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## INSIDE



### Manipur groups to mark one year of ethnic conflict

**NEW DELHI**  
Kuki-Zo and Meitei civil society organisations in violence-hit Manipur have planned to hold events on Friday to mark one year of the ethnic conflict in the State which began on May 3 last year, though in completely different terms. » PAGE 4

### Instagram drops BJP video after user complaints

**NEW DELHI**  
A BJP video posted from its official handle on Instagram on April 30 reiterating Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks on Muslims was taken down from the platform after many users reported the clip for hate speech. » PAGE 4

### In Israel, Blinken asks Hamas to accept deal

**TEL AVIV**  
U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Wednesday called on Hamas to accept a "very strong" ceasefire-for-hostages offer. Mr. Blinken, who also met with hostage families, told them that freeing the hostages was "at the heart of everything we do". » PAGE 14

### In a first, U.K. asylum seeker sent to Rwanda

**LONDON**  
In a first, a migrant whose asylum application was rejected by the United Kingdom was sent to Rwanda under a voluntary scheme that pays migrants £3,000 to leave, according to reports in the British press. » PAGE 14

# April's gross GST takings power past ₹2.1 lakh cr. in new record

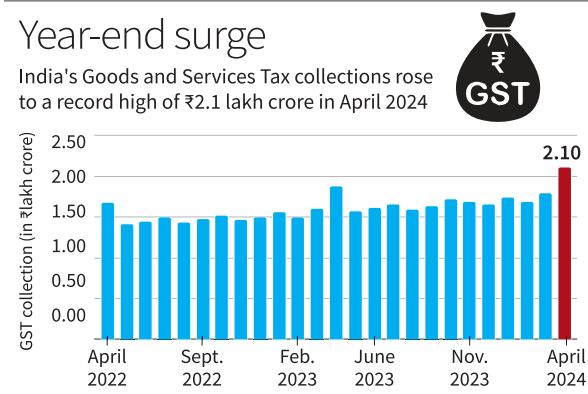
High tax collections with 12.4% growth over previous highest tally due to strong momentum in the economy, says Finance Minister; April's GST revenues are usually the highest, as taxpayers meet compliance deadlines before end of financial year

**Vikas Dhoot**  
NEW DELHI

**Y**ear-end compliance lifted India's gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenues past a record ₹2.1 lakh crore in April, reflecting a 12.4% growth over the previous highest tally of ₹1.87 lakh crore in the same month last year. Taking refunds into account, GST revenues for the month were at ₹1.92 lakh crore, 15.5% higher than the collection in April 2023.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman attributed the ₹2 lakh crore-plus GST revenues in April to "the strong momentum in the economy and efficient tax collections", and said there were no dues pending on account of IGST (Integrated GST) settlement to the States.

Revenues from domestic transactions grew 13.4%, the Finance Minister



try said, while goods imports yielded an 8.3% uptick, helping GST inflows "breach the landmark milestone of ₹2 lakh crore".

#### Rebound in revenues

This marks a rebound in revenues from goods imports that had contracted 5% in March, while domestic transactions' growth weakened in April relative to the 17.6% uptick recorded in the previous month. Overall, gross GST revenues

grew at a slower pace of 11.5% in March, while net revenues had risen 18.4%, faster than April's growth.

April's GST revenues, for transactions in March, are typically the highest in a year as taxpayers square their books for the financial year and remit any pending dues to meet compliance deadlines.

Following last month's record spike, experts project revenues to moderate in coming months, with

some growth expected over the ₹1.68 lakh crore monthly average GST collection of 2023-24.

GST compensation cess collections also hit an all-time high of ₹13,260 crore last month, which included ₹1,008 crore collected on imported goods. The cess is levied on select goods such as automobiles and tobacco products, over and above the peak GST rate of 28%.

Initially introduced for five years to compensate States for revenue losses arising from the 2017 switch to the GST regime, the cess is now being used to repay loans taken during the pandemic to recompense States amid a lockdown-triggered collapse in revenues.

The Ministry emphasised that there had been a positive performance across components, pointing to Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST) revenues

of ₹43,846 crore, State GST revenues of ₹53,538 crore and Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) inflows of ₹99,623 crore. The IGST collections included ₹37,826 crore collected on imported goods.

