay silent: HC

Hyderabad: Anyone accused of a crime has a fundamental right to remain silent and can't be forced to incriminate oneself. Telangana HC ruled recently while rejecting NIA's plea for fresh custody of a man charged under UAPA on the ground that he didn't say much during first phase of interrogation, reports **Sagar Kumar Mutha**. A bench of Justices K Lakshman and K Sujana cited Article 20(3) that states that an accused has a right to remain silent and that nobody shall be compelled to testify against oneself. The bench was hearing an appeal by Nossam Mohammed Yunus, one among several suspected members of the banned PFI named in a March 2022 case registered under UAPA. NIA took over the probe in August that year.

Bhojshala ASI survey to go on but no action on report sans SC nod

AmitAnand.Choudhary
@timesgroup.com



The 11th century monument in MP's Dhar district is at the center of a dispute between Hindus & Muslims

New Delhi: Supreme Court on Monday allowed ASI to carry on with a survey of Bhojshala temple-Kamal Maula mosque complex in Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh but directed that no action would be taken on the basis of the survey report without its permission. A bench of Justices Hrishikesh Roy and Prashant Kumar Mishra also directed ASI not to carry out any excavation on the premises which could alter the character of the structure. The 11th century monument is at the centre of a dispute between Hindus and Muslims. Hindus believe it is a temple of Goddess Vagdevi, an incarnation of Goddess Saraswati, while the Muslim community calls it the Kamal Maula mosque. On March 11,

graveyard adjacent to the structure where ASI was carrying out excavation in which human remains were found. "We are not staying the survey but do not try to dig up things," the bench said. SC thereafter passed an order seeking response from MP govt and ASI on the appeal filed against the HC order directing survey of the structure. "Issue notice returnable in four weeks. In the interim, no action should be taken without the leave of this court on the outcome of the ordered impugned survey. It is clear that no physical excavation should be taken which will change the character of the premises in question," the apex court bench said. After HC's March 11 order, the petitioner had moved SC for interim stay but Supreme Court refused to grant stay.

Flight stuck after boarding? Now, you can alight & use departure gate to go to terminal and wait

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: In case of long flight delays or other emergencies after boarding, passengers will now be able to alight from the aircraft through the airport departure gate and wait at the terminal, instead of sitting holed up inside the plane while waiting for it to take off, as per new guidelines issued by the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) amid mounting congestion and delays. The demand for this move used to peak every foggy winter when passengers, especially in north India, would spend hours restlessly

waiting on their seats without access to drinking water, snacks, or an adequate number of toilets. On Monday, BCAS DG Zulfiqar Hasan said the new guidelines had been issued to airlines and airport operators on March 30 and were **NO MORE GROUNDING** now in force. "This will help ensure less harassment for passengers who would not have to keep sitting inside an aircraft for long hours after boarding," he said at a function to mark BCAS' 38th Raising Day. The decision on deboarding passengers will be taken by the air-

line/security agencies concerned. "Airport operators have to make arrangements for the infrastructure, including for screening, to implement the guidelines," Hasan added. In Jan, BCAS fined IndiGo and Mumbai airport Rs 1.8 crore when passengers of a delayed Goa-Delhi flight — that had been diverted to Mumbai due to fog in Delhi — were served meals on the airport tarmac. Hasan said congestion at airports is "unwelcome" and that the agency has developed optimum standards and tools to tackle the issue. BCAS will have security lanes at airports to ensure a better experience for passengers at airports.

Will cut flights to ensure connectivity, says Vistara

Continued from P 1

The last 2-3 days have been particularly painful, with complaints flooding social media. On Monday evening, the airline admitted as much. In Mumbai, though, other airlines' flights were also delayed 30-40 minutes on Monday but that was attributed to VVIP movement linked to PM Narendra Modi's visit to the city. Vistara said it had decided to temporarily reduce the number of flights to ensure adequate connectivity across its network, and that alternative flight options or refunds were being offered to affected customers. "We understand these disruptions have caused immense discomfort to our customers, and sin-

cerely apologise to them. We are working towards stabilising the situation and will resume operating our regular capacity very soon," said an airline spokesperson. While pilots complain about a likely pay cut, there is discontent among other employees, too. "The issue is what level we will be at in the merged airline," said one staffer. Sources say the decision to merge Vistara into Air India was expedited for this reason alone, as more delays could mean more senior roles at AI being filled up, not leaving much scope of accommodating Vistara's arrivals. Similar troubles were not seen during the merger of the erstwhile AirAsia India with Air India Express. **With inputs from Mumbai**

Tender Notice
GMR Visakhapatnam International Airport Ltd (GVIAL) is issuing Expression of Interest for prequalification of interested parties for award of IT Concession on DBOFT basis at Bhogapuram greenfield international airport near Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. Please refer website www.gmrvisakhapatnamairport.com for further details

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NCGTC invites sealed Tenders from eligible bidders for acquiring office premises on Leave & License basis at BKC, Mumbai
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For clarifications if any, please contact 022-67531274 or e-mail at procurement@ncgtc.in

KONKAN RAILWAY CORPORATION LIMITED
(A Government of India Undertaking)
NOTICE INVITING OPEN-E-TENDER DATED 01.04.2024 (Second Call)
On behalf of Konkan Railway Corporation Ltd., Senior Regional Engineer, Ratnagiri is inviting Open E-Tenders for the following work.
Name of Work: Rock bolting and shotcreting in Lajul Shaft inside Karbude tunnel under AEN/Ratnagiri section. (Tender No.: KR-RN-W-2023-68A (Second Call)). Estimated cost: ₹ 212,22,583/- EMD: ₹ 2,56,100/- Last date and time of depositing of tender online: 23/04/2024 upto 15:00 hrs. For further details, contact office of Regional Railway Manager, Office, MIDC area, Mirjole, Ratnagiri. (Web site: <https://www.ireps.gov.in>)

SEARCH FOR MISSING FEMALE
General Public is hereby informed that one female (depicted in the photo) namely **Juhi Parveen @ Muskan D/o Md. Mumtaj Ali R/o H.No.99, Resettlement colony Sec-26, Rohini, Delhi Aged-21 Years** has been reported missing since 18.03.2024 at 8:20 PM from her residence vide **DD No.45A Dated 26.03.2024** registered at Police Station K.N. Katju Marg, Delhi. Her physical description is as under:-
Complexion: Fair, **Height:** 5'4", **Face:** Round, **Built:** Medium, **Clothing:** Blue coloured jeans, Blue coloured top and white-pink coloured shoes in feet.
Any person having any information/Clue about this missing female, may inform SHO, K.N. Katju Marg, Delhi at E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in or website : <http://cbi.cnic.in> Sd/-
Tele No. : 011-24368638 or 24368641 SHO, K.N. Katju Marg, Delhi
FAX No. : 011-24368639 Tel.: 011-27571162, 27571171
DP/3689/RD/2024 Mob.: 9911954646, 8750870327

पी.एम. श्री केन्द्रीय विद्यालय
आयुध निर्माणी मुरादनगर, गाजियाबाद-201206
प्रवेश सूचना 2024-25
विद्यालय में शैक्षणिक सत्र 2024-25 के लिये बालवाटिका-3 में प्रवेश हेतु ऑफलाइन और कक्षा 1 में प्रवेश हेतु ऑनलाइन आवेदन आमंत्रित किये जाते हैं।
क्र.सं. विषय-वस्तु निर्धारित तिथियां SCHEDULED DATES संबंधित वर्ष जिसमें प्रवेश मांगा गया है।
1. बालवाटिका- III के लिए पंजीकरण - ऑफलाइन माध्यम से ऑफलाइन माध्यम से ऑफलाइन माध्यम से ऑफलाइन माध्यम से 01.04.2024 (Monday) to 15.04.2024 (Monday) 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM 5 वर्ष लेकिन 6 वर्ष से कम आयु। 5 years but less than 6 years
2. कक्षा 1 का पंजीकरण ऑनलाइन होगा वेबसाइट - 01-04-2024 (10:00 AM onward) To 15-04-2024 (05:00 PM) 6 वर्ष लेकिन 8 वर्ष से कम आयु। 6 years but less than 8 years
<https://kvsonlineadmission.kvs.gov.in/index.html> प्राचार्य

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Kerala author quits Sahitya Akademi over 'political interference'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kochi: Noted litterateur from Kerala C Radhakrishnan on Monday resigned as eminent member of Sahitya Akademi as a mark of protest after Union minister Arjun Ram Meghwal inaugurated this year's literary festival a few weeks ago.

cluding Sahitya Akademi award, Ezhuthachan award, Vayalar award and Kerala Sahitya Akademi award. The author said this is the first time that such a thing happened in the long-cherished history of the Akademi "which consistently upheld its autonomy against pressure exerted by those with political clout". "Last year, a lesser official, a minister of state, had taken part in inaugural session of the festival, inviting protests from all of us. Assurance was given that this will not repeat. Hope you remember the unpleasant struggle we put up against efforts to influence the Akademi politically," he wrote.

Will start talks with Sri Lanka to get fishing rights off Katchatheevu: EAM

'Cong, DMK Ceded Claim Without Any Resistance'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Amid disclosures through RTI that India did not try hard enough to keep Katchatheevu, external affairs minister S Jaishankar said gov't will open negotiations with Sri Lanka over implementation of India-Sri Lanka Maritime Boundary Act and a subsequent deal based on which Colombo is stopping Indian fishermen from operating in waters near the island.



Jaishankar said people have a right to know how Katchatheevu was given to Sri Lanka and why even fishing rights were given up

wrote that he doesn't like matters like this being pending indefinitely and being raised again and again in Parliament. He saw it as a nuisance," Jaishankar said, reading out from documents on the agreement and preceding debates on the issue.

"We should get fishing rights. We need to sit with Sri Lankan authorities and sort it out. Even today, our fishermen are being arrested and vessels are being seized. Katchatheevu island was given away in 1974 and fishing rights were given away in 1976," Jaishankar said as he held Congress and DMK equally responsible for "ceding claim without putting up resistance".

He said the most basic reason was indifference shown by central gov't and the Prime Ministers of the day (Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi) and connivance of DMK gov't with Congress regime of the time.

"We know who did it but people of the country should be told who hid it. In May of 1961, PM Nehru wrote that he attaches no importance at all to this little island and he would have no hesitation in giving up claim to it. He

times. And my record shows that to the current CM (M K Stalin), I have replied 21 times on this issue. This is not an issue which has suddenly surfaced. This is a live issue," the minister said.

"Now, every political party in Tamil Nadu has taken a position on this matter. As though the situation is for today's central gov't to resolve, there is no history to this, this has just happened, they are people who are taking up the cause; that is the way they would like to project it," he said.

"The PM (Indira Gandhi) is said to have remarked in an All India Congress Committee (AICC) meeting that this is a little rock. I am reminded of those days when Pandit Nehru called our northern boundary a place where not a blade of grass grew. I would like to remind that after this historic statement by Nehru, he never regained confidence of the country," Jaishankar said, adding that the same happened to Indira when she said this was only a "little rock".

"This dismissive attitude was the historic Congress attitude towards Katchatheevu," he said.

Katchatheevu issue has unmasked DMK's double standards: PM

Continued from P 1

New details emerging on Katchatheevu have unmasked DMK's double standards totally," PM stood on X, along with the TOI report.

He targeted Congress for the second day running over the controversial decision. "Congress and DMK are family units. They only care that their own sons and daughters' rise. They don't care for anyone else. Their callousness on Katchatheevu has harmed interests of our poor fishermen and fishermen in particular," he said.

On Sunday, he had said, "Weakening India's unity, integrity and interests has been Congress' way of working for 75 years and counting."

PM's remarks come in the wake of growing scrutiny of the agreement between India and Sri Lanka, signed during the tenure of Indira Gandhi gov't in 1974. The TOI report was based on an RTI reply received by Tamil Nadu BJP president K Annamalai to his queries on the matter.

Annamalai reiterated that Congress and DMK colluded to give away Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka. "This is part two of expose of betrayal of DMK in ceding of Katchatheevu," Annamalai said at a press conference, adding, "Ex-CM Karunanidhi was consulted twice before ceding Katchatheevu to

Kharge: PM building false narrative on Katchatheevu

New Delhi: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said PM Modi had manufactured a "false narrative on Katchatheevu" to divert focus from his silence in the face of Chinese provocations and occupation of 2,000 sq km of Indian territory after he gave a "free pass" to the belligerent neighbour.

Party general secretary Jai Ram Ramesh, releasing RTI information of 2015, said under then foreign secretary S Jaishankar, who is now EAM, the ministry had clearly stated that there was no question of acquiring or ceding the island as the area was not demarcated and under the agreement signed later, it lay on the Lankan side of India-Sri Lanka international maritime boundary line. "Is Jaishankar disowning the reply given by MEA on Jan 27, 2015?" he asked.

Taking potshots at the minister, Congress leader P Chidambaram said Jaishankar had somersaulted from a "liberal foreign service officer" to "spokesman of BJP-RSS". He said fishermen have been detained by Sri Lanka during all govts, including Vajpayee and Modi regimes, and all have negotiated their release. "What has changed for Jaishankar to launch a tirade against Congress and DMK?" he asked.

Congress said Katchatheevu was part of a friendship treaty just like Modi handed over III enclaves to Bangladesh in return for 55 under boundary agreement, and nobody pointed any fingers at him.

Spokesman Pawan Khara said what was galling was the land taken away by force, like China has done post-Galwan, and against which environmental activist Sonam Wangchuk is holding a protest in freezing cold in Ladakh.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr.P.C. Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Mohd. Saddam @ Chhotu, S/o: Mohd. Mutakeem, R/o: H.No. 5959, Gali Babbu Khan, Ballimaran, Chandni Chowk, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 967/2022, U/s 376/328 IPC, P.S.: Kotwali, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused Mohd. Saddam @ Chhotu cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Mohd. Saddam @ Chhotu has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Advertisement for Northern Railway Tender Notice. Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement System. Principal Chief materials manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110001 for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items:

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person namely Tashi S/o Sh. Karma R/o N-17, Aruna Nagar, Majnu Ka Tilla, Civil Lines, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 294/2020 Dt 17.07.2020 U/s 12/9/55 D.G. Act at PS: Civil Lines, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused Tashi can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Tashi has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that one girl Namely Arsh Begum d/o Md. Kayyum R/o W-88, Amar Park, Darbhanga tola Tulsī Nagar, Inderlok Delhi has been missing/kidnapped from her house, since: 06.02.2024. In this regard, a case DD No.10A, dated 07.03.2024, has been registered at P.S. Sarai Rohilla, Delhi. The description of the missing girl is as under.

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that one girl namely Kum Kum Kumari D/o Yugal Kishor R/o: D-461, Sanjay Colony, Okhla Phase-II, New Delhi, Age: Approx 17 years, Height: 4'6", Complexion: Wheatish, Face: Round, Built: Thin, wearing Yellow Pink T-Shirt and Blue colour Jeans and Slipper in feet, has been missing/kidnapped from the jurisdiction of P.S. Okhla Industrial Area, Delhi since 24.12.2023. In this regard a FIR No. 966/2023 U/S 363 IPC, dated 25.12.2023 has been lodged at P.S. Okhla Industrial Area, Delhi.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Vijay Prajapati, S/o: Narayan Prajapati, R/o: WZ-44, Ground Floor, Dayal Sar Road, West Uttam Nagar, Delhi-110059 has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 52/2019, U/s 420/411 IPC, P.S.: Rajouri Garden, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused Vijay Prajapati cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Vijay Prajapati has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Advertisement for National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences. Tender notification for supply of various kinds of Drugs, Chemicals, Surgical & Miscellaneous items required by the Institute for the period of 24 Months for the date of issue of Rate Contract.

BANARAS LOCOMOTIVE WORKS, VARANASI-221004

Advertisement for Banaras Locomotive Works, Varanasi. E-Tenders for supply of various items including Digital Signature and registrations on IREPS.

NHAI halts toll fee hike till June 1

New Delhi: In a temporary relief to commuters, National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) on Monday deferred for two months annual toll rate hike, which comes to effect from April 1 every year, reports Dipak Dash.

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified deadbody of male Age : About 28 years, Height : 5'6", Complexion : Wheatish, Face: Round, Build: Medium, Identification: A tattoo of Ganesh Das on left hand, wearing blue jeans and white printed shirt, was found dead in train accident on 28.03.2024

PM backs EB as key '1st step' towards probity

Surendra Singh & Manash Gohain | TNN. New Delhi: PM Narendra Modi on Sunday justified his gov't decision to bring in electoral bonds and said they were an important first step in tackling influence of black money in electoral politics and any imperfection in it could have been taken care of in due course of time.

Essential med prices set to see marginal rise after govt nod

New Delhi: National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has allowed pharma companies to marginally increase prices of scheduled formulations included in National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) from April 1. The drugs include commonly used painkillers, antibiotics, diabetes medications, and anti-rabies immunoglobulin, among others, reports Durgesh Nandan Jha.

Shahjahan remanded to ED custody till April 13

Kolkata: PMLA court in Kolkata Monday remanded Sandeshkhalī strongman Sheikh Shahjahan in ED custody till April 13, report Subrata Chatteraj & Rohit Khanna. ED counsel said the agency has enough evidence in possession to take him in custody under PMLA and asked for another 14-day custody.

Advertisement for कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय PIU पटना नगर निगम, पटना शुद्धि-पत्र-2

Advertisement for Banarasi Lokomotivski Radovi, Varanasi. E-tenders for supply of various items including Digital Signature and registrations on IREPS.