"The Central government settled ₹50,307 crore to CGST and ₹41,600 crore to SGST from the IGST collected. This translates to a total revenue of ₹94,153 crore for CGST and ₹95,138 crore for SGST for April, 2024 after regular settlement," the Ministry statement said.

Four States, including the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh, and Sikkim, recorded a contraction in revenues last month. Eight States saw muted growth relative to the 13.4% overall growth in domestic revenues, with Jharkhand (3%), Uttarakhand (4%), and Tamil Nadu (6%) seeing the weakest growth.

# SC rejects plea for allocating spectrum without auction

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has declined to receive an application by the Centre to allow the administrative allocation of spectrum.

The Registrar found the application for clarification misconceived. Spectrum, a scarce natural resource, is allocated to private players only through open, transparent auction.

The law was laid down on this issue by the Supreme Court 12 years ago in the 2G spectrum judgment. 'Administrative allocation' of spectrum would have government in sole charge of selecting operators to distribute airwaves.

The Registrar invoked Order XV Rule 5 of the Supreme Court Rules, 2013 to decline the application. Under this provision of the 2013 Rules, the Registrar may refuse to receive a petition on the ground that it discloses no reasonable cause or is frivolous or contains scandalous matter. The government has 15



'Administrative allocation' of spectrum will put Centre in sole charge of selecting operators to distribute airwaves.

days to appeal to the court.

The application filed by the Union government had said spectrum was assigned not only for commercial telecom services but also for discharge of sovereign and public interest functions.

The February 2012 judgment in the 2G spectrum case held that "for alienation of scarce natural resources like spectrum, etc, the state must always adopt a method of auction by giving wide publicity so that all eligible persons may participate in the process".

## A river's bones



**Summer travails:** Villagers depend on this shrinking river in Balangir district of western Odisha for their domestic use. With many rivers going dry this summer season, people are facing water scarcity. BISWARANJAN ROUT (HEATWAVES TO PREVAIL: PAGE 4)

# Telangana CM has no role in doctored video, says lawyer

**Press Trust of India**  
NEW DELHI

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's lawyer appeared before the Delhi Police on Wednesday and asserted that the Congress leader had nothing to do with creating or posting the doctored video of Amit Shah's speech.

Mr. Reddy, who was summoned by the police for allegedly posting the video on social media platform X, hit out at the BJP at a rally in Telangana, accusing Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home

### Police sources say they are close to identifying creator of the deepfake video on Shah speech

Minister Amit Shah of adopting a vengeful attitude towards him for questioning the BJP over its stand on reservation.

Police sources said they are close to identifying the creator of the deepfake video but before reaching out to the suspect they have to verify who uploaded or forwarded it.

Notices have also been served to five others from various Opposition parties for allegedly sharing the video.

Jharkhand Congress president Rajesh Thakur has also been summoned by the Delhi Police on Wednesday in connection with the probe, a party spokesperson said on Wednesday.

"It is beyond my understanding why the notice was served to me. This is nothing but anarchy," Mr. Thakur said.

**'GUJARAT HEGEMONY'**  
» PAGE 3

# New York Police storm Columbia University again; over 100 protesters held

**Anisha Dutta**  
NEW YORK

A dramatic scene unfolded at Columbia University in the U.S. late on Tuesday as the New York Police Department (NYPD) brought in a military grade vehicle with an extendable ramp to gain entry to a window of Hamilton Hall, the campus building occupied by anti-war student protesters.

Dozens of NYPD officers in riot gear swarmed Columbia University around 9.30 p.m. and encircled key areas of the campus including the 'Gaza Solidarity Encampment' and Hamilton Hall that had been occupied by student protesters. Around midnight, the entire encampment had been cleared out by the NYPD.

Additional crowds of officers entered campus on

foot through the main gate. According to the police, flash bangs were used to disorient the protesters as officers made their way inside Hamilton Hall.

#### Campus on lockdown

The officers blocked media and student journalists from entering the premises of Hamilton Hall while putting the entire campus on a lockdown till the area was cleared. The NYPD also threatened those inside Pulitzer Hall, where Columbia's Journalism School resides, including the Dean, Jelani Cobb, to remain inside till "the area was cleared". The building was inhabited by faculty and student journalists covering the events.

According to the police, at least 109 people were taken into custody on Tuesday night from Columbia University, and three en-



Student activists remonstrate with New York police officers on the Columbia University campus on Tuesday. AP

campments dismantled.

At least two New York City Department of Correction buses full of protesters were seen being driven away from the school.

One of the organisers and suspended Barnard College student Maryam posted on X: "Just got out of jail again after being arrested 12 hours ago, this time for protesting outside

the gates of my own campus. I was thrown onto the ground and pinned down by 6 or 7 cops after having my phone knocked out of my hand because the cop got mad I was livestreaming it."

Columbia University said it had called the police to the campus for the second time in less than two weeks after Hamilton Hall

was "vandalised and blockaded."

University president Minouche Shafik has also asked the NYPD to maintain a presence on campus at least till May 17 to prevent further encampments or occupations.

On April 18, Ms. Shafik's decision to authorise the NYPD's sweep of the "Gaza Solidarity Encampment", which led to the arrest of over 100 protesters, had left many community members stunned.

Over 100 faculty members from the university on April 22 gathered on the campus for a walkout to condemn the suspension and arrests of students and call for amnesty and protection of academic freedom.

According to the NYPD, protesters had barricaded the halls with soda machines, chairs and other

furniture. Meanwhile student protesters alleged that the NYPD officials turned off their body cameras while entering the building.

Columbia University Apartheid Divest, the coalition organising the encampment protest, said, "Columbia admin and NYPD prevented Columbia's volunteer student-run EMS service (CUEMS) from treating students injured by police violence on campus. People who called for help on campus were unable to access medical attention."

#### Barricades set up

Police had set up barricades all around the university's perimeter earlier Tuesday evening, where more protesters gathered. Protesters outside the campus were heard chanting "shame on you" and "free,

free Palestine" as officers made their way inside and led students in handcuffs out. The move also came shortly after New York Mayor Eric Adams said in a press conference at 6 p.m. that the protest at Columbia University "has basically been co-opted by professional outside agitators" who intend to sow chaos.

In a press conference on Wednesday morning, Mr. Adams said, "Once I became aware of the outside agitators who were part of this operation, as Columbia mentioned in their letter and their request with the New York City Police Department, it was clear we had to take appropriate actions, when our intelligence division identified those who were professionals, well trained." (Anisha Dutta is a freelance journalist based in New York)

# Restored industry confidence: Shinde

**Nistula Hebbur**  
MUMBAI

The two-year-old Mahayuti government in Maharashtra has restored industry confidence in the commercial city of Mumbai, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said in an exclusive interview to *the Hindu* on Wednesday, asserting that record of the NDA governments at the State and the

Centre would be enough for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to secure third term.

**INTERVIEW**  
» PAGE 9



## IN BRIEF



## President pays obeisance at Ram temple in Ayodhya

President Droupadi Murmu paid obeisance and performed "aarti" at the Ram temple in Ayodhya on Wednesday. Before visiting the temple in the evening, Ms. Murmu took part in the Sarayu "aarti" and performed puja at the Hanumangarhi temple. "President Droupadi Murmu had darshan and performed puja at Shri Hanuman Garhi temple, Ayodhya," the President's official X handle said in a post. Earlier in the day, the President was received at the Ayodhya airport by Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel. This is Ms. Murmu's first visit to Ayodhya since the Ram temple's consecration in January this year. PTI

## Former Punjab MLA Dalvir Singh Goldy joins AAP

Former Congress MLA Dalvir Singh Goldy, who had quit the party over denial of ticket from the Sangrur Lok Sabha seat, on Wednesday joined the AAP. While welcoming Goldy into the party fold, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann referred to him as his "younger brother" and a "hardworking youth". "We welcome him along with his supporters," he said. Mr. Goldy worked a lot and became an MLA but he was ignored by the Congress, Mr. Mann, who was flanked by AAP candidate from Sangrur seat Gurmeet Singh Meht Hayer, said. Mr. Goldy, had unsuccessfully contested the 2022 Assembly polls from Dhuri seat against Mr. Mann. PTI

## Payback time for BJP in AGP's quest for Parliament seats

Rahul Karmakar  
GUWAHATI

The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) was the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) stepping stone to power in Assam. More than two decades later, it is payback time for the latter in the regional party's quest for a berth in Parliament.

The AGP's last Lok Sabha member was Joseph Toppo, who won the Sonitpur (now Tezpur) constituency in 2009.