Advertisement for Office of the Executive Engineer, Sikrahna Embankment Division, Motihari. Letter No. 397/Motihari

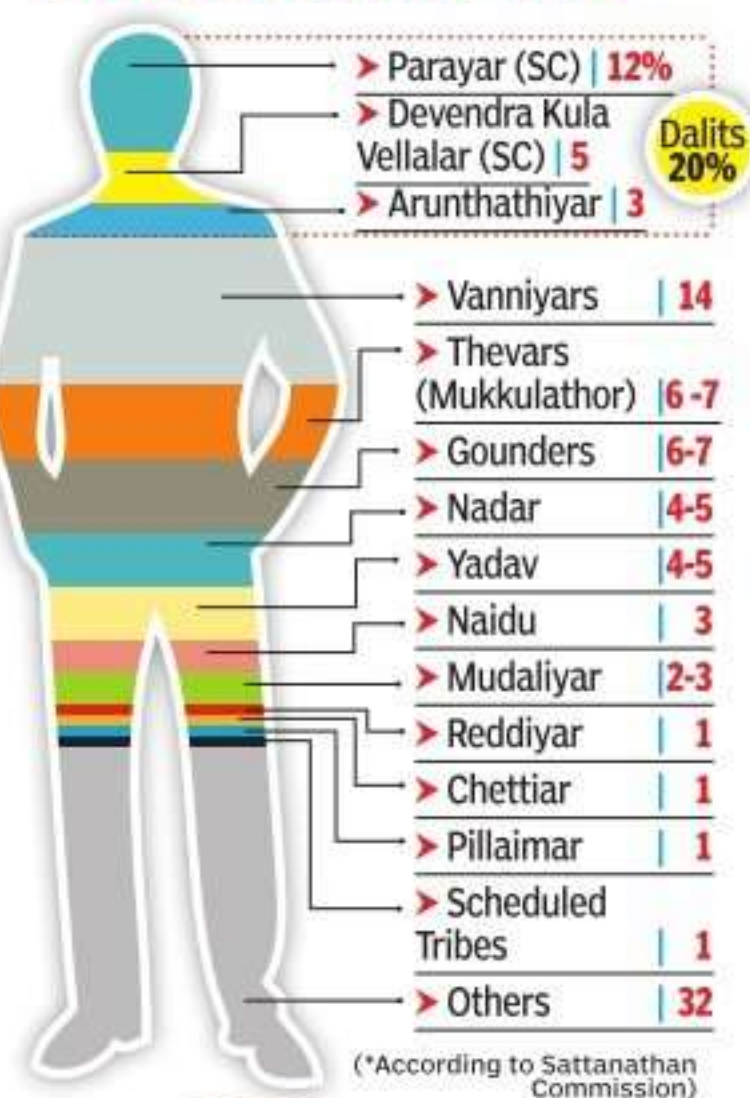
Advertisement for Tender No. 055BD/2023-24 and P.R No.-020157 (W.R.D)/2023-24, invited by the undersigned is Corrected. Now the time and date of opening of Technical Bids (SR.No-5 of NIT) is Corrected to dated 08.04.2024 at 3.30 P.M.

NOT CAST IN STONE? IN TN POLITICS, IT PERHAPS IS

PMK & VCK AS ALLIES EMBODY SIGNIFICANCE OF CASTE-BASED PARTIES

THE ARITHMETIC

Bosco.Dominique@timesgroup.com



Electoral politics in Tamil Nadu is, among other things, a jumble of ironies. What else can explain the eagerness of virtually every party that vows to strive for a casteless society putting caste on high priority while choosing allies and candidates? While each of the three major alliances this time tried to keep caste-based vote banks happy, two parties stand out as embodiments of caste politics — PMK and VCK.

Anbumani Ramadoss's PMK, with a strong Vanniyaar vote base, and Thol Thirumavalavan's VCK, a Dalit party, have been in demand in the alliance market (Dalits constitute about 20% of the state's population, while Vanniyaars are estimated to be around 14%). VCK stayed loyal to the DMK alliance; PMK negotiated simultaneously with BJP and AIADMK before finally deciding to sail with the saffron.



Desia Katchi, which has a support base among grounders in some western pockets.

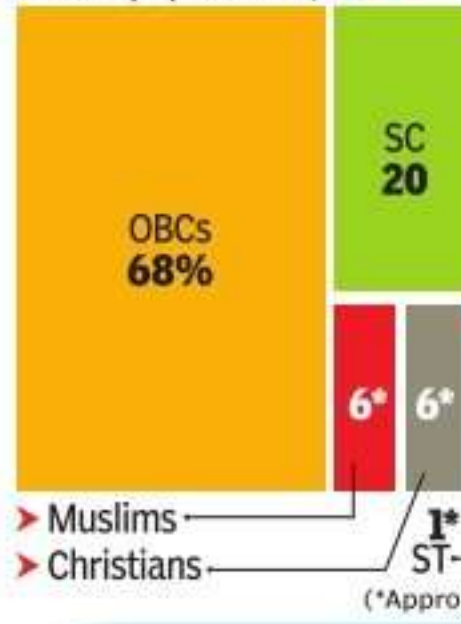
PMK's decision to align with BJP is seen as the party's strategy to work for a coalition gov't in TN without DMK and AIADMK in 2026. "That's why thalaivar (Anbumani) isn't contesting this time," said an insider. In the fray in Dharmapuri is his wife Sowmya Anbumani. Anbumani has been trying to shake off PMK's image as a 'caste party', but the party's bottom line remains the support of Vanniyaars — something that makes it desirable for alliance leaders.

VCK has been a dependable ally of DMK. Besides his call to defeat 'fascist forces', Thirumavalavan feels his community stands to gain more by aligning with the winning side in the state than the one at the Centre. Hence his stand that this election is "not between the INDIA bloc and the BJP-led NDA, but between the people and Sangh Parivar". A challenge for VCK would be that it hasn't got its preferred 'pot' symbol.

VCK members find comfort in the fact that AIADMK and PMK are not together this time. "Votes of Vanniyaars will be split between AIADMK and PMK, giving us an edge," said a VCK functionary. "PMK joined an alliance led by BJP, which has completely different ideologies. PMK demands the conduct of a caste-based census while BJP is against it. Similarly, the stance of the two parties on NEET and reservation and several other issues are contradictory," he said.

BREAK-UP

Total population 7.2 cr



VCK IN LS

- Thol Thirumavalavan lost thrice (1999, 2004 and 2014)
- Won twice (2009, 2019)
- Ravikumar is contesting in LS polls for the second time
- He is a sitting MP from Villupuram

Rahul's Wayanad fight inappropriate: Vijayan

Accuses Rahul Of Double Standards For 'CAA Silence'



Jolt to oppn as Left names nominees for 8 J'khand seats

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kozhikode: Fault lines in the INDIA bloc split wide open in Kerala on Monday after CM Pinarayi Vijayan declared it was "inappropriate" of Congress to field sitting MP Rahul Gandhi in Wayanad against CPI's Annie Raja, defeating the alliance's professed aim of taking on BJP-led NDA.

"Can Rahul Gandhi say he has come here to contest against NDA? He has come here to fight LDF, which is the major political power. What is the justification for contesting against LDF, which is part of the INDIA bloc, and that too against Annie Raja, who is a nationally recognised Left leader?" Vijayan said.

Accusing Rahul of "double standard", the CM questioned why the former Congress president remained silent on CAA throughout his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra.

Vijayan, who attended a campaign rally for Annie Raja at Thiruvambady in Kozhikode, said it was also intriguing that Congress wasn't taking a stand against "central agencies hounding non-Congress opposition leaders".

"Congress played a key role in levelling corruption allega-

Cong brass overrules Maha unit, names Ambedkar rival

Hours after the state Congress leadership said it would not hesitate to support Prakash Ambedkar's candidature from Akola provided his VBA backs seven of its nominees, the Congress's poll committee on Monday declared the name of Dr Abhay Kashinath Patil as its candidate from Akola. The declaration marked the rejection of leader of opposition (Congress) Vijay Wadetiwar's bid for a fresh outreach towards the Ambedkar-led VBA. **TNN**

Sanjay Sahay | TNN

Ranchi: Fissures have appeared in INDIA bloc in Jharkhand, with Left parties announcing candidates in eight of the state's total 14 Lok Sabha seats despite a tentative "seat-sharing plan" formulated by the alliance.

The move by CPI, CPM, CPI-ML and MCC comes amid claims that they find themselves "almost left out" in the "seat-sharing" contours drawn up so far. If the Left goes ahead and eventually contests in these eight seats, that will leave only six for the senior members of the INDIA bloc, JMM and Congress.

CPM state secretary Prakash Viplav and CPI's Ajay Singh blamed JMM and Congress for not talking to them on seat-sharing. To complicate matters further, RJD, another INDIA ally, has demanded two seats, Palamu and Chatra, saying these are home to its traditional voters.

CPI has named candidates for four LS seats — Palamu, Lohardaga, Chatra and Dumka. CPM has fielded nominees in Rajmahal and Chatra. MCC has done so from Dhanbad. CPI-ML claims it has been assured of one seat, Koderma.



PMK IN LS

1998	Contested 5 seats and won 4	2009	Runner up in all 6 seats contested
1999	Contested 7 seats and won 5	2014	Contested 8 seats, only Anbumani won
2004	Contested 5 and won all 5 seats	2019	Lost all 7 seats contested

SC notice to EC on PIL for complete VVPAT count

New Delhi: Supreme Court on Monday issued notice to Election Commission on a PIL filed by activist Arun Kumar Agrawal seeking complete count of voter verified paper audit trail (VVPAT) paper slips in elections as opposed to the current practice of verification of only five randomly selected electronic voting machines (EVMs) in each assembly segment of a parliamentary constituency. Citing that similar petitions are pending and under consideration of the apex court, a bench headed by Justice B R Gawai tagged Agrawal's plea with them.

The petitioner said that if simultaneous verification is done and more officers are deployed for counting, the complete VVPAT verification can be done in matter of 5-6 hours.

The petition further argued that while govt has spent nearly Rs 5,000 crores on purchase of nearly 24 lakh VVPATs, presently slips of only about 20,000 VVPATs are verified. Given that questions are being raised by experts on VVPATs and EVMs and a large number of discrepancies have been reported, it is imperative that all VVPATs slips are counted and the voter is given an opportunity to verify that his vote as cast in the ballot is also counted by allowing him to physically drop his/her VVPAT slip on the ballot box, it argued. **TNN**

HC: Can't issue blanket order to deposit arms before polls

Lucknow: Lucknow bench of Allahabad high court has ordered UP govt not to force people to deposit their licensed arms under a blanket order, saying the state has to specify the reasons why it's necessary to deposit the weapons. Angered by the state directive asking licence holders to deposit their firearms as soon as the model code of conduct comes into force, despite previous HC rulings against such a general order, Justice Abdul Moin warned authorities of imposing heavy costs, if HC's order was not complied with.

The bench found in the case of Mohd Arif Khan in 1994, HC had restrained state authorities from passing such a general order requiring people to deposit their licensed arms. HC had reiterated its order in different cases in 2000, 2002, 2021 and again in 2022, but to avail. Censuring the "lackadaisical approach" of authorities, the court said it showed judgments of "the highest court of state... (which) are binding on all authorities in the state are being conveniently overlooked". **TNN**

ARTISTS ADD COLOUR TO POLL PROCESS



Volunteers create a 'rangoli' during a competition organised to create voter awareness ahead of upcoming Lok Sabha elections in Chikkamagaluru in Karnataka on Monday

EC raps Ghosh, Shrinete for 'low-level personal attacks'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Election Commission on Monday strongly censured BJP MP Dilip Ghosh and Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete over their derogatory remarks against West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee and actress and BJP candidate from Mandi Kangna Ranaut, respectively.

Ruling that the impugned statements by the politicians were "low-level personal attacks" and thus in violation of model code of conduct, EC, in separate orders, warned them to be careful with their public utterances. Sources said both their election-related communications will henceforth be "especially and additionally monitored" by EC for derogatory content. Specifically condemning the disrespectful post made from Shrinete's handle against Ranaut, EC said the former being chairperson of Congress's social

BJP seeks EC action against Rahul for 'match-fixing' comment

Taking strong exception to Rahul Gandhi's "match fixing" remark at the opposition INDIA bloc rally, BJP Monday urged Election Commission to take the "strictest action" against Congress and issue directions to lodge an FIR against Rahul. BJP also urged EC to direct the Congress leader to tender an "unconditional public apology" to the nation and PM Narendra Modi for levelling "false allegations" against him.

Addressing INDIA bloc's rally on Sunday, Rahul accused Modi of trying to do "match-fixing" in Lok Sabha polls and warned if BJP won the election through this endeavour and "changed" the Constitution, the country would be "finished". Trinamool Congress, meanwhile, appealed to EC Monday to restrain central agencies like ED, CBI and IT dept from taking action against candidates, leaders and workers of parties opposed to BJP till the conclusion of the polls. **TNN**

media and digital platform at national level, "is expected to know sensitivities of wider communication".

EC on Monday also marked to the party chiefs a copy of its warning notice to Ghosh and Shrinete. The purpose, sources said, is to get the party heads to sensitise their functionaries to be careful while communicating in the public domain and

refrain from making any derogatory comments or violating MCC guidelines.

While the posts from Shrinete's social media handles had taken an undignified dig at Ranaut's candidature from Mandi (Mandi being a slang associated with immoral traffic), Ghosh had stirred the hornet's nest by commenting on Mamata's parentage at a press meet.

Influential Naga outfit threatens to abstain from poll process

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Guwahati: Eastern Naga People's Organisation (ENPO), the apex body of seven major tribes of Nagaland, has written to the chief election commissioner reaffirming its decision to abstain from the Lok Sabha elections in protest against non-creation of a separate "Frontier Nagaland Territory". ENPO says Centre had promised the separate zone, with greater autonomy, before the announcement of the model code of conduct.

ENPO has been demanding that the zone be carved out of the state's six eastern districts — Mon, Kiphire, Longleng, Tuensang, Shamator and Noklak. Centre has proposed an alternative autonomous council with legislative, executive, administration, and financial autonomy. These six districts are home to seven of the 17 tribes of the state, including the Konyak, Chang, Yimkhung, Sangtam, Phom, Khiamnungan and Tikhir.

The entire state is one Lok Sabha constituency (Nagaland) comprising 60 assembly segments. Twenty of these segments are in the six eastern districts. These districts together have nearly four lakh voters, which would be about 30% of the state's total electorate.

In its letter, ENPO said MHA had on Dec 7, 2023, "offered and assured" to settle the creation of Frontier Nagaland Territory before LS poll model code. "Despite numerous reminders through letters and mass public rallies, MHA turned a deaf ear... which is why the Eastern Nagaland populace feels compelled to take this course of action as a means of expressing our collective discontent," it wrote. ENPO emphasised its decision was not intended as an act of defiance against the electoral machinery or principles of democracy.

Shah accuses oppn of prioritising family over country



Home minister Amit Shah is felicitated in Jodhpur on Monday. At a rally, Shah criticised UPA for 'plunging the country into darkness' and perpetuating a culture of dynastic politics

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Jodhpur: Union home minister Amit Shah launched a scathing critique against "dynastic politics" during the second day of his Lok Sabha election campaign in Rajasthan on Monday, asserting that BJP is the only party prioritising the interests of the nation's youth, unlike INDIA bloc constituents entrenched in familial ambitions.

"Our fight is against dynastic politics. This 'ghamandiya' coalition (INDIA bloc) has no concern for the country except their families. Sonia Gandhi wants his son Rahul to be PM. (Ashok) Gehlot wants his son to be CM. Mamata (Banerjee) wants his nephew to be CM. Lalu Yadav wants his son to be CM. Stalin wants his son to be CM. Uddhav Thackeray wants his son to be CM," Shah said. He was addressing an audience comprising party workers from Jodhpur, Pali, Jalore-Sirohi, and Jaisalmer-Barmer Lok Sabha constituencies at Polo Ground in Jodhpur.

Shah began his day with a meeting of the party's core committee of the Jodhpur division with CM Bhajan Lal Sharma and Rajasthan BJP co-in-charge Vijaya Rahatkar. Later, he held a rally to

galvanise efforts towards securing all 25 LS seats in Rajasthan for a third consecutive time and surpassing the target of 400 seats nationwide.

Drawing comparisons between the 10 years of UPA govt and NDA's decade since 2014, Shah criticised the Congress-led coalition for "plunging the country into darkness" and perpetuating a culture of dynastic politics and appeasement. Responding to Congress's allegations of democracy being in peril under NDA govt, Shah retorted: "It was your grandmother, who sent lakhs behind bars and invoked a ban on political parties. You have no moral right to talk about democracy." He was alluding to Congress MP Rahul Gandhi's accusations of BJP stifling democracy.

Highlighting central funds allocated to Rajasthan for development projects, Shah asserted that the state received Rs 161,000 crore during UPA's tenure, while Modi govt sanctioned Rs 624,000 crore. Challenging Gehlot, Shah challenged him for a debate on these details once the former CM was free from campaigning for his son Vaibhav Gehlot, the Congress candidate for Jalore LS seat.

Rajasthan votes in two phases on April 19 and 26.

Nakul Nath aide & Chhindwara mayor quits Cong, joins BJP

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Bhopal: Chhindwara mayor Vikram Ahake, another Kamal Nath loyalist, quit Congress and joined BJP on Monday, just three days after party Amarwara MLA Kamlesh Shah defected to the saffron camp, in Madhya Pradesh.

Ahake, a young tribal leader, was given primary membership of BJP by chief minister Mohan Yadav and state BJP president VD Sharma at CM House in Bhopal.

More than former CM Kamal Nath, Ahake was known to be the discovery of his son Nakul Nath, the Chhindwara MP fielded by Congress for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

AAP ex-MP from Patiala joins Cong

In a boost to Congress ahead of Lok Sabha elections, former AAP MP from Patiala Dharamvir Gandhi joined the party at AICC headquarters in New Delhi. Gandhi, whose alliance with Congress became evident during the Bharat Jodo Yatra, expressed readiness to contest from Patiala parliamentary constituency if needed. **TNN**

It was on Nakul's insistence that Congress gave the mayoral poll ticket to Ahake in 2022. Whenever Nakul toured his constituency, Ahake accompanied him like his shadow.

The Naths find themselves increasingly alone as their loyalists desert them. Ahake said, "I have joined BJP after being influenced by the developmental works of PM Modi and CM Mohan Yadav and the slogan of 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas'. I have decided to follow PM Modi and work for his welfare schemes. I am happy that BJP has given me a place in their family."

BJP makes veiled attack on Naveen aide Pandian with focus on 'Odia asmita'

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Bhubaneswar: BJP and BJD's swift transition from would-be allies to poll rivals manifested itself in a tug-of-war over "Odia asmita (pride)" on Utkal Divas, with both parties projecting themselves as the sole custodian of Odisha's culture, history and aspirations.

BJP's focus on Odia identity is seen as a veiled attack on CM Naveen Patnaik's aide VK Pandian, whose roots are in Tamil Nadu.

Muslim general infamy for attacking the Jagannath temple in Puri in the 16th century. In a series of posts on its social media platform, BJP's Odisha unit accused BJD of betraying Odia pride.

BJP's campaign strategy was evident immediately after its state president Manmohan Samal announced that the party would go it alone in Odisha. Pandian, an IAS officer who quit the bureaucracy to join BJD last year, became the target of the party's social media meme fest focused on his allegedly frequent heli-

copter rides. BJP also questioned "unnecessary security cover" for Pandian, citing information acquired through RTI and alleging that all of this was "at the expense of the Odia people's hard-earned money".

BJD's take on "Odia asmita" came across in a message from CM Naveen, who said "self-respect" was the essence of the state's quest for development. "Odisha continues to inscribe its proud history, flourishing with the commitment of every Odia.

Aligned with the era of transformation, our collective pledge is to propel Odisha towards development. As we commemorate Odisha Divas, let us unite to bolster Odia pride and stride towards a prosperous Odisha," Naveen wrote.

Union minister and BJP's Sambalpur LS candidate Dharmendra Pradhan said time was ripe for a change in Odisha.

Mysuru 'yuvaraja' owns no car, house or land, says poll affidavit

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Bengaluru: Yaduveer Krishnaraja Datta Wadiyar, the titular head of the erstwhile Mysuru royal family and BJP candidate for Mysore Lok Sabha seat, does not own a house, land, or even a vehicle, according to the affidavit he filed with the Election Commission of India Monday.



Yaduveer, who is fighting on a BJP ticket, declared assets worth Rs 9cr, mostly shareholdings, other assets

year and the couple's son Aadyaveer own assets worth Rs 1 crore and Rs 3.6 crore, respectively, the affidavit stated. Yaduveer owns gold and silver worth Rs 3.4 crore, while Trishika possesses precious metals worth Rs 1 crore. The couple hold directorial roles in several companies, including Little

Buntings Private Limited and the Bherunda Foundation.

Yaduveer, 32, is locked in a direct fight with Congress candidate M Lakshmana, who is also the party's spokesperson in Karnataka.

In stark contrast to Yaduveer, Mandya Congress candidate Venkatramme Gowda, aka Star Chandru, has disclosed assets worth a staggering Rs 622 crore, that predominantly consist of extensive land holdings.

PC Mohan, incumbent BJP Bangalore Central MP who is seeking re-election from the seat has reported assets worth Rs 66.4 crore, along with liabilities of Rs 15.8 crore.



A thought for today

We must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence by military-industrial complex

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

Global War Inc

Why do so many wars carry on and on? Because the political-military-industrial complex wants them to

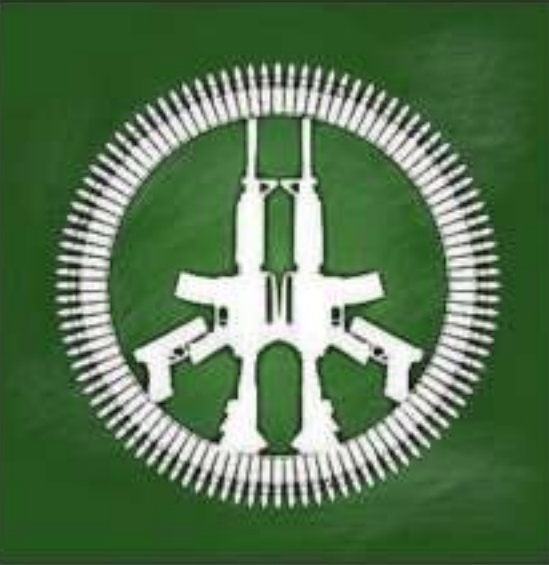
Over the weekend tens of thousands of Israelis began four days of demonstrations against their govt over its handling of the Gaza war. But is Netanyahu listening? No. In ports across the world some dock workers and others have protested shipments of military cargo to Israel. Has that halted Israel's offensive? No. This dissonance between decision makers and increasingly vocal popular opinion shows why it's really difficult to stop conflicts today.

The political-military-industrial complex | Arms companies benefit from wars. Generals, who don't usually die fighting, like weapons. Therefore, they like arms companies. But the influence of arms companies on political leadership is less discussed. Per SIPRI, Europe is witnessing record defence spending with companies like Germany's Rheinmetall and France's Dassault Aviation witnessing 367% and 89% growth, respectively, in share prices. Almost all politicians like companies that are doing well, they like jobs being created, and they respect their generals. Plus, wanting to be macho is a universal political weakness. Hence the political-industrial-military complex.

Joe's finessing | Look at Biden. Despite protests from young Democrats, he continues to ship weapons to Israel. He also says protesters have a point. But he fears cutting off weapons supplies to Tel Aviv might jeopardise his re-election campaign – American arms firms like Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and General Dynamics are big political financiers. And generals want weapons to be tested.

Tail wagging the dog? | Africa is awash with weapons and multiple conflict zones. Little wonder, all top weapons manufacturers have a presence on the continent. Russia is a leading arms supplier in the sub-Saharan region. China is close behind in second spot, while US and France continue to have new and legacy weapons platforms. This again begs interesting questions: Would disputes such as the one over the Moroccan Sahara continue if Russia hadn't been a major supplier of arms to West-backed Morocco's rival Algeria? Was the war against Gaddafi's Libya a move to open up new markets for arms producers? Is Sudan a test bed for Western and Russian weapons?

These questions are asked because many wars around the world just go on and on. Mad dictators are only one part of the answer. Who supplies the weapons? The global arms industry today is more powerful than ever. And when its interests align with those of politicians, whether in democracies or in autocracies, war becomes big business – and deaths become statistics.



Freeloading & Freedom

Sticky-fingered journos are an embarrassment to the profession. Repressive regimes are a threat to it

US govt is asking journos who travelled on Air Force One to discreetly – return items filched from the prez's ride. Indian journos are known to have flicked towels, cutlery, even ketchup sachets and toothpaste during their work trips. Journos are only human. And some of them are susceptible to petty follies. The nature of journalism can bring reporters and editors proximity and access to exalted situations and things. Some folks help themselves to goodies, just as some scrupulously do not. Sticky-fingered journos should face the same penalties anyone else would. No journalist can deny there are a few rotten apples in the basket.

But, seriously, what journalists need is not the ability to freeload, but the ability to speak and write freely. Pressure from heavy-handed regimes is cramping journalists around the world. Russia has detained hundreds of journalists since it started the war. Israel, until recently a thriving democracy with flourishing press freedom, has not only denied access and security to journalists, its security forces seem to have intentionally targeted them – more journalists have died in Gaza than during the two-decade Vietnam war.

Journalists are being harassed and censored when they try to be a check on power. Around the world, various regimes delegitimise the media. Journalists have been called traitors, prostitutes and liars. Professional questioning is often branded 'fake news', while real fake news flows freely. A free press is crucial, if we are not to be torn apart by tribal interpretations of the world. Journalists need the freedom to report facts as they see them, to disclose their biases and then proceed fairly. Yes, even when reporting or commenting, journalism isn't perfect. But the answer to that is calling out imperfections of the press, not filching the freedom of the press.

However brawny the bots

On AI bestsellers, Rushdie's bite has it right

Shinie Antony



Halt all ye writers preparing your Booker speeches – AI won't just write your speech for you, it will write your book! Naively you thought AI was here to do your housework, watching fondly as you type an award-winning masterpiece. Instead, GPT-5 is all set to mimic your personal writing style; 'co-written by AI' is going to be a common byline. While you stare out of the window pondering over the nature of existence and drunk-text an ex, AI is busy going clickety-clack. Put in all the words you know, press button, sit back for bestseller.

Salman Rushdie did pooh-poo this AI threat, dismissing as 'a bunch of nonsense' what an AI tool came up with as his style. He says it has no humour or originality. No backstory or childhood trauma either. AI does not drink itself silly in middle age because its dad missed a school play. AI's mom did not fat-shame it through puberty. My kids accuse me of the terrible damage I wreaked on them as foetuses – they don't share my interest in Punjabi rap – but what will AI ever tell a therapist?

The Writers Guild of America went on strike because writers wanted to play hero, with AI cast as a research extra. Rie Kudan's novel *Tokyo-to Dojoto-to* is 5% AI-generated; Stephen Marche's novella *Death of an Author* is 95% AI-generated. As far as publishers are concerned, no fat advances, no writer's block, no fancy book launch, no tantrum after a bad review. Pulp fiction writers will be jobless sooner; it will take longer – maybe 20 years – to erase the critically-acclaimed lot.

But human input will remain key even in the new AI-verse. Machine can never know more than man. Could Robert Browning's *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, which has been my earliest religious text with its brawny, tawny, rumbling, tumbling rhymes, be replicated by anyone? Bots go by patterns. Press releases, yes; poems, no.

What about when no words are spoken? That pause when a silent look is exchanged in a story. AI can write 'his eyes met hers' all it wants, but has it ever met an eye? ChatGPT is like an over-talkative uncle who knows everything about everything but in a dull second-hand way. Books written by non-AI authors will become an underground movement one day. Future readers will then go: Fie, foh and fum, I smell the blood of a real writer.

Don't Lose Sleep Over Inequality

Bihar has the lowest consumption inequality among the largest states, Kerala highest. Migrants from the more equal to the less equal state underline what matters in a developing country: Fighting poverty

Arvind Panagariya



Unlike poverty, which many countries, including India, have successfully combated through the instrumentality of growth and anti-poverty programmes, inequality lacks easy solutions. Those who have made careers out of sounding

the alarm about rising inequality have rarely succeeded in doing anything about it. Not only is combating inequality inherently difficult, but the form of inequality on which alarmists focus often does not resonate with the public, denying them policymakers' ear.

A commonest measure of inequality on which experts focus is the Gini coefficient. For those unfamiliar with it, Gini is an index that takes a value of 0 when income (or wealth) is equally divided among the members of a group and 1 if it concentrates in the hands of a single member. A rising value of the index indicates rising inequality.

In India, we have periodically conducted large-scale consumption expenditure surveys of representative households, which allow us to track the value of this Gini coefficient over time, nationally and for individual states.

Nationally, value of this index was 0.30 in 1993-94, 0.35 in 2004-05, 0.36 in 2009-10 and 0.36 in 2011-12. While hundreds of millions experienced the joy of exiting extreme poverty during these years, hardly any of them were even aware that inequality had risen at the same time.

The common man knows what his consumption is; he may also know what his neighbour's consumption is. But he has little knowledge of or interest in what the national Gini is.

During my lecture on inequality in the Indian economy course at Columbia in the 2000s, I would challenge students in the class to name the Indian state among the larger ones that exhibited the highest consumption inequality, as measured by Gini. I would give them three guesses, which they quickly exhausted by picking states such as Maharashtra, Haryana, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, or Bihar.

I would then tease them by telling them they would likely get it wrong even if I gave them another ten chances. The correct answer – Kerala – was simply contrary to the common impression that having been governed by left-of-centre parties throughout its post-Independence history, the state had to be among the most equal.

The outcome in these classes was not very different when I asked students to name from among the larger

states the one exhibiting the lowest consumption inequality. The answer in this case was Bihar, which they rarely guessed correctly in three tries.

To drive home the point that people cared a lot more about poverty than inequality, I would then remind students that they migrated out of Bihar into Kerala; that is to say, from the poorer but more equal to the richer but less equal state.



Poverty reduction requires wealth creation. Until 1990, wealth creation in India was minimal, dollar billionaires were rare, and extreme poverty persisted. Today, billionaires are ubiquitous, but extreme poverty is history

The latest trend among inequality alarmists is to focus on the rising share of the top 1% of the population in total national income or wealth. But even this form of inequality elicits little opprobrium from the masses.

A personal experience illustrates the point. Last June, *WSJ* published an article on the "Billionaires' Row", narrating the recent rise of a group of ultra-luxury residential skyscrapers near the southern end of Central Park in Manhattan, New York. The penthouse apartments in some of these buildings had fetched the owners a quarter billion dollars each. If the alarmists were right, reading this story should have left me enraged. Minimally, I should have lost at least one night's sleep over it. Instead, the thought of billionaires living in my backyard only amused me. I smiled and went about my business as usual.

The inequality that bothers individuals the most is the one they experience within their immediate social context. Michael Bloomberg adding another billion to his wealth matters little to me since he is not a part of my immediate social circle; I am not in competition with him. But if a Columbia colleague is awarded a significantly larger salary increase than me, I am bound to rush to knock on the door of my school's dean.

The same holds true for a villager in India. She hardly cares if Mukesh Ambani adds another five billion to his wealth in a given year. But if her neighbour's wealth rises sharply while she struggles, she has sleepless nights.

In a developing country, fighting poverty trumps the pursuit of equality. Poverty reduction, in turn, requires wealth creation. If those who create wealth keep even a tiny proportion of it, their share in the total wealth and income quickly spikes. Until 1990, wealth creation in India was minimal, dollar billionaires were rare, and extreme poverty persisted. Today, billionaires are ubiquitous, but extreme poverty is history.

Alarmists recommend a hefty tax on wealth as the solution to the inequality they bemoan.

But they forget that while the wealthy may indulge in some ostentatious consumption, they allocate most of their wealth to high-return investments. If the same wealth ends up in the hands of govt, it is unlikely that it would be similarly invested.

Equally, the fear of future wealth being taxed away will put brakes on new entrepreneurship and investments. This is especially true of first-generation entrepreneurs who want to see their next generation to escape the hardships they suffered.

The writer is chairman, Finance Commission

Politics Is Tough. But Women Have It Tougher

From Mamata to Smriti to Jaya and others across parties, how women politicians have been subjected to treatment men seldom face

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When Kalpana Soren and Sunita Kejriwal faced the cameras for the first time in political avatars – Kalpana early Feb and Sunita in March – to protest the imprisonment of their spouse-CMs, it took barely minutes for contempt to be heaped upon them. Sly comments flew of wives 'eyeing the CM post', of going the 'Rabri way', a reference to the time when Bihar CM Lalu Prasad's wife was vaulted into the CM's seat.

Kalpana (48) and Sunita (58) remained unfazed by the chatter. At Sunday's opposition rally in the capital's Ramlila Maidan, both addressed crowds, without any stage fright. Kalpana is set to contest in the upcoming polls, Sunita, not yet, though that may be more a matter of 'when', than 'if'.

It's always encouraging to see more women turn to politics, though electoral politics demands a tough hide. Women are in Parliament in small numbers. But in no small measure, they helped India take giant strides to realise rights for women – from the anti-dowry act to inheritance rights, to name two legislations of many.

Bring them in | Thirty years since constitutional amendments reserved one-third of seats for women in local administration, women hold over 40% seats in local bodies, and 20 states have expanded reservations in panchayati raj institutions to 50%, per an ORF report.

Reservation for women is more often pitted as sharing of power, but it is in fact bringing in women's perspectives to policy-making. At the state level, Jayalalitha's welfare schemes focused on women. Back in 1990s, women in a Yavatmal panchayat even got officials suspended for manipulating village funds. Health and education are often considered soft issues – the two sectors where India still struggles. More women in Parliament will not only focus on 'women's issues' such as health and education, but will also

hopefully reduce the other disease: relentless toxicity.

From everywhere | Women enter politics from all walks of life, via family networks, via cadre-based recruitments like in Left parties, through parivar politics into BJP, such as veterans Sushma Swaraj and minister Smriti Irani, or via the temple movement such as Uma Bharti, Rithambara and Pragna Thakur – all of whom have been elected representatives.

An ever-expanding pipeline is of career politicians ever since reservations in panchayat bodies. But the



If a woman politician has entered politics via family network – bibi, beti, bahu – she's an object of derision, which is hardly the case for the most incompetent beta or bhatija. As Brinda Karat pointed out at least 20 years ago, a "bibi" in politics is also the last resort for politicians – brought in only when a male relative is not at hand. Which is why, though it falls foul of tenets of intra-party democracy, NCP founder Sharad Pawar's handing the reins of his party to daughter Supriya Sule was a thumbs-up for women in politics.

We love aggro, but... | Indian male netas have often gushed at machismo politics. Whether Indira Gandhi ever took the fawning 'only man in cabinet' comment as a compliment was never even debated. It was taken as given. That men approved some aggro geopolitics was sufficient.

But even aggressive women netas in later years didn't have it any easier. Take Mayawati or Mamata or Jayalalitha. They persevered despite physical assaults by men from parties in power – Jayalalitha was even attacked in TN assembly, her sari was pulled. When Mayawati years later tied up with SP for the Gorakhpur bypolls, which the alliance won, her character was again put through the slander machine, derided for allying with her attackers. There were whisper campaigns against Smriti Irani, of a kind that male politicians never face.

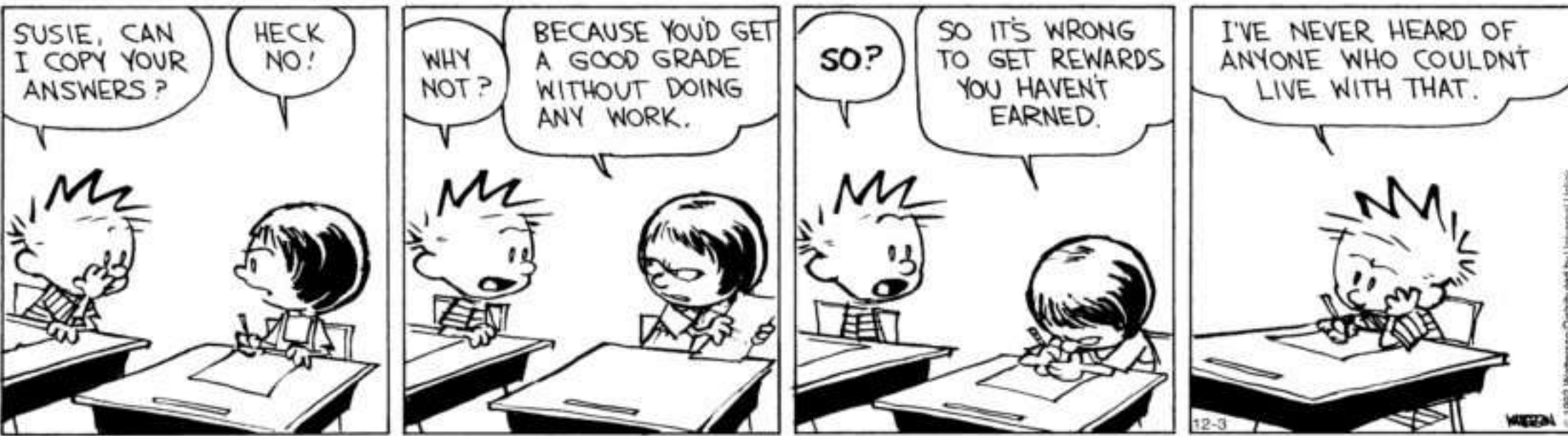
pain point is that regardless where they come from, for decades women politicians have had it tough – at multiple levels. Kerala's communist leader KR Gouri Amma had said she faced, in 1960s and 1970s, "extreme harassment within the party" from then CPM (male) leadership.

Never enough | For starters, they're held to higher standards of a nebulous 'merit'. While that's the case across sectors, medical science to media, computer science to PhD labs, the difference for a woman in public life is that she's judged more on 'conformity to tradition', which passes off as 'merit'.

Toxic plus | Social media has made toxicity an always-on phenomenon. A 2021 study found that women in politics face 27 times more online abuse than male counterparts. Sometimes it's women against women. Congress's Supriya Shrinete apologised for a base post against BJP nominee Kangana Ranaut. But the actor herself has doubled down since, on her old post denigrating Urmila Matondkar.

For women in politics, it's a quick jump from being in the news to being under the microscope. Men in politics should remember – it's far tougher being a woman politician.