The BJP tasted success in its first Assembly election in Assam in 1991, winning 10 seats, nine of which were from the Bengali-dominated Barak Valley. But the party's graph started dipping until the Prafulla Mahanta-led AGP struck a partnership ahead of the 2001 State elections.

The 2001 State elections were a disaster for the AGP but it gave the BJP a toe-hold in the Assamese-dominated Brahmaputra Val-



AGP chief Atul Bora (right) campaigning for the party's Barpeta candidate in Nalbari.

ley. The alliance, broken after the AGP's electoral debacle that year, was forged again ahead of the 2016 State polls, which the two parties won along with the now-discarded Bodo-land People's Front.

## Defeat in allotted seats

As the minor partner of the BJP since, the AGP was in 2019 allotted three Lok Sabha seats - Barpeta, Dhubri, and Kaliabor - which the BJP was reportedly uncomfortable with because of a high percentage of Muslim voters.

## Congress leading nation towards second Partition, says Yogi Adityanath

At rallies in three constituencies in Maharashtra, U.P. CM says BJP has curtailed terrorism and Naxalism in India; he attacks Congress for allegedly questioning the existence of Lord Ram

Shoumojit Banerjee  
PUNE

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath alleged on Wednesday that the Congress seeks to Islamise the country. He said the Congress was leading India towards a "second Partition," and lambasted it for coining the term 'Hindu terrorism'.

Mr. Adityanath is holding a series of rallies in Maharashtra to bolster the Mahayuti-NDA candidates. Prime Minister Modi has just finished a campaign tour of western Maharashtra.

Mr. Adityanath held public rallies in Solapur in support of the BJP's Ram Satpute and later in Sangli and Kolhapur's Hatkanangale Lok Sabha constituencies to bat for the BJP's Sanjaykaka Patil and Dhairyaheel Mane of the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena. All three seats go to the polls on May 7 in the third phase.

He lashed out at the



Poll blitz: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister and BJP leader Yogi Adityanath at an election rally in Solapur on Wednesday. PTI

Congress for allegedly questioning the existence of Lord Ram and for allegedly allowing Muslims to slaughter cows across the country.

## 'Standing enhanced'

He said the country's borders were insecure, and terrorism and Naxalism were rampant during the Congress regimes. Mr. Adityanath said that India's standing in the world, which had taken a knock, had been enhanced by 10 years of BJP rule at the

Centre. "It was the Congress that coined the term 'Hindu terrorism' to insult the Hindu community. At that time, the UPA was in power. No one can violate our borders today," said Mr. Adityanath, speaking in Solapur.

He criticised the failure of Congress governments in dealing with cross-border terrorism and national security issues. "Presently if there is an incident in India, Pakistan is quick to offer explanations as it recognises the resolve of the

New India," said Mr. Adityanath.

## New resolve

"This 'New India' respects sovereignty and refrains from unnecessary interference, but it also responds decisively to provocations. This is not the India of the Congress era, where a slap was met with requests for patience and peace... If someone dares slap us today, we will retaliate," he said, adding that under the BJP terrorism and Naxalism had been curtailed.

"The Congress questioned the existence of Lord Ram. They claimed rivers of blood would flow if there was a resolution of the Ram Jannabhoomi movement... Look at their double standards. First, they questioned the existence of Lord Ram, and now they say Lord Ram belongs to everyone," he said.

He compared inheritance tax to *jaziya*. "India will never accept this inheritance tax," said the UP Chief Minister.

## Bihar RJD chief's son quits JD(U) over ties with NDA

Amit Bhelari  
PATNA

Ajit Singh

Claiming that the BJP's agenda has become dangerous for democracy and that the NDA has so far made no major announcement for Bihar, Ajit Singh, 46, the son of RJD State chief Jagdanand Singh, quit the Nitish Kumar-led party on Wednesday. He was serving as the State general secretary-cum-organisational in-charge of the JD(U)'s Buxar unit and is likely to rejoin the RJD.

In his resignation letter to JD(U) State president Umesh Kushwaha, Mr. Ajit said the party's recent decisions were taken without taking into confidence its grassroots workers. He said the leadership always took a stand that was the exact opposite of what the party workers had taken.

"Yet, we felt that Nitish Kumar must have taken the appropriate decision keeping the party and State's interests as top priority. But even after two phases of the election, no major announcement was made by the NDA regarding the interests of Bihar. There was complete chaos in the party and workers on the ground were feeling cheated. So, I had to take

the decision of resigning from the party," he told *The Hindu*.

Impressed with the vision and leadership of Mr. Kumar, Mr. Ajit had quit the RJD and joined the JD(U) in April 2022.

"In the last Lok Sabha polls, the Prime Minister made big announcements for Bihar. This time, no promise was made by him on big issues like giving special category status to the State. On top of it, now BJP leaders are constantly talking about changing the Constitution. So, the BJP's agenda has now become dangerous for democracy and I decided to quit the party," he said.

Mr. Ajit also pointed out that there was a deep concern in society over such issues and it was "morally not right to go among the people and ask votes for the NDA".

## Salman house firing: accused dies after attempt to end life

The Hindu Bureau  
MUMBAI

A 32-year-old man arrested in connection with the firing outside Bollywood actor Salman Khan's house in Mumbai, died in a hospital where he was rushed to after attempting to end his life inside the toilet of the lock-up of Mumbai Police's Crime Branch on Wednesday afternoon.

The accused, Anuj Thapan, was declared dead at the State-run Gokuldas Tejpal Hospital during treatment, the police said.

## CID to probe case

Later in the evening, Thapan's body was sent to the State-run JJ Hospital for in-camera postmortem to be conducted by forensic doctors in the presence of a magistrate. An accidental death case was registered at the Azad Maidan police station in south Mumbai.

The Crime Investigation Department of the Maharashtra police has taken over the probe into the death, and CCTV footage of the lock-up will be examined, officials said.

"One of the accused in the case, Anuj Thapan, had reportedly attempted suicide," Deputy Commissioner of Police Datta Nalwade had confirmed earlier in the day.

According to the Crime Branch, Thapan had provided weapons to the shooters, who had fired five rounds outside the actor's residence in Bandra on April 14. He was arrested from Punjab along with Sonu Subhash Chander, 37, on April 25 and brought to Mumbai.

(With PTI inputs) Those in distress may contact Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health suicide prevention helpline: 011-40769002.

## Himanta involved in multiple scams in Assam, says Priyanka

The Hindu Bureau  
DHUBRI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has a "secret understanding" with All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) chief Badruddin Ajmal to defeat the Congress, party general secretary (organisation) Priyanka Gandhi Vadra claimed on Wednesday.

Seeking support for Congress candidate Rakibul Hussain, Ms. Vadra addressed an election rally at Balajan in Dhubri district where she claimed that "mafia raj" prevails in Assam and alleged that the Chief Minister was "involved in multiple scams".

"BJP and AIUDF have taken local politics to a different level. Both parties have a secret understanding. Assam CM, in an interview, said that Badruddin wanted him to be the CM from his heart," Ms. Vadra said.



Heat and dust: Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra greets supporters at a public rally in Dhubri, Assam, on Wednesday. PTI

The Congress claimed that Mr. Ajmal, a three-time MP from Dhubri, was a businessman who prefers to go with the ruling party.

"Both PM Narendra Modi and the CM are running governments for billions. Modi, Himanta, Ajmal - all are the same. They want elections to be fought on any issue except the people's issues," she said.

Ms. Vadra also raised the sexual abuse allega-

tions against JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna from Karnataka and said Mr. Modi sought votes for him but did not stop him from leaving the country.

She said the PM was silent when the wife of an Army veteran was paraded naked in Manipur and medal-winning sportswomen alleged sexual abuse by a BJP leader.

She further said the Congress fully supported ST status demand by Koch-Rajbongshi community.

## BJP rakes up issue of 'Odia Asmita' as part of its election strategy to corner BJD

Satyasundar Barik  
BHUBANESWAR

Ratcheting up the Bharatiya Janata Party's main poll plank of *Odia Asmita* (pride) in the simultaneous polls to the State Assembly and Lok Sabha next month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and party president J.P. Nadda seem to have begun the party's electoral campaign targeting the rise of V.K. Pandian, the Tamil Nadu-born former IAS officer who is presumed to be the successor of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik.

By raking up issues with apparent reference to the non-Odia origin of Mr. Pandian, who has emerged as the *de facto* chief of BJD in the 2024 polls, Mr. Modi and Mr. Nadda seem to be hitting the BJD where it hurts most.