Calvin & Hobbes



Sacredspace

Truthfulness is attained if one's speech is such that it harms no being in the world. Truth is not truth if it is spoken to further some wrong. The standard test for right conduct including truthfulness is harmlessness...

Thiru Valluvar

Mantra For Evolution: Arpan, Tarpan, Samarpan

Meena Om

Our breath is like a conveyor belt. It carries into the universe our thoughts, words, actions, and intentions. It also draws to us directives, messages and the energy from the Universe for creative living and for fulfilling our purpose of existence.

Whatever we do, has to be like arpan – an offering to the Divine. This way one does not get tied to the karma, that is, get caught in the cause-and-effect cycle of karm, action.

Since everything we do has to be like an offering, can we offer negativity, complaints, criticism, abuses to the Divine? No. Whatever we throw into the Universe via breath comes back to us manifold; this is true for pious thoughts as well as impious ones. Since everything is a prasad for the Divine, we need to be

careful that we are offering only the best – righteous actions, thoughts, and speech.

For all the existing burdens of the soul, imperfections of the body, polluted thoughts of the mind, we should do tarpan, oblation. Like we do tarpan for our ancestors, wishing them well for their journey ahead and delinking ourselves from them, as part of the final rituals.

Whenever troubling thoughts arise, past incidents surface in the mind, and realisation dawns that we have acquired some substandard habits, or are nurturing some vices, do their tarpan. Visualise that you are releasing them into the Universe, offering them to the Divine for recycling, and are getting rid of them.

There is no better way to cleanse our subconscious minds than tarpan.

Continue doing this repeatedly until the bothersome and undesirable thoughts stop surfacing or troubling.

For the situations and people that come in front of us, be in samarpan, in surrender to the Divine's will. No complaining, no brooding. Know that everything – situation or people – that comes, is meant to cut our past karma; take us forward; help us evolve further; spiritually; indicate the path ahead; illuminate our manna and buddhi, mind and intellect; awaken us from Sushupti – slumbering state; and show us what karm

to give up, which one to continue performing. Every action should be done to the best of one's abilities and capacities. Supreme Intelligence knows everything and is omnipresent. It arranges everything according to our karmas.



THE SPEAKING TREE

Truth is present in each and every molecule. The one who does the sadhana of Truth, is truthful in his words, thoughts, and deeds. Satyeshwar – Truth as Supreme Entity – uses that person's ability to absorb the highest jnana and makes him a medium to reveal its truth to all. His teachings become the source of courage and energy for all in their future endeavours and illuminate their paths ahead. We slot all happenings in our life as good or bad and then suffer. By living each one of them to the fullest, going through them with our whole being, deriving the jnana, learning the lessons from them, we never stagnate and are always gatimaan – on the move. But chewing like cud the incidents that have happened, is only a waste of time. Our progress gets stalled. So, 'arpan, tarpan and samarpan' is the mantra to move on, grow, and evolve.

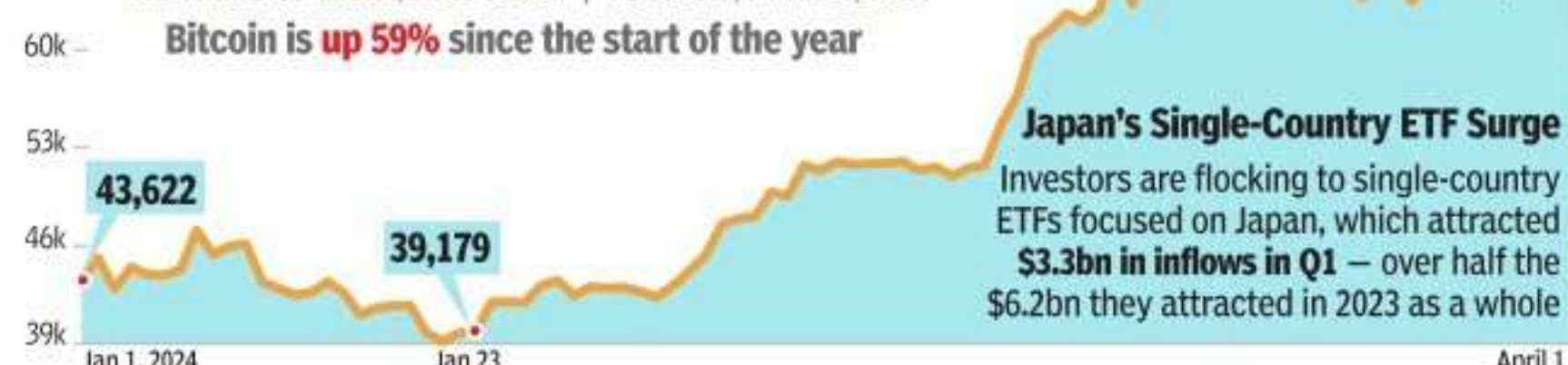
Focus On Bitcoin in Q1 Eclipses Broadening US ETF Landscape

The birth of spot bitcoin exchange-traded funds (ETFs) and the quest for new ways to invest in AI overshadowed other trends in the broader ETF market in the first quarter, but analysts say other themes like single-country ETFs and bond ETFs are likely to play out through 2024. Here are some of the trends for the second quarter and beyond...

Source: Reuters, Refinitiv

TIMES BUSINESS

THE TIMES OF INDIA, NEW DELHI | TUESDAY, APRIL 2, 2024



Moving Beyond Magnificent 7

Beyond mega-cap tech stocks, other sectors are gaining traction as well. While tech-focused ETFs pulled in \$9bn in the first three months of the year, energy ETFs attracted \$1.2bn, industrial funds \$1bn, and real estate \$2bn in Q1

New Players on the Rise

While BlackRock, Vanguard, and State Street dominate, newer players are growing rapidly. The Fidelity Wise Origin Bitcoin Fund — with \$10bn in assets — triggered a surge in Fidelity's overall ETF assets



Insulate eco from problems of other nations: PM to RBI

Tells Central Bank To Take Steps To Internationalise Rupee

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) should take continuous measures to ensure the country's fast, inclusive and sustainable progress and urged the central bank to insulate the economy from problems faced by other nations and take steps to internationalise the rupee.

PM was speaking at an event to mark the 90th anniversary of RBI. Modi asked RBI to assess credit needs of emerging sectors and take proactive steps to prepare banks. "RBI will have to think out of the box and governor Shaktikanta Das is an expert in thinking out of the box. Particularly in emerging sectors," said Modi. He said innovation will play an important role in the 21st century.

Modi said the situation had changed vastly since he addressed bankers at RBI's

"RBI will have to think out of the box and governor Shaktikanta Das is an expert in thinking out of the box. Particularly in emerging sectors"

"We must try to make India's economy aatmanirbhar (self-reliant) to ensure that global events do not impact India. Today, India is a global growth engine contributing 15% to global growth. Our efforts should be to make the rupee more accessible and acceptable worldwide"

— NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER



80th anniversary at the same location. The banking sector, which struggled with NPAs then, has been transformed and is now generating profits and showing record credit growth, he said.

"The economy and GDP depend on co-ordination between fiscal and monetary policy... the transformation in the last 10 years was possible because of the change we brought about in motive, policies and decisions," said Modi, adding that if motives were right the outcome would also

be proper. "We must try to make India's economy aatmanirbhar (self-reliant) to ensure that global events do not impact India. Today, India is a global growth engine contributing 15% to global growth. Our efforts should be to make the rupee more accessible and acceptable worldwide."

Modi said RBI, with its success in managing inflation and growth, despite the pandemic and two wars, can be a role model for other central banks. Pointing out that other countries have debt

that is twice the size of their GDP, Modi said RBI should study this and ensure that India's credit growth is sustainable.

Describing developments in last decade as only a trailer, Modi said there was a lot of work left to be done to take the country forward. "I am busy with the elections for the next 100 days. You take the time to prepare now. From the day after the swearing-in there will be a lot of work to be done," he told bankers.

"We must have a clear vision of the goal for next ten years. We have to expand digital transactions, keep sight of the changes that are taking place because of digital, and improve efforts on financial inclusion and empowerment," said Modi. He said artificial intelligence and machine learning will play a key role in taking India to the forefront in developing digital public infrastructure.

Gold surges to all-time high of ₹68,420

New Delhi: Gold prices surged by Rs1,070 to hit an all-time high of Rs 68,420 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday amid a rally in the precious metal in global markets, according to HDFC Securities.

Gold had closed at Rs 67,350 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver prices also jumped by Rs 1,120 to Rs 78,570 per kg. In the previous trade, it had closed at Rs 77,450 per kg.

Gold prices touched record levels as the US Federal Reserve is getting closer to cutting interest rates which is adding momentum to a rise in bullion prices. "Additionally, robust Chinese demand also feeding a rise in the prices of the precious metal," Dilip Parmar, research analyst at HDFC Securities, said. Meanwhile, in futures trade on the MCX, the June contract of gold climbed Rs 978 to Rs 68,679 per 10 grams. The May contract of silver rose by Rs 763 to Rs 75,811 per kg.

In the overseas markets, spot COMEX gold prices climbed as much as \$2,265.7 per ounce and last quoted at \$2,257.1 per ounce. AGENCIES

Share of SUVs scales 50% of sales in FY24

Hatchbacks Skid To 28% In Last Fiscal, With Price Increasing 65% Over Past Few Years

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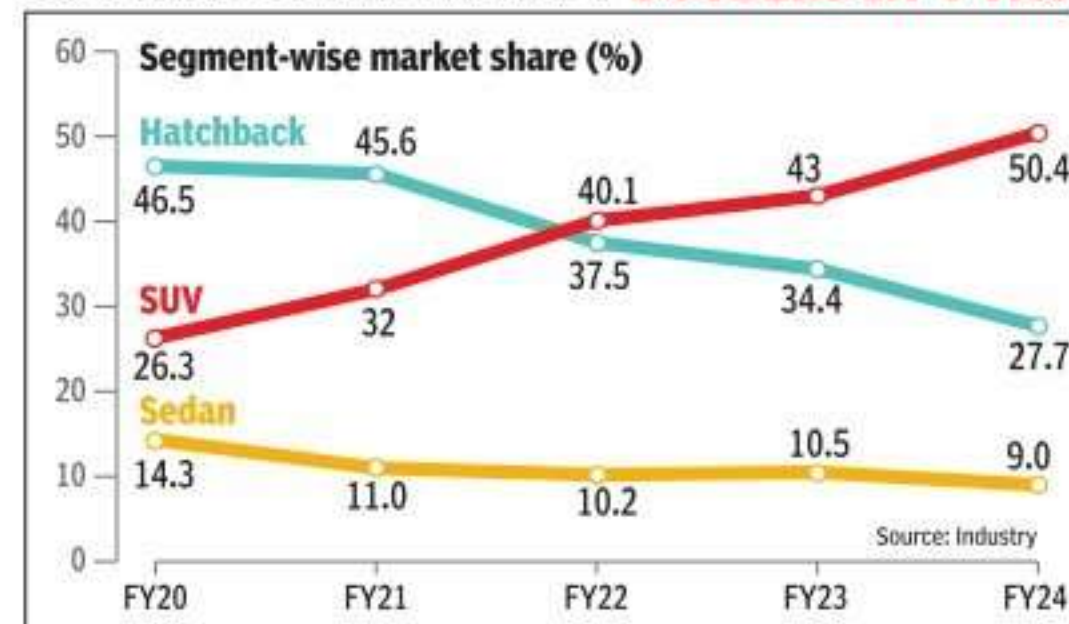
New Delhi: What was once the share of small cars in India has been grabbed by SUVs now. Share of off-roaders (SUVs) — across price points ranging from sub-Rs 10 lakh and upwards Rs 1 crore — in Indian car sales crossed 50% for first time for a full year in 2023-24, almost doubling to what they accounted for four years back.

And, share of hatchbacks (minis), that were once the staple of Indian car buyers and accounted for one out of every two cars sold in the country, slipped to around 28%, beaten down by growing popularity of SUVs. With prices of hatchbacks rising as much as 65% over the past few years and income of their buyers inched up much slower, the humble mini car has failed to keep pace.

The trend is only going to get stronger as has been the case over the last few years. "We see share of SUVs moving up to around 55% or so from here, while hatchbacks may settle at around 25%," says Shashank Srivastava, executive committee member at Maruti Suzuki.

The change has been so dramatic that Maruti Suzuki, which was once the home

SUV MKT SHARE NEARLY DOUBLES IN 4 YRS



for most affordable mini cars, now gets almost 22% of its sales from SUVs (this was 11% at the close of FY23). With perhaps the widest portfolio of small cars, share of hatchbacks for the company has been slipping over the years.

As hatchbacks fight a battle for survival, the story has been even more challenging for sedans. Share of sedans in car sales slipped to single digit in FY24. They closed the year at 9% against 14.3% at close of FY20.

Companies are cashing in on the trend. Mahindra & Mahindra, Hyundai and Tata Motors and even luxury players, such as Audi and Mercedes-Benz have been launching new SUVs and also earmarking them for the

push towards electrics.

For example, M&M is having a line-up of only off-roaders in its portfolio and has mandated the SUV body style for its soon-to-be-launched new electric vehicles. Hyundai too has been keeping its new launches and marketing expenses focused towards SUVs, something evident from its broad portfolio that has Exter in the entry and progressively moves up through Venue, Creta, Alcazar, and Tucson, with the Ioniq5 EV at the top. "We continue to see strong demand for our SUVs and their share to our total sales now stands at 65%," says Tarun Garg, COO of Hyundai India.

Mercedes has 12 SUVs in its portfolio.

Re less volatile than other currencies: FM

Das: RBI to continue with proactive steps

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the rupee has exhibited greater stability compared to its counterparts even as yields in government securities market have stabilised, thanks to RBI's measures building investor confidence.



The finance minister was speaking at a function to commemorate RBI's 90th anniversary. "In the past few years, India's capacity to manage and take care of external imbalances and uncertainties has significantly improved purely because of the professional management of RBI," she said.

The finance minister's statement comes at a time when govt and the central bank are working on internationalisation of the rupee. Sitharaman said that RBI stands tall among its peers on several counts. "When Covid hit, RBI

adopted and deployed a conventional and unconventional range of instruments to provide liquidity and to promote growth and ensure financial stability."

Sitharaman cited the moratorium on loan repayments and the infusion of liquidity. "RBI was among the earliest to recognise the non-transparent nature of inflation and front-load interest rate hikes," she said, adding that forex management is also an area where RBI has done exemplary work by building up reserves.

She emphasised the global recognition of RBI's contributions by citing the acknowledgement from the Bank of International Settlements. This recognition specifically commended RBI's role in anchoring inflation expectations through its effective communication policies.

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: RBI governor Shaktikanta Das underscored the central bank's commitment to proactive measures in response to contingencies. He said coordinating RBI's monetary policy with govt's fiscal policy has helped the economy.



The governor's comments come as the central bank has taken a series of measures to curb lending in digital and unsecured loans, and barred some finance companies from certain lending activity — a change from its earlier practice of merely imposing a penalty.

In his speech at an event to commemorate RBI's 90th anniversary, Das highlighted the central bank's evolution from a resource allocator during the planning era to a full-service central bank in a market economy. He said that the "well-cal-

ibrated and coordinated monetary and fiscal policies between RBI and central govt have shielded the economy from the twin shocks of the pandemic and ongoing geopolitical hostilities."

"It is a matter of satisfaction that today our GDP growth is robust, inflation is moderating, financial sector is stable, the external sector remains resilient, and the forex reserves are at an all-time high," Das added.

"It has been our endeavour to promote a financial sector that is robust, resilient and future-ready. The path-breaking structural reforms, such as the enactment of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code and the adoption of flexible inflation targeting in recent years, have helped us deal more effectively with the challenges in the banking system....," said Das.

Sensex, Nifty hit new lifetime peaks

Mumbai: Stock markets started the new fiscal on a high with the sensex and Nifty scaling fresh peaks in intra-day trade before settling in the green on Monday, backed by firm trends in Asian markets and foreign fund inflows.

Extending its winning momentum to the third day in a row, the sensex jumped 363 points to settle at 74,015. During the day, it zoomed 603 points to hit its record intra-day high of 74,255. Nifty climbed 135 points to 22,462. During the day, it jumped 203 points to hit the all-time peak of 22,530.

"The Indian market boarded on a strong trajectory at the onset of the new financial year, with indications pointing towards a continuation of this favourable momentum, in the near term. This confidence is supported by a global rally in expectation of a Fed rate cut in June," Vinod Nair of Geojit Financial said. AGENCIES

UPI volume rises 55% YoY to new high

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: UPI transactions touched an all-time high of 1,344 crore in March 2024, recording a 55% increase year-on-year and 11% over the previous month.

The total value of transactions stood at Rs 19.8 lakh crore — 40% higher than a year ago and 8% more than in Feb. At the current level, the number of UPI transactions average to 43.3 crore a day. The National Payments Corporation of India is preparing for a transaction volume of 100 crore a day in a couple of years.

Bankers said that UPI transactions usually spike during festive months.

Byju's delays salaries for second mth

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Troubled edtech startup Byju's is struggling to make salary disbursements to its employees amid a severe cash crunch. The company, which failed to make disbursement of full salaries for Feb to most of its employees, has also not been able to pay March salaries to its staff on time.

The move by a few select investors to disable the company from using the funds raised through the rights issue has delayed the payment of salaries, the company's management said in a letter to employees on Monday. "... we are following a parallel line of credit to ensure that you receive your salary by the 8th of April," the firm said.

Sanofi to strengthen India footprint, product pipeline

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New Delhi: Drug biggie Sanofi, with marquee brands including pain and inflammation relief drug Combiflam, anti-infective Allegra and anti-diabetic Lantus, is accelerating its "lean-in" strategy in India, by fast-tracking a robust pipeline, which includes expanding its core diabetes portfolio in India. Sanofi is implementing an accelerated growth plan, 'India for India' to gear up for the future and strengthen its India footprint, Rodolfo Hrosz, the company's managing director said.

Unlike certain MNCs, it has no plans to divest legacy

brands in the country, he told TOI in an interview, adding, "India is important for us, we value the talent pool and innovation (here)".

The comments are significant, coming close on the heels of Sanofi's recent back-to-back partnerships with three domestic firms — Cipla, Emcure and Dr Reddy's — for its legacy brands and vaccines. The deals raised speculation about the company's future in India, coming at a time when MNCs are reducing exposure and divesting core therapies in the over Rs 2 lakh crore domestic market.

With the renewed strategy, the nearly Rs 3,000 crore company, which has been

"under-represented in India" could match the pace of the market, and even grow faster than the industry, he added. Sanofi India grew only a strong single-digit in the past.

"Though we have established a robust footprint over the last 68 years (in India), it isn't the one we need for the future, hence we decided to reset it in the beginning of 2023 to enable growth," Hrosz said.