Hailing from Tamil Nadu, Mr. Pandian is a former IAS officer who served as the private secretary to the Odisha CM. After voluntary retirement from IAS position months ago, he was appointed as the chairman of 5T Transformation, a role equivalent to that of a cabinet minister.

While he doesn't hold any official position within the BJD, he wields considerable influence within the party, with few daring to oppose him. Political analysts remarked that he might take over from ageing Mr. Patnaik, who is largely seen as fighting his last election. The ascent of Mr. Pandian has left seasoned leaders both within and outside the BJD sulking.

Opposition BJP and Congress sensed the opportunity to corner the regional party, which was



Political target: Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik with Chairman of 5T Transformation V.K. Pandian. BISWARANJAN ROUT

founded with an objective to protect Odia pride and prioritise development of Odisha, over the issue of Mr. Pandian. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi too took name of Mr. Pandian in his last public meeting in Odisha.

In a coordinated attack, leaders of the Odisha unit of BJP have long been tar-

getting the former bureaucrat. Every action of Mr. Pandian goes through scrutiny. The BJP was unsparing in its attack when the bureaucrat-turned-BJD leader had allegedly facilitated social media influencer Kamya Jani's visit to the Shree Jagannath Temple, Puri last year. The saffron party had alleged that Ms.

Jani was known for promoting beef consumption and demanded action against Mr. Pandian. Dozens of memes mimicking his Tamil-accent Odia have made it to social networking sites.

In the no-holds-barred campaign, the State unit of BJP recently released a 60-page booklet portraying Mr. Pandian as the face of corruption and mismanagement. The former bureaucrat's photographs featured in 15 separate pages while the image of the Odisha CM appeared only on 10 pages.

## 'Splurging State's fund'

When Mr. Pandian toured all districts as 5T Secretary to receive grievances of people by helicopter in 2023, the BJP had also launched a fierce attack accusing him of wielding extra-con-

stitutional power and splurging the State's fund. The sight of senior ministers and prominent BJD figures clearing traffic on the road to facilitate Mr. Pandian's convoy did not augur well with the public.

Though former Odisha-cadre bureaucrats such as Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav and Member of Parliament Aparajita Sarangi, who hail from other States, are active in the State's politics and members of BJP too, no one is perceived to be so close to taking over Odisha's mantle like Mr. Pandian.

According to top BJP leaders, there was resonance disapproving Mr. Pandian succeeding Odisha CM and people were critical about it. Now, as BJP and BJD are squared up for a direct fight, the

BJP leaders have raked up Odia pride as the poll issue. In an interview to a private TV channel, Mr. Modi said, "the erosion of Odia pride is becoming increasingly apparent and Odia pride is in danger. Odia language is also facing crisis. I don't think Odias will tolerate it for long."

## 'Outsider' tag

In a public meeting near Berhampur on Sunday, Mr. Nadda said there was effort to import an 'outsider' and make him successor in the State. On a satirical note, he asked if Odisha was not left with any of its own leaders to lead the State.

Not bogged down by protracted attack, Mr. Pandian has once again resumed touring different districts as star campaigner of BJD for the election, trying to prove the old adage that

the best form of defence is good offence.

The BJD issued a statement saying, "For thousands of years, proud Odias have always protected the Odia culture very fiercely. Odia Culture does not need a political party like Odisha BJP to protect it. The Odia culture is far greater and bigger than any political party in the world that any party can consider itself so big to think of protecting Odia culture."

"It is important to understand Odisha BJP culture first. Its culture is to get all political leaders who have heinous crimes against them and are habitual criminal offenders to become their leaders and take party tickets to contest elections as seen in 2024," the regional party said.



# Prajwal seeks 7 days to appear before SIT

Siddaramaiah writes to PM seeking his intervention to cancel Prajwal's diplomatic passport and bring back the 'absconding' Hassan MP from abroad; JD(S) leader says 'not in Bengaluru to attend the inquiry' and posts on social media that 'truth will prevail'; he has a return ticket to the city for May 15

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BENGALURU

**J**anata Dal (Secular) MP from Hassan Prajwal Revanna, who is facing a probe by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) for the alleged sex scandal involving him, on Wednesday sought seven more days to appear before the agency. The day also saw Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah writing to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking his intervention to "ensure the swift return of the absconding Member of Parliament to face the full force of the law".

Mr. Siddaramaiah has asked Mr. Modi to cancel the diplomatic passport of

Mr. Prajwal, who has "fled the country", "sensing the impending nature of police case and arrest" in the "serious case of alleged sexual exploitation of innumerable women".

**When and how he left** Prajwal Revanna booked a ticket on a Lufthansa flight from Bengaluru to Germany on April 26, when Hassan went to polls where he is contesting as a BJP-JD(S) National Democratic Alliance candidate in the Lok Sabha election. He flew out of the country at 2 a.m. on April 27 using his diplomatic passport, and he has a return ticket to Bengaluru booked for May 15, sources said. He is believed to be in Munich, Germany.



Congress leader Supriya Shrinete, right, shows photos of Prajwal Revanna at a press conference, in Bengaluru on Wednesday. PTI

Mr. Prajwal was served a notice on Tuesday to present himself for questioning within 24 hours, which he did not on Wednesday. In a first response since the alleged scandal broke, Mr. Prajwal posted on his so-

cial media accounts on Wednesday afternoon, "I am not in Bengaluru to attend the inquiry. I have communicated to the CID Bengaluru through my advocate. Truth will prevail soon," he posted.

Meanwhile, H.D. Revanna, also accused in the case filed by a former maid in their household, is supposed to present himself for questioning before the SIT on Thursday. However, sources said the advocate's response was not authorised and would not stand. The SIT will likely move to issue a look out notice against him very soon, sources said.

**Diplomatic passport** Meanwhile, Mr. Siddaramaiah said it was learnt that Mr. Prajwal was travelling abroad on his diplomatic passport. Mr. Siddaramaiah has urged Mr. Modi to "move the Ministries of External Affairs and Home Affairs to take swift

action to cancel the diplomatic passport of Mr. Prajwal and to take such other steps using diplomatic and police channels of the Government of India as well as international police agencies to ensure the swift return of the absconding Member of Parliament to face the full force of law".

This comes a day after Union Home Minister Amit Shah responded to Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi's statement that while the Prime Minister knew of the movement of all Opposition leaders, "such a criminal was allowed to flee the country". He slammed the State government for the delay in action against Mr. Prajwal.

# No urgent hearing on PIL on victory of BJP Surat candidate: HC

**Press Trust of India**  
AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat High Court has refused to take up for urgent hearing a Public Interest Litigation challenging the uncontested victory of the BJP candidate Mukesh Dalal from the Surat Lok Sabha constituency.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Sunita Agarwal and Justice Aniruddha P. Mayee on Tuesday told the petitioner's lawyer that he should have filed an election petition, and not a PIL. Petitioner Bhavesh Patel sought an urgent hearing, arguing that he was a voter registered in Surat and the Election Commission gave a certificate declaring Mr. Dalal a winner

without conducting polling, depriving him of the option of negative voting.

"If a candidate is elected uncontested, he is also in the same position as a winning candidate. He does not fall in any other different category, and there is no provision in the Representation of the People Act to treat him differently. Don't make it a PIL issue," Chief Justice Agarwal said. As per the law, if a dispute is about the election of a candidate, one has to file an election petition, she said. She will take up the matter when it comes before her in the normal course, and there was no urgency as the petitioner had approached the wrong forum.

# Thiruvananthapuram Mayor in a spot over squabble with bus driver on road

**The Hindu Bureau**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Thiruvananthapuram Mayor has found herself in a spot after she got embroiled in a road rage incident with a Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) bus driver.

Traffic camera footage broadcast by television channels showed Arya Rajendran and her husband, CPI(M) MLA K.M. Sachin Dev, intercepting a KSRTC bus with their car in the city on April 26 and questioning the driver, H.L.



Youth Congress activists stage a protest against Arya Rajendran in Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday. PTI

Yadhu, for 'unruly road behaviour'.

The footage showed the car parked on the zebra crossing in front of the bus

even as the traffic light above blinked green.

The police later arrested Mr. Yadhu for making obscene gestures at the

Mayor and her family. The KSRTC benched him.

However, the police controversially refused to register Mr. Yadhu's complaint that Ms. Rajendran, Mr. Dev and two other co-passengers had interrupted his trip and violated traffic rules.