"The renewed strategy focuses on two objectives — first, maximising access to Sanofi's existing established portfolio in India... Second, "fast-tracking a robust product pipeline by bringing best-in-class innovations into India," he added.

'India can be 2nd largest lodging mkt'

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New Delhi: Indians are all set to become the second largest globetrotters — from being in the top five of now — and their travel trends are influencing not just menus but also hotels designs. While Chinese remain the biggest group of world rovers, the hospitality industry is more bullish on India as 'consumer confidence is not so strong' in the former. Alan Watts, president of Asia-Pacific at US hospitality major Hilton, says given its rising economic prowess and population, "India has the potential to be the second largest lodging market (after US) in the world".

India has seen the fastest



"Chinese business is above 2019 levels, fully recovered in terms of occupancy and tariffs. (But) consumer confidence currently in China is not as strong as it is in India. The reason for that could be overall economy and negative sentiment. India is riding high on infrastructure... India has seen fastest recovery for all metrics — new signings, rates and occupancies"

— ALAN WATTS | PRESIDENT OF ASIA-PACIFIC, HILTON

recovery in travel post-pandemic and the trend of religious tourism being seen here now will be the thing to watch out for globally. Hilton currently has over 7,000 properties globally. "All investment analysts and pundits thought that travel-tourism would recover a lot slower and that we wouldn't be back to 2019 levels (by) 2025. But the

reality is, we are as an industry ahead of those times. And certainly here in India, we are double-digits above 2019 levels. India has seen the fastest recovery for all metrics — new signings, rates and occupancies," Watts told TOI.

Like China, the biggest traveller group in India is desi domestic. "Chinese business is above 2019 levels, fully reco-

vered in terms of occupancy and tariffs. (But) the consumer confidence currently in China is not as strong as it is in India. The reason for that could be the overall economy and negative sentiment. India is riding high on infrastructure," Watts said.

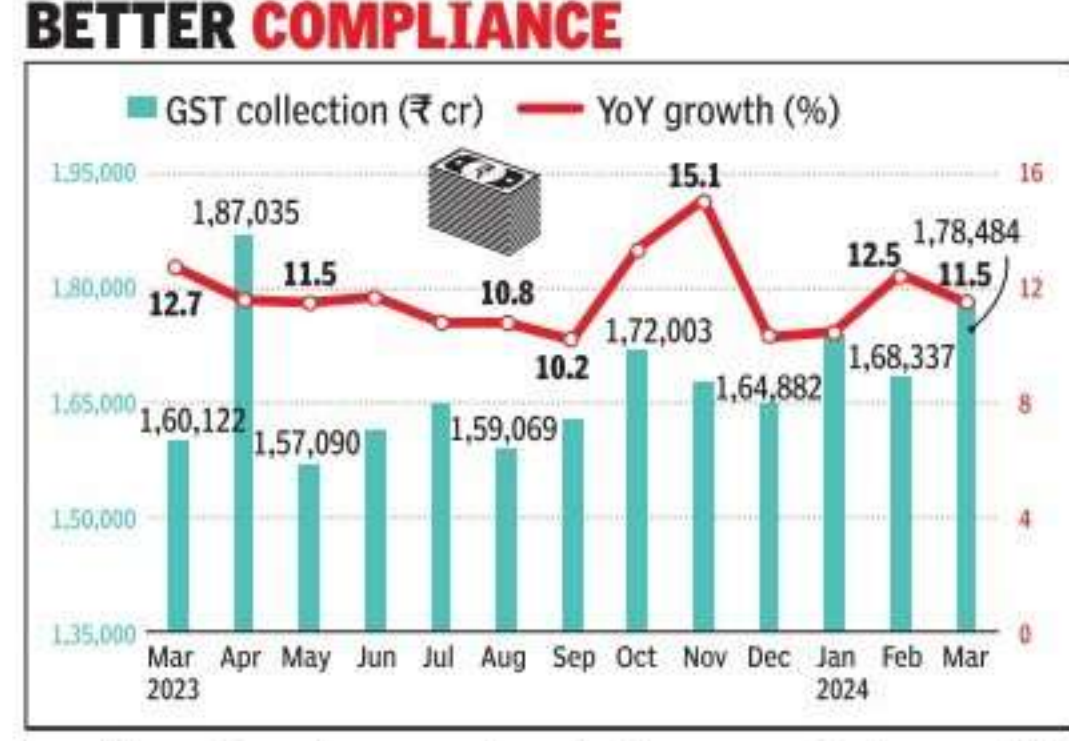
Outbound from India had recovered fully long time back. This has seen the trend of 'generational travel' get stronger among affluent Indians going for luxury breaks. "The primary travellers are mom and dad, with their parents and their kids. So don't be surprised when you see a door that may look like a fire exit in your hotel floor corridor. That door can close to have a hallway with three rooms for this segment," Watts said.

► From P 1

BETTER COMPLIANCE

Integrated GST mop-up, levied on inter-state transactions and imports, rose 6.1% to Rs 87,947 crore. A key reason for this was a fall in revenue from imports, which declined 5.1% at Rs 40,322 crore.

"Record collections during FY24 demonstrate the economic resurgence across sectors and was possible due to the various measures taken by GST authorities to improve compliance and stamp out evasion. The big focus on comparison of taxpayer behaviour across tax and corporate databases has also convinced businesses on the need to be compliant not only on their activities, but also keep track of their vendors' tax behaviour and ensure that the entire value chain becomes compliant. Since all major states have recorded double-digit growth in GST collections — collections being also a barometer for economic activities as it's a transaction-



based tax — it can be reasonably inferred that the growth is across regions and sectors," said MS Mani, partner at Deloitte India.

In March, barring Mizoram (29% fall), all states and Union territories with legislatures reported a sharp increase. On an overall basis, tax experts see this trend continuing. "The double-digit growth continues in monthly GST col-

lections over last year. With this trend, it will not be surprising if the target for FY25 is revised when the main Union Budget is presented after the formation of a new govt. Also, the collections, which are only likely to be better in coming months, may pave the way for the next wave of GST reforms, including rate rationalisation," said Pratik Jain, partner PwC India.

ABFRL looks at demerger of Madura Fashion

Mumbai: Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail will evaluate vertical demerger of Madura Fashion & Lifestyle business into a separate listed entity, the company said in a statement on Monday. The MFL portfolio includes lifestyle brands Louis Philippe, Van Heusen, Allen Solly, Peter England etc. TNN

A correction

In the report, 'Torrent's Mehtas join philanthropy club', published on April 1, the photograph of Sudhir Mehta of Pinnacle Industries was inadvertently carried instead of Sudhir Mehta of Torrent Pharma. The error is regretted. TNN



KIRSTEN DUNST CALLS SPIDER-MAN'S UPSIDE DOWN KISS 'MISERABLE': 'TOBEY MAGUIRE COULDN'T BREATHE, IT WAS LIKE RESUSCITATING HIM'



GWYNETH PALTROW SAYS POLYAMORY RELATIONSHIP IS NOT FOR HER: 'I AM A ONE-MAN KINDA GAL'

Part of Iran's Damascus consulate flattened, top gen killed in air raid

Iranian Media Blames Israel; Attack Reportedly Targeted Secret Meeting Between Tehran Intel Officials & Palestinian Militants On Gaza; Bldg IRGC HQ: Israeli Officials

Israeli air strikes destroyed a building belonging to the Iranian consulate in Damascus, killing a senior commander in the Quds Force, the external military and intelligence service of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, Iranian state media reported on Monday. General Mohamad Reza Zahedi, 65, oversaw Iran's covert military operations in Syria and Lebanon, Iranian officials said. He is among the senior most Iranian commanders believed to have been killed by Israel in a years-long shadow war that has included assassinations of Iranian military leaders and nuclear scientists in Iran and in Syria.

The Israeli military declined to comment on the strike, but four Israeli officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, acknowledged that Israel had carried out the attack, targeting Zahedi. They did not confirm that he had been killed. Iran's foreign minister, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, strongly condemned the attack in a statement and said he had spoken to his Syrian counterpart about the "Zionist regime's attack on the consulate section of the Islamic Republic's embassy in Damascus." ("Israeli PM) Netanyahu has lost his mental balance because he has faced back to back defeat in Gaza and



Smoke rises after what the Iranian media said was an Israeli strike on a building belonging to the Iranian consulate in Damascus, Syria, on Monday

Who are Iran's Revolutionary Guards?

The Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) is Iran's dominant military force. It was set up shortly after the 1979 Islamic Revolution to protect the Shia clerical ruling system and provide a counterweight to the regular armed forces. It answers to supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The IRGC has an estimated 125,000-strong military with army, navy and air units. It also commands the Basij religious militia, a volunteer paramilitary force loyal to the clerical establishment that is often used to crack down on anti-government protests. The Quds Force is the IRGC's foreign espionage and paramilitary arm that heavily influences its allied militia across Lebanon to Iraq and Yemen to Syria. Its members have fought in support of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria's civil war and have backed Iraqi security forces in their battle against IS militants in recent years. Its top commander, Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani, was killed by the US in a drone attack in Iraq in 2020. The IRGC has been branded a terrorist group by the US. The IRGC also oversees Iran's ballistic missile programme, regarded by experts as the largest in West Asia. REUTERS

has not achieved the Zionists' ambitious goals," he said. The strike, an Iranian member of the Revolutionary Guards

said, targeted a secret meeting in which Iranian intelligence officials and Palestinian militants gathered to discuss

the war in Gaza. Among the Iranian officials were senior commanders in the Quds Forces and leaders of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, an armed group armed and funded by Iran.

The head of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Ziad Nakhleh, was in Iran last week meeting with senior Iranian leaders. Syrian and Iranian state news agencies reported that several people were killed in the strikes on Monday and aired video footage of the ruined building, the remnants of burned cars, shattered glass and debris covering the ground.

Israeli officials said the building in which the meeting took place was not a diplomatic office but the headquarters of the Revolutionary Guards, making it a military target without the same protections as the consulate itself. The NYT could not independently confirm whether the building was being used by the Revolutionary Guards.

Syria's defence ministry said the strikes happened around 5pm (local time) when Israeli fighter jets entered Syria from the Golan Heights. Iran's ambassador to Syria, Hossein Akbari, said in a statement released to state media that the consulate's building came under attack by two F-35 fighter jets. Akbari said among those killed were several Iranian military advisers deployed to Syria. "This attack will have our fierce response," said Akbari, according to Iranian media. NYT

Russian military intelligence unit may be linked to 'Havana syndrome': Report

Kremlin Denies 'Baseless, Unfounded' Accusations By Media

London: The mysterious "Havana syndrome" ailment that has afflicted US diplomats and spies across the world may be linked to energy weapons wielded by members of a Russian military intelligence sabotage unit, the Insider media group reported. A US intelligence investigation whose findings were released last year found that it was "very unlikely" a foreign adversary was responsible for the ailment, first reported by US embassy officials in the Cuban capital Havana in 2016.

But Insider, a Russia-focused investigative media group based in Riga, Latvia, reported that members of a Russian military intelligence (GRU) unit known as 29155 had been placed at the scene of reported health incidents involving US personnel. The year-long Insider investigation in collaboration with US network CBS's 60 Minutes and Germany's



The US embassy in Havana. The report said the first incident of 'Havana Syndrome' symptoms may have happened in Frankfurt when a US govt employee stationed at the consulate there was knocked unconscious by something akin to a strong energy beam

Der Spiegel also reported that senior members of Unit 29155 received awards and promotions for work related to the development of "non-lethal acoustic weapons".

Kremlin has dismissed the report. "This is not a new topic at all; for many years the topic

or expressed any convincing evidence of these unfounded accusations anywhere. Therefore, all this is nothing more than baseless, unfounded accusations by the media."

Symptoms of the ailment have included migraines, nausea, memory lapses and dizziness. The Insider report said the first incident of "Havana Syndrome" symptoms may have happened earlier than 2016. It said "there were likely attacks two years earlier in Frankfurt, Germany, when a US govt employee stationed at the consulate there was knocked unconscious by something akin to a strong energy beam".

US Congress passed the Havana Act in 2021 authorising state department, CIA and other US govt agencies to provide payments to staff and their families who have been affected by the ailment during assignment. REUTERS

Pak arrests mastermind, 12 others for terror attack on Chinese, say officials

Islamabad: At least 12 people, including the mastermind, have been arrested in connection with last week's suicide bombing that killed five Chinese nationals and their Pakistani driver in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, officials said on Monday.

The Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD), which launched a probe into the attack, blamed the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militant group for the assault, Express Tribune newspaper reported. No group had claimed responsibility for the terror attack that took place when the Chinese engineers were en route from Islamabad to their camp in Dasu, the headquarters of the Upper Kohistan district of the province, when a suicide bomber rammed his explosive-rigged car into their vehicle in Bisham area of Shangla district.

A report submitted by CTD on Monday said over a dozen militants and facilitators of the attack were arrested in



The crime site in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. A probe has blamed the banned TTP militant group for the assault

multiple raids carried out by authorities. CTD sources said authorities arrested Hazrat Bilal, the mastermind of the attack who brought the suicide bomber from Afghanistan.

Bilal is also wanted in prior attacks on the Chinese. The report said the explosives-laden vehicle was brought through the Chaman border to Dara Zinda town in Dera Ismail Khan district for Pakistani Rs 0.25 million. Two facilitators were also arrested from Balochistan, the report said. The report said some of those arrested had links with TTP militants in Pakistan and that raids were still ongoing across the country. PTI

Court suspends jail term for Imran & wife in Toshakhana case, but they won't be freed

Omer Farooq Khan | TNN

Islamabad: Islamabad high court Monday suspended ex-Pakistan PM Imran Khan's and wife Bushra Bibi's 14-year sentences in the Toshakhana case related to selling state gifts he received while in office. A trial court had sentenced them on Jan 31 this year, just a week before the Feb 8 general elections. Despite the suspensions, Imran (71) will not be released as he was convicted in two other cases.

HC said the Toshakhana sentences would remain suspended until it decided Imran's appeal case after the Eid holidays that begin in 10 days. "No evidence backs up this conviction," Imran's lawyer Ali Zafar told reporters, explaining why HC put the sentences on hold at the appeal's first hearing itself.

The trial court had also barred Imran and Bushra from holding any public office for 10 years and slapped a fine of Pak Rs 787 million (\$2.8 million) each. The case against Imran



Imran Khan and wife Bushra Bibi are accused of retaining state gifts received when he was PM. Imran will not be released as he has been convicted in 2 other cases

and his wife was filed by National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Pakistan's anti-corruption watchdog, last Dec accusing the couple for retaining a jewellery set received from the Saudi crown prince against an undervalued assessment. NAB claimed Imran and his wife received a total of 108 gifts from various heads of state and foreign dignitaries when he was PM from 2018 to 2022. In the case at hand, Imran is also accused of not disclosing assets from alleged sale of such state gifts valued at more than Pak Rs 14 crore.

Israeli troops exit al-Shifa, leaving rubble & bodies

Israeli soldiers withdrew from al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza after a two-week raid in which they killed around 200 Palestinians and arrested hundreds of others, the Israeli military said Monday. The troops left widespread devastation in their wake after extended firefights with Palestinian militants.

Taysir al-Tanna, a longtime vascular surgeon at al-Shifa, said many of the hospital's main buildings, including the emergency, obstetrics and surgical wards, had been badly damaged in the fighting. "Now it looks like a wasteland," he said. The Israeli military said the roughly 200 Palestinians it had killed were militants, and that



The damaged building of al Shifa hospital after Israel military's withdrawal

its soldiers had arrested around 900 people it suspected of being militants at the Shifa complex over the past two weeks, including senior commanders

in groups like Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. It said two Israeli soldiers were killed and eight were wounded in the raid. Daniel Hagari, the Israeli

military spokesman, blamed the destruction on the militants, saying they had fortified themselves inside hospital wards, fired on soldiers and refused calls to surrender. The WHO said over 20 patients died and dozens were put at risk during the raid.

Israel OKs bill on Al Jazeera ban Israel's parliament passed a bill giving top ministers the authority to bar from Israel the broadcasts of news channel Al Jazeera. PM Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to immediately close the "terror channel", accusing it of harming Israeli security, participating in the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks and inciting violence against Israel. NYT & AGENCIES

Google agrees to destroy browsing data to settle consumer privacy lawsuit

Google agreed to destroy billions of data records to settle a lawsuit claiming it secretly tracked the internet use of people who thought they were browsing privately. Terms of the settlement were filed Monday in the Oakland, California federal court, and require approval by US district judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers.

Lawyers for the plaintiffs valued the accord at more than \$5 billion, and as high as \$7.8 billion. Google is paying no damages, but users may sue the company individually for damages. The class action began in 2020, covering millions of Google users who used private browsing since June 1, 2016.

Users alleged that Google's analytics, cookies and apps let the Alphabet unit improperly track people who set Google's Chrome browser to "Incognito" mode and other browsers to "private" browsing mode. They said this turned Google into an "unaccountable trove of information" by letting it learn about their friends, favou-



Under the settlement, Google will update disclosures about what it collects in 'private' browsing

rite foods, hobbies, shopping habits, and the "most intimate and potentially embarrassing things" they hunt for online.

Under the settlement, Google will update disclosures about what it collects in "private" browsing, a process it has already begun. It will also let Incognito users block third-party cookies for five years. "The result is Google will collect less data from private browsing... and will make less money," the plaintiffs' lawyers wrote.

A Google spokesman said the firm was pleased to settle the lawsuit, which it always considered meritless. "We are happy to delete old technical data that was never associated with an individual." REUTERS

Sunak faces revolt from party over bill to criminalise homelessness

London: British PM Rishi Sunak faces a potential revolt from within his party ranks over new legislation that is set to criminalise homelessness.

According to a "Times" report on Monday, several Conservative Party MPs have warned that they will vote against the measures in the 'Criminal Justice Bill' in House of Commons. The proposals, which had been unveiled by former India-origin home secretary Suella Braverman, would mean rough sleepers in England and Wales could be fined as much as £2,500 or face prison terms.

"A lot of colleagues believe that the bill as it stands is completely unacceptable because it would have the effect of criminalising people who have no choice but to sleep on the streets," said Tory MP Bob Blackman, who is also joint secretary of the powerful Conservative backbench 1922 committee. The bill is designed to present Conservatives as tough on crime as it prepares for a gruelling election campaign, with the odds stacked against it due to anti-incumbency sentiments. PTI

A PORTION OF FAMED CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY CRUMBLES INTO OCEAN



A portion of scenic Highway 1 in the Big Sur area of California collapsed Saturday, stranding about 2,000 motorists, mostly tourists, overnight. The highway, also known as the Pacific Coast Highway, features stretches of rocky cliffs, lush mountains, panoramic beaches and coastal redwood forests. Large chunks of the road fell into the ocean. Officials did not say what led to the collapse, but torrential rain had battered the area. There were no reported injuries. On Sunday, uniformed officials were guiding some motorists around the damaged road in organised convoys. NYT

Pak SC to hear case about 'ISI interference' in judicial matters

Islamabad: After backlash and criticism, Pakistan's SC on Monday decided to hear the case about a stunning letter by six HC judges about alleged interference in judicial matters by the country's powerful intelligence agencies. The decision comes after govt on Saturday appointed a one-member commission headed by former chief SC justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani to hold an inquiry into the allegations levelled by the judges and submit its report in 60 days. Jilani had, however, declined to head the commission. The govt had drawn criticism from the opposition, as well as lawyers who wanted the apex court to use its special suo motu powers to hear the case based on allegations. After the backlash, top court set up a seven-member bench to hear the case from Wednesday. It was not clear if the probe commission announced by govt would continue its proceedings. PTI chief Gohar Khan, whose party had objected to the commission, welcomed the move by SC but demanded that the number of judges should be increased. PTI

AROUND THE WORLD



POTLUCK: Marijuana campaigners in Germany lit celebratory joints on Monday as the country liberalised rules on cannabis. The new law legalises possession by adults of up to 25 grams of marijuana for recreational purposes and allows individuals to grow up to three plants on their own. Germany now has some of the most liberal cannabis laws in Europe, alongside Malta and Luxembourg, which legalised recreational use in 2021 and 2023, respectively

Japan's royal family debuts on Insta as the oldest monarchy tries to woo youth



A QUEST FOR LIKES

Japan's imperial family made an Instagram debut with a barrage of posts on Monday, hoping to shake off their reclusive image and reach out to younger people on social media. The Imperial Household Agency, a govt agency in charge of the family's affairs, posted 60 photos and five videos showing Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako's public appearances over the past three months. The agency said they wanted the public to have a better understanding of the family's official duties. By Monday evening, their verified account Kunai-

cho_jp had more than 2,70,000 followers. So far, the images are limited to the family's official duties and do not include private or candid moments. The Japanese imperial family's social media debut comes 15 years after Britain's royal family joined X, formerly Twitter, in 2009. Naruhito's father, Emperor Emeritus Akihito — who abdicated the throne in 2019 — and his wife were popular during their time. But currently, the royal family's fans largely belong to older generations.

US YouTuber released after being kidnapped in Haiti An American YouTube personality who was kidnapped two weeks ago by a gang leader in Haiti was released over the weekend and was on his way home to the US on Monday. Adisson Pierre Maalouf, 26, had travelled from the neighbouring Dominican Republic to interview Jimmy Cherizier, a former police officer and gang leader known as Barbecue. Maalouf said online that he had been abducted by a rival gang leader and held in a "concrete shack surrounded by barbed wire".

Furry slippers and sweatpants: Young Chinese embrace 'gross outfits' at work

Seoul: When the weather turned cold in Dec, Cindy Luo started to wear her fluffy pajamas over a hooded sweatshirt at the office. Wearing cozy sleepwear to work became a habit and soon she didn't even bother to wear matching tops and bottoms. A few months later, she posted photos of herself to a "gross outfits at work" thread that had spread on Xiaohongshu, a Chinese app similar to Instagram. She was one of tens of thousands of young workers in China to proudly post pictures of themselves showing up at the office in onesies, sweatpants and sandals with socks. The just-rolled-out-of-bed look was shockingly casual for most Chinese workplaces. "I just don't think it's worth spending money to dress up for work, since I'm just sitting there," said Luo, 30, an interior designer in Wuhan.



SLEEPWEAR IS NEW FORMAL As China's growth slows, many young people are choosing to "lie flat", the approach to an easy life

The intentionally lackluster outfits became a social media movement when a user named "Kendou S" posted a video last month on Douyin, the Chinese sibling service of TikTok. She showed off her work outfit: a fluffy brown sweater dress over plaid pajama pants with a

pink, light-quilted jacket and furry slippers. In the video, she said that her supervisor at work told her several times that her outfits were "gross" and that she needed to wear better clothes "to mind the image of the company." The video took off; it got over 735,000 likes and was shared 1.4 million times. The hashtag "gross outfits at work" spread across multiple Chinese social media platforms and it unleashed a competition of whose work dress was the most repulsive. On Weibo, the

topic generated hundreds of millions of views and sparked a wider discussion about why young people are not willing to dress up for work nowadays. People's Daily, the Communist Party's mouthpiece, criticised young people for "lying flat" in a 2022 editorial, but it has refrained from scolding youth for what it called "being ugly" at work. Xiao Xueping, a psychologist, said that might be because the outfits are a form of responsible protest as people are still doing their jobs. NYT

A ROYAL THRASHING FOR MI

Boult, Chahal, Parag Star As Mumbai Suffer Hat-trick Of Losses

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Mumbai: Smashing Gerald Coetzee for back-to-back sixes over cover and then to mid-wicket, before sealing the chase with a top-edged four, Riyan Parag, following up on his scores of 43, 84 not out, finished with a sizzling 54 not out off 39 balls. Playing some regal shots while hitting five fours and three sixes, Parag made the difference in a low-scoring game, guiding the Rajasthan Royals to an emphatic six-wicket win over the Mumbai Indians on Monday night at the Wankhede Stadium. Parag's second fifty on the trot ensured that RR, who initially looked shaky while chasing 126, reached home with as many as 27 balls to spare.

Meanwhile, in a season which is turning out to be miserable for them with every match, MI having now lost their first three games in the season and are languishing at the bottom of the 10-team pool, with their net run rate a shoddy -1.423. In stark contrast, the Royals, having won all their three games so far, are now topping the table.

Thriving on a spicy pitch with pace and bounce, RR's left-arm pacers Trent Boult (3-22 in four overs) and Nandre Burger (2-32 in four overs) left MI limping at 20/4 in the fourth over, before seasoned leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal (3-11 in four overs) snuffed the life out of the latter half of the hosts' innings, which was restricted to 125/9.



ON FIRE! Trent Boult leaps after dismissing Rohit Sharma on Monday

125/9 Mumbai Indians' score is the lowest by any team in this edition of the IPL. The previous lowest was 143/8 by Gujarat Titans vs CSK in Chennai on March 26.

20 Yuzvendra Chahal has emulated Jasprit Bumrah's tally of 20 three-wicket hauls in the IPL.

A fine spell by speedster Akash Madhwal (3-20 in four overs) threatened to derail RR's innings, but Parag, who is currently enjoying by far the best IPL season of his career, ensured that the visitors reached home safely, adding 40 off 35 balls for the fourth wicket with R Ashwin (16) and 39 in just 19 balls for the fifth wicket with Shubham Dubey (8 not out).

RR lost Yashasvi Jaiswal (10), the off-colour Jos Buttler (13) and skipper Sanju Samson (12) with 48 on the board, but Parag's blazing blade carried them through.

Earlier, complimenting the brilliant effort of their bowlers, RR fielded superbly, taking as many as eight catches—some of them being outstanding ones. MI's plight would've been worse but for a 56-run fifth

wicket partnership in 36 balls between skipper Hardik Pandya (34, 21b, 6x4) and Tilak Varma (32, 29b, 2x6).

Put in to bat on a juicy pitch, the hosts were blown away right at the start by a fiery spell by Boult, whose triple strike in his first two overs revived memories of a similarly destructive spell that triggered India's defeat in the 2019 World Cup semifinal at Old Trafford, Manchester.

With the fifth and sixth ball of his first over, Boult scalped MI's former captain Rohit Sharma (caught brilliantly by RR captain Sanju Samson diving to his right) and Naman Dhir, who fell lbw while playing down the wrong line to an inswinging ball he had no clue about, for 'golden ducks.'

Boult now has taken 25 wickets in his first

over in the IPL—the maximum along with Sunrisers' pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar.

Rattled by the early blows, MI, in a poor decision caused more by panic perhaps, sent Dewald Brevis as an 'Impact Player' No. 4, but the South African became the third MI batter on the night to be out for a first-ball duck, leaving his team tottering at 14 for three in the third over. Brevis played a poor stroke, throwing his bat at an outgoing Boult delivery to be caught at short third man.

The tall Burger then joined in the fun, having Ishan Kishan (16 off 14 balls) caught behind at that point, MI looked to be in danger of being shot out for an embarrassing total, before Pandya and Varma saved them the blushes. However, that was when Chahal began to weave his magic.

Pandya gets booed at toss, Manjrekar tells crowd to 'behave'

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Mumbai: As expected, new Mumbai Indians skipper Hardik Pandya was booed at the toss by the Wankhede Stadium crowd during the Mumbai Indians' first home game, even as the spectators kept chanting former MI captain Rohit Sharma's name. In what must be the first instance of its kind, the booing prompted former India batsman-turned commentator Sanjay Manjrekar to tell the crowd to "behave" during the toss.

"Got the two captains with me. Hardik Pandya, captain of the Mumbai Indians. Big round of applause ladies and gentlemen, be-



HARDIK PANDYA

have," Manjrekar said, as the crowd booed Pandya once Manjrekar announced his name. Even Rohit was seen asking the crowd to refrain from the booing. To Pandya and MI's relief, the crowd did cheer for the 30-year-old when he hammered six fours in his 21-ball 30-run cameo after MI were asked to bat first by the Royals. Since he took over the MI captaincy from Rohit, Pandya has been booed by the crowds in MI's first two matches of this IPL season in Ahmedabad and Hyderabad.

Pandya can take heart from the fact that several star India cricketers, including Virat Kohli—during an IPL match in 2013—and Harbhajan Singh, and on one occasion in a

Test against England in 2006, even the legendary Sachin Tendulkar, have been the target of boos by the Wankhede crowd.

Rohit posters not allowed?

Before the match began, MI supporters carrying posters backing Rohit, were disappointed as they were asked to leave their banners and posters outside the stadium by the police. It's learnt that the cops were following instructions from the Election Commission of India that barred any posters-banners carrying political messages inside the venue, and in doing so, ended up telling the fans to leave all their posters outside the stadium.

Master and protégé sparkle in Vizag

Both Dhoni & Pant Turned The Clock Back In The CSK-DC Clash In Their Own Way

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It was rolling back of the clock. One that went a couple of years back, the other that went a couple of decades back.

A quintessential Rishabh Pant innings was followed by vintage MS Dhoni in Vizag on Sunday. The protégé, coming back to competitive cricket after a horrific accident in December 2022, showed his wares first, then the master turned it on and made everyone stand up and yearn for more.

Dhoni's powerful hits to the boundary ropes, and beyond it, were reminiscent of the time he went berserk against bowlers soon after he had made his international debut.

His flowing golden mane peering out of the helmet added to the trip down the memory lane. His fans had spent two matches in this year's IPL without getting to see him wield the willow. They were eagerly waiting for those timeless MSD sixes.

Dhoni hit three of them on Sunday, one with a single hand that landed in the second tier beyond the mid-wicket fence. There were four bludgeoned boundaries too. Sixteen balls, twenty-two minutes at the crease, yielded 37 runs and made the fans present at the stadium and those watching on TV delirious.

Dhoni's 'box-office' effect makes spectators, pundits, former cricketers question why he doesn't come

early and bats so low down the order. On Sunday, he batted at No. 8. Ex-Australia captain Michael Clarke thinks Dhoni is prepping for bigger challenges ahead.

"Every MS Dhoni fan wants to see him as high up the order as possible. We've all said he should open the batting. I think if there's a game on the line and he needs to go up the order because it's what's best for the team, I'm sure he will," Clarke said.

Maybe Dhoni will bat higher up when the situation arises, but Pant did bat two rungs above his normal batting position on Sunday. Coming at No. 3, Pant put to rest concerns regarding his ability to bat like the days of yore.

A slog-sweep six over mid-wicket got him going on the night. But what grabbed eyeballs was how he handled the sling-shot Matheesha Pathirana who hit the timber twice with two thunderbolt yorkers.



TWO OF A KIND: MS Dhoni and Rishabh Pant share a strong bond

Pathirana tried his slinging, high-on-pace yorkers to Pant, but those were dispatched over the long-on boundary and sliced towards the cover point fence.

Pant looks fit as a fiddle post his "inspirational" comeback which has the cricketing world all gushing. "To think that Rishabh did this after the injuries that he sustained

is unbelievable," former Australian allrounder Shane Watson said. "You're not a true human being if you're not inspired by Rishabh Pant, the way he was able to come out and turn it on like that. It took him a little while to find his feet but once he let those shackles off, he played some 'Rishabh Pant' shots, and they were extraordinary."

3/22 Trent Boult has produced his best bowling performance for Rajasthan Royals, bettering the 3/29 vs Delhi Capitals in Guwahati on April 8, 2023. This is also his best ever vs Mumbai Indians, surpassing the 2/30 for KKR in Kolkata on May 13, 2017.

17 Rohit Sharma, with his first-ball duck, has now emulated Dinesh Karthik's tally of 17 ducks in the IPL. Both share this unwanted record for most ducks in the IPL.

6 Rohit Sharma, Naman Dhir & Dewald Brevis have provided the sixth instance of three batters out of the top four getting dismissed without scoring in an IPL innings.

181 Royan Parag's average while scoring 181 runs, including two fifties, at a strike rate of 160.17 in 3 IPL Innings this season, the best among all batters this season. His tally is the joint-highest with Virat Kohli (avg. 90.50 in 3 innings).

SCOREBOARD

MI: I Kishan c Samson b Burger 16, R Sharma c Samson b Boult 0, N Dhir lbw b Boult 0, D Brevis c Burger b Boult 0, T Varma c Ashwin b Chahal 32, H Pandya c sub (Powell) b Chahal 34, P Chawla c Hetmyer b Avesh 3, T David c Boult b Burger 17, G Coetzee c Hetmyer b Chahal 4, J Bumrah not out 8, A Madhwal not out 4; Extras (b1, lb2, w4); **7: Total (RR 6.25): 125/9; FoW:** 1-1, 2-1, 3-14, 4-20, 5-76, 6-83, 7-95, 8-111, 9-114; **Bowling:** Boult 4-0-22-3, Burger 4-0-32-2, Avesh 4-0-30-1, Chahal 4-0-11-3, Ashwin 4-0-27-0

SRR: Y Jaiswal c David b Maphaka 10, J Buttler c Chawla b Madhwal 13, S Samson b Madhwal 12, R Parag not out 54, R Ashwin c Varma b Madhwal 16, S Dubey not out 8; Extras (b2, lb2, w10); **14: Total (15.3 ov; RR: 8.19): 127/4; FoW:** 1-10, 2-42, 3-48, 4-88; **Bowling:** Maphaka 2-0-23-1, Bumrah 4-0-26-0, Madhwal 4-0-20-3, Coetzee 2-3-0-36-0, Chawla 3-0-18-0

Result: RR won by 6 wickets (with 27 balls remaining)

RCB pacers need to shape up vs Lucknow

Joseph May Make Way For Topley; KL Rahul's Fitness A Worry For LSG

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Bengaluru: As RCB's hapless bowlers struggled against KKR's fury last week, their homegrown medium pacer Vyshak Vijaykumar stood up to the onslaught with a disciplined performance. It almost felt like the 27-year-old, who returned 1/23 in four overs, was bowling on a different pitch.

On Tuesday, when RCB host a resurgent Lucknow Super Giants, they will need their wayward bowling lineup to take a cue from Vyshak, who came up with variations, mixing yorkers with hard-length deliveries and bouncers.

Going by RCB's bowling effort against KKR, they have a lot of work to do. Given their limited spin options, Faf du Plessis and Co. have gone pace heavy but that isn't working. One of the biggest liabilities has been West Indies pacer Alzarri Joseph, who could make way for left-arm pacer Reece Topley. Lead pacer Siraj has two wickets in three outings and that hardly inspires confidence.

Lucknow have their own share of woes. They are sweating over

3 Bengaluru's three wins have come by 18 runs at DYP, Mumbai, on April 19, 2022; by 14 runs in Kolkata on May 25, 2022 and by 18 runs in Lucknow on May 1, 2023. Lucknow's only victory was by one wicket in Bengaluru on April 10, 2023.

35 Runs needed by Quinton de Kock (2965 @32.22 in 99 innings, 2x100s, 21x50s) to complete 3000 runs.

382 Virat Kohli's runs @127.33 (2x100s, 2x50s) in his last five IPL innings is his best-ever sequence in five consecutive innings in IPL. The scores are 100 vs SRH in Hyderabad on May 18, 101* vs Gujarat in Bengaluru on May 21 (both in 2023), 21 vs Chennai in Chennai, 77 vs Punjab and 83* vs KKR (both in Bengaluru) (all in 2024).

the fitness of regular captain KL Rahul. Rahul, who suffered a quadriceps injury after the first Test against England earlier this year, is being eased back into the game. On Monday, he was seen going through a fitness test.

Ruturaj eases into role of Dhoni's successor

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Visakhapatnam: Though these are early days, Ruturaj Gaikwad seems to be settling in nicely as the new CSK captain. In the presence of MS Dhoni and Ravindra Jadeja, the youngster has been impressive. Gaikwad has also taken some inspiring decisions on the field which have worked, like sending debutant Sameer Rizvi ahead of Jadeja in the 19th over against the Titans.

Importantly, Dhoni seems to have immense faith in his capabilities. In an event with the official broadcaster, Rachin Ravindra was asked if he looked at Dhoni

after dropping a catch. Even before Ravindra could respond, Dhoni intervened to say, "CSK have a new captain now."

Coach Stephen Fleming lauded the new captain, saying, "Transition into the job of captaincy is not easy. But Ruturaj has done it seamlessly. MS by his side along with Jadeja in the ranks means Ruturaj is doing well. His demeanour off the field is excellent. We are really positive about his captaincy."

CSK's bowling consultant Eric Simons gave an insight into Ruturaj's captaincy. "Ruturaj is very calm and he is a great student of the game. Ever since he joined us, he kept asking questions. As a captain, you need to understand the game. You need to know when to make changes and why you make those changes."

GALLERY

Sri Lanka on top despite collapse

Chittagong: Asitha Fernando claimed 4-34 as Sri Lanka bowled out Bangladesh for 178 to take a massive 353-run lead in the first innings of the second Test on Monday. The visitors decided against enforcing a follow-on but were left struggling with their batting in the second innings, reaching 102-6 at stumps on the third day to extend their lead to 455 runs. **SCORES:** Sri Lanka 531 & 102/6 vs B'desh 178. AGENCIES

ACTION TODAY

BASKETBALL: NBA, 5 am (Jiocinema)
CRICKET: IPL, Bangalore vs Lucknow, 7.30 pm (Star Sports, Jiocinema); Bangladesh Women vs Australia, 2nd T20i, 11.30 am (Fancode)
FOOTBALL: ISL, Odisha FC vs Punjab FC, 7.30 pm (Jiocinema); EPL, various matches 12.30 am Wednesday onwards (Star Sports)

BCCI may discuss increase in auction purse

New Delhi: The BCCI has invited owners of the 10 IPL teams for an informal meeting in Ahmedabad on April 16 and there could be discussions on potential increase in auction purse for the franchises and player retention.

The meeting will take place on the sidelines of the game between Delhi Capitals and Gujarat Titans at the Narendra Modi Stadium. "The IPL owners have been invited

MEET WITH IPL TEAM OWNERS

for an informal meeting. There is no set agenda. Since IPL will be into its second month, it will be a good time for all stake-holders to get together," a BCCI official said.

Likely discussions could be around the mega auction due later this year, covering player retention and potential

increase in the auction purse which currently stands at Rs 100 crore. BCCI secretary Jay Shah, president Roger Binny and IPL chairman Arun Dhimal will attend the meeting.

Currently, teams are allowed to retain four players ahead of every mega auction, which is conducted once in three years and was last held in 2022. The next mega auction will be held ahead of the 2025 edition of the league.

The two-month IPL began on March 22 and will end with the final in Chennai on May 26. Qualifier 1 and Eliminator will be held in Ahmedabad on May 21 and May 22 while the Qualifier will be staged in Chennai on May 24. The BCCI had first announced the schedule of the first two weeks before releasing the full line-up of games last week after the dates of the general elections were revealed. ¶¶

Mirabai qualifies for Paris Oly

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New Delhi: Tokyo Olympics silver medalist and reigning CWG champion, Mirabai Chanu, on Monday became the only weightlifter from the country to qualify for the Paris Games 2024 after finishing third in Group B of the women's 49kg division at the IWF World Cup in Phuket. She had a total lift of 184kg (81kg in snatch+103kg in clean&jerk).



Mirabai Chanu

finished 12th overall. She had lifted 202kg (87kg in snatch+115kg in clean and jerk) to clinch silver in Tokyo, while her personal best in snatch is 88kg and 119kg in clean and jerk.

"Almost every lift I made today felt clean, clear and powerful. I am leaving this competition feeling strong and confident. The rehabilitation was tough and demanding, but with the support of everyone involved in my rehab and recovery, I pushed through all the complications. The journey to get here required relentless dedication and hard work and I couldn't be happier being back on the ramp—lifting and competing for my

Nagal attains career-high ATP ranking of 95

London: Ace Indian tennis player Sumit Nagal on Monday achieved a career-high ranking of 95 in the ATP singles chart, following impressive results in recent times. His previous best was 97 in Feb, which he had attained after winning the Chennai Open, an ATP Challenger series event.

Nagal made headlines in Jan after he made it to the main draw of the Australian Open and also became the first Indian to beat a seeded player (Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan) in the same before bowing out in the second round af-

ter losing to Shang Juncheng of China. After his Chennai Open triumph, he played two more Challenger tournaments, along with an ATP 500 competition (Dubai Championship) and a couple of ATP 1000 Masters (Indian Wells and Miami). But, his best performance at this time was restricted to a semifinal finish in the Bengaluru Challenger.

Currently, Nagal is preparing for Grand Prix Hassan II, an ATP 250 event in Marrakesh, Morocco, where he will be taking on Corentin Moutet of France in the opening round. ¶¶



Sumit Nagal made headlines in Jan after he became the first Indian to beat a seeded player in the Australian Open

F1 owner buys MotoGP

Liberty Media Strikes \$4.5 Bn Deal, May Draw Scrutiny From Antitrust Regulators

Paris: Formula One owners Liberty Media have agreed to buy MotoGP on Monday in a deal valued at around \$4.5 billion, the American company said.

MotoGP said in a statement that Liberty Media would acquire "approximately 86 percent" stake from Spain-based owners Dorna in a deal valued at 4.2 billion euros (\$4.5 billion).

The acquisition is expected to be completed by the end of 2024 subject to clearances and approvals by competition and foreign investment law authorities in various jurisdictions.

The deal may draw scrutiny from antitrust regulators. The buyout firm CVC Capital Partners Ltd. was forced to put MotoGP up for sale nearly two decades ago to gain antitrust approval from European regulators for its takeover of Formula 1 in 2005. MotoGP is planning to host 21 races across 17 countries in this year's season, according to the company statement.

Liberty will not be the first company to own both Formula One and MotoGP. Private equity firm CVC Capital Partners had owned both F1 and MotoGP but was forced to sell the motorcycle series to buy F1 after EU competition regulators raised objections.

"Liberty Media Corporation has announced an agreement to acquire MotoGP. MotoGP is the



MOTORSPORT MOGUL: Greg Maffei

pinnacle of two wheels," read a statement issued by MotoGP.

"Liberty Media will acquire approximately 86 percent of Dorna, with Dorna management retaining approximately 14 percent of their equity in the business.

"The transaction reflects an enterprise value for Dorna/MotoGP of EUR4.2 billion and an equity value of EUR3.5 billion, with MotoGP's existing debt balance expected to remain in place after close." Liberty were not the only company interested in acquiring Dorna.

According to a report last week in the Financial Times, Qatar Sports Investments (QSI), owners of French champions Paris Saint-Germain, and TKO Group Hold-

ings, which comprises mixed martial arts organisation UFC and World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), had also held talks with Dorna.

However, it was Liberty who emerged the winners.

"We are thrilled to expand our portfolio of leading live sports and entertainment assets with the acquisition of MotoGP," said Greg Maffei, Liberty Media President and CEO.

"MotoGP is a global league with a loyal, enthusiastic fan base, captivating racing and a highly cash flow generative financial profile. Carmelo and his management team have built a great sporting spectacle that we can expand to a wider global audience."

THE NEW FORMULA

- US-based company buys 86% stake for \$4.5bn from Dorna
- Takeover subject to clearance and could attract scrutiny
- Canada Pension Plan Investment Board bought a 39% stake in Dorna from Bridgepoint in 2012
- The remaining shares were owned by Dorna management, whose stake has dropped to 14% following the takeover

Long serving CEO Carmelo Ezpeleta will remain in the post he has occupied since 1994 with the business headquarters remaining in Madrid. Ezpeleta said he was looking forward to the 21-race global championship evolving even further. AGENCIES

FREE-KICKS

RODRYGO SCORES A BRACE IN VINICIUS' ABSENCE, POWERS REAL

Madrid: Rodrygo thrived in the absence of Vinicius Junior as Real Madrid beat Athletic Bilbao 2-0 to keep an eight-point lead over Barcelona in the Spanish league.

Rodrygo scored both goals and Madrid maintained their comfortable lead at the top after Barcelona had won 1-0 at Las Palmas on Saturday. Vinicius didn't play because of a suspension over yellow cards. Jude Bellingham set up

Rodrygo's second goal in Madrid's third straight league win. Rodrygo's opener came with a beautiful shot into the top corner from just outside the area

eight minutes into the match at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium. "He played very well, made the difference with some high-quality plays," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said about Rodrygo.



VITINHA AND RAMOS STRIKES SECURE 2-0 WIN FOR 10-MAN PSG AT MARSEILLE

Marseille: Vitinha and Goncalo Ramos scored in the second half as 10-man Paris St Germain overcame early jitters to secure a 2-0 win and hand Marseille their first home loss of the season in Ligue 1 on Sunday.

PSG's league double over their rivals took them to 62 points and put them 12 points clear of second-placed Brest, who won 1-0 at Lorient earlier in the day.

"Yes, I'm happy with the result, because it's a classic," PSG manager Luis Enrique said. "We know it's special for our supporters. We knew the pressure in this stadium where they were undefeated.

"There's always this desire to be unpredictable for opponents," Enrique said. "I liked what I saw in terms of occupying space. If you don't know where my players are going to play, it's a surprise."

CHELSEA BOSS HAYES HITS OUT AT ARSENAL'S EIDEVALL OVER 'MALE AGGRESSION'

London: Chelsea manager Emma Hayes criticised Arsenal counterpart Jonas Eidevall for displaying

"male aggression" after he had a heated exchange with midfielder Erin Cuthbert during the Women's League Cup final. Cuthbert exchanged words with Eidevall when the Chelsea midfielder went over to the touchline to take a throw-in in extra time as her side chased the game at Molineux. Arsenal's Stina Blackstenius's goal in the 116th minute secured the 1-0 victory for Eidevall's team.

"I think there's a way to behave on the side of the pitch and not for the first time, I've been in women's football a long time and I don't think we should tolerate male aggression like we did today," said Hayes, who appeared to push the Arsenal manager away as they shook hands after the final whistle. AGENCIES



Sinner gets third-time lucky

Beats Dimitrov In Straight Sets To Win The Title

Miami: Jannik Sinner said he is enjoying every moment of his sensational start to the 2024 season after winning the Miami Open on Sunday for his third title of the year. The Australian Open champion Sinner previously finished as runner-up in Miami in 2021 and 2023.

The Italian thoroughly outplayed Daniil Medvedev in the semis and Grigor Dimitrov in the final to improve to 22-1 on the year and rise to a career-

best world No. 2. "This is a special moment," Sinner said after beating Dimitrov 6-3 6-1 in the final for his second Masters 1000 title.

"You never know if this is the last time or not. So you have to enjoy this for one day, and now a new chapter is coming, clay-court season is coming, so completely different.

"Let's see how I will play from now on. But for sure, the hard-court season until now has been very good."

Behind an improved serve and textbook shot-making, Sinner has been on a roll this season, winning the Australian Open in January for what is expected to be the first of

many Grand Slam titles.

His only loss of the year came to Carlos Alcaraz in the semis at Indian Wells but after his triumph in South Florida, the Spaniard will now be looking up to his rival in the rankings come Monday.

"Being number two, it's an amazing feeling," Sinner said.

"I never thought to come to this point. I come from a very normal family. My dad is still working, as my mom, too. For me sport is one thing and life is different." Sinner's coach Darren Cahill said that the 22-year-old was loving life but also staying grounded.

"He appreciates every single moment that is happening to him." REUTERS



"I'M VERY HAPPY TO BE NUMBER TWO IN THE WORLD. IT IS JUST A NUMBER, FOR ME THE MOST IMPORTANT IS TRYING TO EXECUTE MY GAMEPLAN AND I MANAGED TO DO THAT." —Jannik Sinner

Extreme heat conditions to coincide with LS poll schedule

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Earth sciences minister Kiren Rijiju said on Monday extreme weather conditions were anticipated in upcoming two-and-a-half months that will coincide with Lok Sabha polls. "It is going to be very challenging for all of us. Since we are the most populous country in the world and face extreme weather conditions, it makes it absolutely necessary for India to prepare in advance," he said at a press conference where IMD released its seasonal outlook.

National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has already issued heat-wave advisory for elections, asking Election Commission to guide states and UTs in safeguarding against heat-wave incidents.

IMD director general Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said above-normal heat wave days were likely over most parts in plains during April-June. Ten to 20 days of heat wave were expected in different parts of the country against a normal of four to eight days, he added.

Gujarat, central Maharashtra, north Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, north Chhattisgarh and Andhra may face worst impact of heat waves.

As far as April is concerned, "above-normal" maximum temperatures were likely over most parts of the country, with a high probability of it over central south India. Above normal heat wave days were likely over many areas in central India and the adjoining areas of the northern plains and south India in April, IMD said.

Rainfall during April is most likely to be normal. "Normal to above-normal rainfall is likely over most parts of northwest India and many parts of central India, north peninsular India, some parts of east and northeast India. Below normal rainfall is likely along east and west coasts, some parts of east and northeast India and west central India," Met department said.

Working on US info: EAM on Garcetti's Pannun remarks

'Probe Involves Our Own Nat'l Security Interest'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Without revealing anything about the outcome of the probe into the US murder-for-hire charges, foreign minister S Jaishankar reiterated on Monday that India is investigating the information shared by US authorities because it involves India's own "national security interests".

Jaishankar was responding to US ambassador Eric Garcetti's remarks on the issue a day earlier in which he had said that no govt or govt employee can be involved in the alleged assassination of "one of your own citizens". That's just an unacceptable



The US ambassador will obviously speak about the position of US govt, I will speak about the position of our govt, said Jaishankar

red line, he had said.

The US has blamed an identified but unnamed Indian official for the foiled plot to assassinate Khalistan leader and US national Gurbaj Singh Pannun.

Asked about Garcetti's comments, Jaishankar said the US ambassador will obviously speak about the position or thinking of the US

China's 30 new names for Arunachal sites to 'take effect' from May 1

Continued from P 1

After China objected to PM Modi's visit to Arunachal earlier this year, India has repeatedly reminded China that such baseless claims won't change the reality that the state is and will always be a part of India. The official website of the Chinese ministry posted 30 additional names for the region. Set to take effect from May 1, the implementation measures stipulate in Article 13 that "place names in foreign languages that may harm China's territorial claims and sovereignty rights shall not be directly quoted or translated without authorisation".

govt. "I will speak about the position of our govt. And that is that in this particular case certain information has been shared with us which we are investigating. And we are investigating because we believe our own national security interests are involved in that investigation," he said.

"At this moment, beyond the fact that there's an investigation going on, we have nothing to say," he added.

Garcetti had, in an interview, spoken against what he described as any country, having an active member of its govt involved in a second country, trying to assassinate one of its citizens. "That's, I think, usually a red line for any country. That's a basic issue of sovereignty. That's a basic issue of rights," he had said.

Final hearing on Muslim side plea in July 3rd wk

Continued from P 1

For the Anjuman Intezamia Masjid (Gyanvapi mosque) management committee, senior advocate Huzefa Ahmadi, with advocate Mohd Nizamuddin Pasha, argued that first, the discovery of a purported 'shivling' in the wuzukhana had led to sealing of the area and, now, the tekhkhana was being allowed to be worshipped by Hindus. "This is akin to Hindus slowly chipping away the mosque and is nothing but encroaching on the land which is a wakf property," Ahmadi said.

Drawing a parallel with the fate of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, Ahmadi said despite an undertaking by the highest executive of the state before SC, the structure could not be protected and was demolished. "... Allowing puja inside the mosque's cellar will result in discord and will

lead to disturbances. Why would they need this cellar when there is a huge temple adjacent to it and when both communities have offered prayers peacefully for centuries?" he asked.

However the bench said allowing puja had not resulted in obstructions for namaz.

"At this stage, bearing in mind that namaz by Muslim community continued unhindered after Jan 17 and 31 orders (of the trial court) and the offering of puja and worship by Hindu priest is confined to the area of tekhkhana, it would be appropriate to maintain status quo as of today so as to enable both the communities to offer religious worship in the above terms," it said, adding that status quo would not be altered by any party without prior leave of SC.

The CJJI-led bench said religious observances by Hindus shall be in terms of the or-

der dated Jan 31 of the trial court, subject to the custody of the receiver. This means only the priest would carry out puja and related rituals and the public would not be allowed to enter the cellar.

While asking the Hindu side to respond by April 30 to the mosque management committee's appeal against Allahabad HC decision, which upheld the trial court's Jan 17 and 31 orders, appointing a receiver for the tekhkhana and allowing puja, the bench posted the final hearing on the Muslim side's appeal in the third week of July.

For the Hindu side, senior advocate Shyam Divan and advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain said only priests nominated by the temple trust were permitted to do puja by entering the cellar from the southern side, which is distinct from the north-side entry for Muslims to offer namaz in the mosque. They said

the court's suggestion not to expand the worship area was acceptable to the Hindu side.

Ahmadi said for 30 years, access of Hindus to the mosque was barred and suddenly the trial court judge, on his last day in office prior to retirement on Jan 31, allowed worship inside the mosque, which historians believe to have been constructed over the razed structure of the original Kashi Vishwanath temple. But Divan argued that till 1993, the tekhkhana was in possession of Hindus.

Ahmadi said, "Within hours of the trial court order of Jan 31, UP govt acted in haste, cut open the iron grill to create access to the cellar and on the same day the worship commenced. It effectively presented a fait accompli and stubbed out Muslim side's right to appeal. In which case has the state acted with such alacrity to implement a trial court order within hours?"

CJI bats for 'need to uphold due process' during probes

New Delhi: The topic of this year's 20th DP Kohli Memorial lecture, which CJI D Y Chandrachud was delivering, was 'Adopting Technology to Advance Criminal Justice', report Dhananjay Mahapatra & Rajsheshkar Jha.

"In the realm of criminal justice, the delicate balance between search and seizure powers and individual privacy rights stands at the cornerstone of a fair and just society," Chandrachud said. "At the heart of this balance lies the need to uphold due process while ensuring the effective functioning of law-enforcement agencies.

"Instances of raids conducted and incidents of unwarranted confiscation of personal devices highlight the pressing need to strike a balance between investigative imperatives and individual privacy rights," the CJI said, in the presence of home secretary Ajay Bhalla, CBI director Praveen Sood, CVC P K Srivastava and DoPT secretary S Radha Chauhan.

The CJI praised BNSS, which will replace Criminal Procedure Code, and BSA, which will come in place of the Indian Evidence Act. He said the two Parliament-enacted codes were significant steps towards modernising the justice system.

"From the initial registration of an FIR to the final delivery of judgment, every stage of criminal investigation is slated to be recorded digitally under the purview of the proposed legislation. This comprehensive approach ensures a seamless flow of information and is intended to facilitate better coordination and collaboration among stakeholders involved in the investigative and adjudicatory processes," he said of the laws enacted by Modi govt.

"Summonses can now be issued electronically, and testimonies from witnesses, experts, accused individuals and other parties may also be presented virtually," the CJI said.

I-T move follows Cong claims of 'election-rigging'

Continued from P 1

Solicitor general Tushar Mehta said although the present appeal was not related to the recent tax notices issued to Congress, I-T department has decided to defer coercive steps in view of impending elections.

The court also clarified that the concession by I-T department was made without prejudice to the right and the contention of the department and the Rs 3,500 crore demand was not strictly related to the controversy in this appeal.

The I-T department's stand comes following protests from Congress which alleged that its accounts were frozen — a charge the I-T has denied as part of BJP's conspiracy to rig elections by financially crippling the opponent. The I-T department has justified its move to recover tax arrears and interest by citing Congress's failure to file returns and not following the appeal process. It pressed on with its



The court recorded the SG's statement that the department would keep its order in abeyance till the next date of hearing

claim after Delhi high court did not entertain Congress's challenge.

Recording the SG's statement that the department would keep its order in abeyance till the next date of hearing, the bench said in its order, "The issues which arise in these appeals are yet to be adjudicated upon but having regard to the situation now, the (income tax) department does not wish to precipitate the matter and (says) that no coercive steps will be taken with regard to Rs 3,500 crore approximately. List the matter on second week of July."

TOI LINE OF NO CONTROL SANDEEP ADHWARYU





HARDIK BOOED AGAIN, THIS TIME BY HOME CROWD AT WANKHEDE, AS MI'S LOSS TO RR LEAVES THEM WINLESS AFTER 3 MATCHES 15

INCLUSIVE OF DELHI TIMES (CIRCULATED ONLY IN DELHI NCR) |

Court orders judicial custody till April 15, CM sent to Tihar

Will Influence Witnesses If Released: ED

Vineet Upadhyay
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: A Delhi court on Monday sent chief minister Arvind Kejriwal to Tihar Jail till April 15 in the liquor policy case after Enforcement Directorate said he was being "non-cooperative" and should be sent to judicial custody. Producing Kejriwal after the end of his remand, ED did not seek further custody but alleged that he had tried to mislead the officials who were questioning him. The agency claimed Kejriwal had told them that co-accused Vijay Nair didn't report to him but to Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj, now AAP ministers. "We are asking for judicial

ED: CM REFUSED TO GIVE PASSWORDS

ED told court that Kejriwal had told them that co-accused Vijay Nair didn't report to him but to Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj. At press meet, AAP says Nair had said same thing 1.5 years ago



to know party's election strategy
ED says Kejriwal gave false, contrary evidence. When confronted with statements made by other AAP netas, he called them 'confused'

Agency says CM did not provide passwords of his digital devices. AAP says BJP wants passwords as it wants

Agency says CM claimed he was unaware when shown evidence of meetings Nair had with other co-accused

India will give reply to dictatorship: CM's wife, P 3

AAP govt faces challenge to keep files moving, P 3

custody, subject to the right of asking for further custody, as per SC judgment in the Senthil Balaji case," submitted additional solicitor general S V Raju, who appeared for ED. Raju also claimed that the CM had not provided passwords to his digital devices.

In its application, ED said Kejriwal was highly influen-

tial and there was every likelihood that he would influence witnesses and tamper with evidence if released. This could hamper the ongoing investigation, it said.

Atishi, Bharadwaj, Gopal Rai and Kejriwal's wife, Sunita, were present in court.

ED: 'CM said Nair...,' P 3

Kejriwal to be housed alone in 14x8 ft cell

A cell measuring 14x8ft in Tihar's Jail No. 2 is CM Kejriwal's home for the next two weeks. The cell has an attached toilet and is located in the 'general area' of the prison meant for convicts. Housing around 600 individuals, the complex is less crowded than the jails meant for under-trial prisoners and has thus been chosen, report Raj Shekhar Jha & Abhay.

The CM went to his cell around 6pm on Monday. He was given books he had asked for — 'How Prime Ministers Decide' by journalist Neeraj Chowdhury, Gita and Ramayana. Kejriwal, who has Z+ security cover, will be guarded by four personnel. He will be staying alone. P 4

Anger over cop suspensions in min's son case

The suspension of four MP cops in a road rage and assault case — in which a state minister's son and nephew are among the accused — has left their colleagues in shock and disbelief. "If such decisions are taken under pressure from politicians, how will police work?" an officer asked. One suspended cop told his superiors he wasn't even at the police station at the time of the alleged assault. TNN

Aerial darshan of Adi Kailash begins

In a move to enhance tourism in the Kumaon region, Uttarakhand govt launched its ambitious project of aerial darshan of Adi Kailash and Om Parvat. The package offers pick-up and drop-off from hotels in Pithoragarh, a 2-hour ride featuring aerial darshan of Adi Kailash. The initial package rate is set at Rs 26,000. TNN

F1 owner to buy MotoGP for \$4.5bn

Formula One owners Liberty Media Monday agreed to buy MotoGP in a \$4.5 billion deal. MotoGP said Liberty Media would acquire "approximately 86%" stake from Spain-based owners Dorca. The acquisition is likely to be completed by end-2024. MotoGP is planning to host 21 races across 17 nations in this year's season. P 16

3 of family run over by truck in MP

A boy, 19, his sister and their grandmother were run over by a truck in MP's Gwalior Sunday. The three were on their way to visit relatives on a motorcycle when the truck hit them from behind. After they fell down on the road, the truck crushed the women, killing them on the spot and sped off. The boy died in hospital. TNN

City may escape heat waves this summer: IMD

New Delhi: Most parts of the country are likely to face a searing summer with more 'heat-wave days' predicted from this April to June. But some pockets of northwest India, including Delhi-NCR, may be better off with IMD on Monday predicting 'normal to below-normal' day temperatures for the region. Releasing its seasonal outlook for three months, IMD predicted 'normal to below-normal' night temperatures in isolated areas of northeast and northwest India, including the capital. Delhi may get 'normal to above-normal' rain in April. TNN

Extreme heat, P 16

DMK agreed to island handover, but made a show of protest: PM

New Delhi: Raising the issue of Katchatheevu for the second straight day, PM Modi Monday targeted DMK over revelations that the party had consented to renunciation of the island in 1974.



Taking to X, Modi mentioned official documents cited by TOI to say that notwithstanding DMK's public protestations, party stalwart and then CM of Tamil Nadu MK Karunanidhi had agreed to the Indra Gandhi govt's decision to hand over the island to Sri Lanka. The PM alleged that the then governing party of TN did nothing to safeguard the state's interests and stood unmasked following disclosure of what had transpired between it and the Centre.

'Double standards', P 10

Need to secure fishing rights: Jaishankar

External affairs minister S Jaishankar said govt would open negotiations with Sri Lanka over implementation of the India Sri Lanka Maritime Boundary Act and a subsequent deal based on which Colombo is stopping Indian fishermen from operating in waters near the island.

"We should get fishing rights. We need to sit with Sri

Lankan authorities and sort it out. Katchatheevu island was given away in 1974 and fishing rights were given away in 1976," he said. The basic reason for losing the island, the minister said, was indifference shown by central govt and prime ministers of the day and connivance of DMK govt with Congress regime of the time. P 10

False narrative to divert from China: Cong

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said PM Modi was spinning a "false narrative" on Katchatheevu to divert focus from his silence in the face of Chinese provocations, and occupation of 2,000 sq km of Indian territory.

The party also released RTI information of 2015, in which foreign ministry, under then foreign secy S Jais-

hankar, said there was no question ceding the island as the area was not demarcated and under the agreement signed later, it lay on the Lankan side. "Is Jaishankar disowning the reply?" Jairam Ramesh asked. Congress's P Chidambaram said the EAM had somersaulted from a "liberal foreign service officer" to "a spokesman of BJP-RSS". P 10

By changing name, you can't own our land: EAM to China on Arunachal

TNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi: Following another spat with India over the status of Arunachal Pradesh, China again resorted to renaming of villages in the Indian state to back its claims of sovereignty. In Surat, foreign minister S Jais-



hankar responded by saying the state was, is and will always remain a part of India.

"If I change the name of your house, will it become mine? Arunachal Pradesh was an Indian state, is an Indian state and will remain so in the future. Nothing will be gained by changing names," the minister, who is on a two-day visit to Gujarat, said. The Chinese civil affairs ministry released a fresh list last week of "standardised geographical names" for 30 places in the state it calls Zangnan.

'India working on US info in Pannun case'

Foreign minister S Jaishankar reiterated on Monday that India is investigating the information shared by US authorities in the Pannun case because it involves India's own "national security interests". Asked about Garçetti's 'red line' comments, Jaishankar said, "I will speak about the position of our govt." P 16

sed a fresh list last week of "standardised geographical names" for 30 places in the state it calls Zangnan. This is the fourth time China has released a list of new names for villages in the north-eastern state.

30 new names, P 16

Leopard enters N Delhi village, injures eight, tranquillised

An adult leopard sneaked into north Delhi's Jagatpur village on Monday, entered some houses and attacked people, injuring eight of them, police said. The animal, suspected to have strayed from nearby Yamuna Biodiversity Park, was trapped in a room and tranquillised by forest department personnel, five hours after it was first sighted, report Priyangi Agarwal & Abhay.

Cops took the injured to hospital where they were treated for deep wounds inflicted by the leopard's claws. Several videos of the incident went viral on social media, and in one of them, the leopard was seen jumping onto a terrace. The big cat is now at a forest department rescue facility and will be dealt with further in accordance with standard protocol. P 7

Pre-merger turbulence forces Vistara to cancel 50 flights, may hit 60 today

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Vistara's woes ahead of its merger with Air India (AI) have mounted, with "significant cancellations and delays in the past few days" forcing the Tata-owned carrier to "temporarily" truncate schedules. The airline was forced to cancel close to 50 flights on Monday. Sources said the number of cancellations could go up to 60 on Tuesday.

Vistara — a full service carrier that operates over 300 domestic and international flights — will deploy wide-body Dreamliners and Airbus A321s on domestic routes in a bid to clear the back-

ROUGH WEATHER

Many Vistara pilots have been reporting sick in recent months. Crew unavailability, among other reasons, has led to poor punctuality and high cancellations

Airline to deploy wide-body Dreamliners and Airbus A321s to clear backlog

Deluge of flyer complaints

log of affected passengers.

There has been simmering discontent among the airline's pilots over reported pay cuts when they become part of Air India, the Tatas' aviation flagship, over the next few months.

Breather for flyers of delayed flights

In case of long flight delays or other emergencies after boarding, flyers will be able to alight from the plane through the departure gate and wait at the terminal, instead of sitting holed up in the plane while waiting for it to take off, as per new BCAS guidelines. P 9

Many pilots have been reporting sick in recent months and crew unavailability, among other reasons, has led to poor punctuality and high cancellations.

Will cut flights, P 9

Why Pakistan's tryst with terror is boomeranging

Pakistan's under attack – from Tehreek-i-Taliban (TTP) that operates out of Afghanistan. Sachin Parashar analyses the problem and its implications for New Delhi and Islamabad

After repeatedly warning the Taliban dispensation in Kabul of consequences for not reining in TTP, which is waging a war against the Pakistan govt and military in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province – especially in the parts therein that were earlier known as FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) – Pakistan recently launched targeted strikes on alleged hideouts of a TTP splinter group in the Paktika and Khost provinces of Afghanistan.

While Pakistan claimed the air strikes were in retaliation to a cross-border terrorist attack, Kabul accused Pakistan of violating Afghanistan's sovereignty and fired in response at Pakistan troops along the border. The Pakistan air strikes were not unprecedented and tension had been building up between Kabul and Islamabad for more than a year over the activities of TTP, which wants strict implementation of the Sharia law in Pakistan.

However, this latest and perhaps most ominous flare-up seems to have thrown into disarray Pakistan's pursuit of strategic depth in Afghanistan since the return of the Taliban to Kabul in Aug 2021.

TOI Explains

Cut From Same Cloth

The fall of Kabul in 2021 was seen as nothing short of a victory for the ISI, which had continued to support the Taliban while ostensibly also backing the US war on terror. However, Pakistan probably failed to allow for the blowback that could ensue from the Taliban's complex relationship with TTP.

The Pakistani Taliban was formed in 2007 to fight the Pakistan military but it remains an ideological cousin of the Afghan Taliban – it pursues similar objectives like overthrowing the govt and imposing its interpretation of the Sharia law. Its leaders have also spoken about establishing an Islamic Caliphate in Pakistan.

Earlier this year, a UN report said the Taliban remain "generally sympathetic" to TTP's aims and, barring a few cosmetic measures like the offer to relocate TTP members away from the border, have cared little about Pakistan's repeated calls to prevent cross-border terrorist attacks. Apart from allowing TTP sanctuaries in Afghanistan, some Taliban members reportedly even joined TTP in attacking Pakistan as a "religious obligation".

There are other reasons too for the Taliban being soft on TTP, whose contribution in the fight against the US-led coalition forces has not been forgotten by the regime in Kabul. Even as they desperately seek international recognition, the Taliban know that alienating TTP could see many Pakistani Taliban fighters joining the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) terror group, which remains a major threat for the

regime in Kabul. IS-K is the most violent and uncompromising terror group active in the region.

Unravelling Strategic Depth

The fledgling Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan was quick to block fencing of the disputed Durand Line (the border between Afghanistan and British India drawn by Mortimer Durand in 1893, it is now the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan). This was a clear signal that it wasn't a proxy government run by the ISI. Fencing was crucial for Pakistan to secure its western border.

It delivered another blow to Pakistan by ruling out any kinetic action against TTP, restricting itself only to facilitating talks between Pakistan and TTP. The

regime earlier this month to get the Taliban to sever their links with TTP.

India And Security

India will watch out for any attempt by Pakistan to undermine the Taliban dispensation if the security situation between Afghanistan and Pakistan deteriorates further, as that could also imperil regional security. For India, as of now, Pakistan proclaiming itself a victim of cross-border terrorism is nothing short of retributive justice, as India has long accused Pakistan of perpetrating the same across its border. It is significant that while the security situation has improved in Afghanistan since the return of the Taliban, it has worsened in Pakistan provinces like

SPATE OF ATTACKS IN PAK'S KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

March 2024 | Five Chinese nationals among six killed in a suicide attack. No group claimed responsibility, but Islamist militants linked to Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) have previously targeted Chinese interests in Pakistan

Jan 2024 | At least six policemen escorting an anti-polio campaign killed in a terror attack claimed by TTP

Dec 2023 | At least 23 Pakistani soldiers killed and dozens injured in an attack by TTP at an army base

Aug 2023 | Nine soldiers killed and five others



Taliban have also stressed the need for Pakistan to set its own house in order first, saying the TTP terrorism issue predates their return to Kabul. The Taliban leadership have condemned Pakistan's move to expel Afghan refugees. The latest escalation seems to suggest that Pakistan's eureka moment of August 2021, when the Taliban took control of Kabul, is turning into a nightmare.

However, a Pakistan business delegation visited Kabul barely a week after the clash to improve trade ties between the two countries, suggesting Islamabad is in no mood to give up on the Taliban. Driven by an almost congenital obsession to counterbalance India, Islamabad can be expected to leverage the landlocked country's dependence on Pakistan for international trade, and strong cross-border familial links, to get the Taliban to safeguard its interests.

However, whether it will be enough to also get the fiercely independent Taliban to toe their line on TTP remains anybody's guess for now. In an apparent sign of desperation, Pakistan has been publicly attacking the government in Kabul and urged the UN Security Council

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Like many, India believes Pakistan is only reaping the harvest of its long-standing policy of using terrorism for the attainment of political goals and that Islamabad can no longer 'run with the hare and hunt with the hounds'.

Pakistan believes it has been let down by the Taliban. India, however, has no such complaint yet. Based on the Taliban's repeated assurances in meetings with Indian authorities that it won't allow groups like LeT and JeM to target India from Afghan soil, and its own historical ties with the country, India has built a strong working relationship with the Islamic Emirate, even without officially recognising it. That the Taliban are looking at the possible use of the strategic Chabahar port in Iran by Afghan traders is another incentive. The Taliban have also been very appreciative of the humanitarian aid sent by India, including the 40,000 tonnes of wheat supplied through the land border with Pakistan, and India is currently considering Taliban's request to resume work on its economic/community projects in the country.

ILO reaffirms what we all knew: Indians are crazy about govt jobs

Millions scramble to get a govt job, pretty much any govt job, in India. Take just two examples. Recently, for ~60,000 UP police constable jobs, there were ~48 lakh applicants – that's a selection ratio of 1.25%. For army jawans recruitment, selection ratio is 3%-4%. And ILO's 2024 report on employment in India, as has been widely noted, clearly points to a crisis in creating jobs.

Why, 30+ years after reforms and in the world's fastest growing major economy, is a *sarkari naukri* so coveted?

TOI Explains

First, let's get an idea of the labour market:

- > 972 million working age people (15-64 in 2023)
- > 586 million Indians are employed (2023 data)
- > Organised sector (private + govt) jobs, at 152 million, are just 25% of total jobs.
- > And in this, govt (Centre + states) jobs number 14 million. So, 2 out of every 100 jobs in India are sarkari.
- > Only our 1.4 of 100 working age could be sarkari

This is when LFPR in India is 49.9%, or roughly half of the 972 million working age people in India. Labour force participation rate is the proportion of working-age people who are available for work.

It's clear, therefore, there are very few govt jobs. But that by itself wouldn't create a mad rush for these jobs. That can only be explained if, one, most non-govt jobs were unattractive and, two, govt jobs offered what most private sector jobs didn't. Both are true.

Illustration: AI



KNOCKIN' ON HEAVEN'S DOOR

Problem with most non-govt jobs

Regular private sector jobs with monthly salaries & benefits like paid leave are scarce. Even in cities and towns, just about 50% of jobs offer regular salaries. Of these, just 47% offer jobs with paid leave. It gets worse. Working conditions are even worse in 430 million+ unorganised sector jobs. And, while govt jobs data includes unpaid household work and self-employment as employment, it stands to reason many thus employed would prefer a regular job.

Attraction of govt jobs

- > Entry level govt salary for a low skill job is Rs 33,000 (plus benefits like HRA, DA, paid leave).
- > Entry level private sector salary for a low skill job is around Rs 10,000, often with no benefits.
- > Even low-skill govt jobs offer job security.
- > Most low-skill private sector jobs don't offer job security.

What will reduce the scramble of millions for a few govt jobs are lots of regular private sector jobs with some benefits for low, medium skill workers. But that's not happening. Manufactur-

ing, for example, employs just 35 million.

So, what's the solution?

Pundits have come up with various suggestions.

1 India must specialise in light manufacturing, which is more labour-intensive, and where workers don't need to be highly skilled. Bangladesh in textiles is a case in point. The problem here is that East Asia is well into the game.

2 Another solution, tougher to implement, is to radically improve the quality of education, with special stress on technical education, and create a highly skilled workforce fit for 21st century. The problem here is two-fold. One, it requires not just time but enormous political will. Two, most high-skilled jobs will be in capital-intensive industries, which employ fewer workers. A different idea is to focus on services and not factories. Services jobs can vary from highly specialised, like medical or legal, to basic, delivery personnel. The problem is again two-fold. One, this is virgin territory. No country, at a similar stage of economic development as India is now, has solved its jobs problem via

services. Two, the viability of a services-led labour force depends on middle- and top-end services being exportable on a sustained basis.

Dole for unemployed

Post-war, Western economies recognised capitalism will frequently create unemployment and skills mismatch. Answer: unemployment dole – a fixed, smallish payment for those looking for jobs or rendered jobless.

India doesn't have universal dole. If it did, non-govt jobs won't be as unattractive. In part because low wage/poor working conditions private sector jobs won't be able to compete with the prospect of free money. More important, losing a private sector job won't spell disaster. Therefore, the scramble for govt jobs should become less.

How will govts find the money? One way is to rework welfare financing. People with a dole (or jobs) won't need free grain/free power/free fuel, etc.

Note: Figures have been rounded off for ease of reading; Data sources: Central, state govt data, UN, PLFS, Pay Commission, ILO; Data compilation: Atul Thakur