The memory card of the onboard camera was mysteriously missing. The police were not ruling out a possible cover-up or destruction of evidence. Investigators were tracking down passengers to record their statements.

# Telangana won't tolerate Gujarat hegemony, says Chief Minister Revanth Reddy at rally

**R. Ravikanth Reddy**  
HYDERABAD

Telangana CM A. Revanth Reddy said he will give respect to Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister, but will oppose him tooth and nail if Telangana was insulted by the 'Gujarat hegemony'.

"If the BJP wants to intimidate Telangana people or me, it should remember how the Telangana society opposed the Nizam hegemony and the Razakars," he said in Nizamabad on Wednesday.

Mr. Reddy said he was



Telangana CM A. Revanth Reddy with Nizamabad candidate T. Jeevan Reddy at a rally on Wednesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

served notices by the Delhi Police for questioning the BJP on reservations and its plans to abolish reserva-

tion in the country. "Is this the way Mr. Modi wants to treat his political opponents," he said and asked

the Prime Minister to explain his contribution to Telangana in the last 10 years.

Using the Telugu analogy 'Gadidha Guddu' (Donkey's Egg), which implies that nothing has been done and empty promises, Mr. Reddy, along with Nizamabad candidate T. Jeevan Reddy, showed the campaign symbol with sketches of eggs to the gathering and asked "What did Telangana receive from Mr. Modi?".

The gathering raised the slogan 'Gadidha Guddu'.

## IN BRIEF



### EC orders freezing of 'glass tumbler' symbol in A.P.

The Election Commission (EC) has directed returning officers (ROs) to freeze the "glass tumbler" symbol in the Assembly segments of Lok Sabha constituencies where the Jana Sena Party (JSP) has fielded candidates so that the symbol cannot be allotted to Independents or those of Registered Unrecognized Political Parties. The order came after a submission made by EC's standing counsel to the Andhra Pradesh High Court that the issue would be resolved in 24 hours during the hearing of a plea by JSP.

### Student held for trying to open flight's emergency door

The Bengaluru international airport police arrested a 22-year-old student on Wednesday on for trying to open the emergency exit door of the domestic flight he was travelling in. The accused, Karthik Karan, is from Kolkata. He is a first-time air traveller and had come to Bengaluru on an Indigo flight to meet his friend. The cabin crew noticed Mr. Karan trying to open the emergency exit door and stopped him before lodging a complaint against him. He was handed over to security personnel after the flight landed in Bengaluru.

### Defeat representative of Razakars: Shah in Hyderabad

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said that for the last 40 years, a "representative of the Razakars" has been sitting in Parliament after getting elected from Hyderabad, and the time has come to end this by electing BJP candidate K. Madhavi Latha. Addressing a gathering after a roadshow in Old City on Wednesday, he said, "Whether you are a Hindu or Muslim, I appeal to all voters to cast your vote for the lotus symbol. Out of the 400 seats we are aiming to win to strengthen PM Narendra Modi's hands for a third term, one must be from Hyderabad," he said.

## Summer succour



**Fun time:** With mercury levels rising in Karnataka and many places witnessing extreme heat, tourists were seen flocking to the Vibhuti Falls on Wednesday. The Vibhuti Falls is located in the Western Ghats in Uttara Kannada district. K. MURALI KUMAR

# IIA releases video of the moon occulting brightest star Antares

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BENGALURU

Bengaluru-based Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) has filmed the passing of the moon in front of Antares, a bright red star.

The moon passed in front of Antares on April 27, hiding it for roughly 40 minutes. IIA said this event was visible only from southern India. IIA filmed the event from its Bengaluru campus using a camera on an eight-inch telescope.

While moving in its orbit roughly once a month, the moon will occasionally occult, or hide, bright stars that are behind, and some-

times, even planets. This happens now and then for the star Antares (Jyeshtha), which is the brightest star in the constellation of Scorpius. Since the moon is relatively close to the Earth, such occultations will be visible only from some locations on the globe.

The last such occultation of Antares, which was visible from India, was on February 5 this year.

The next one will be in June 2027. As seen from Bengaluru, Antares disappeared behind the bright side of the gibbous moon around 1.13 a.m. and reappeared at the darker side around 1.53 a.m.

# ISRO finds proof of enhanced possibility of water ice in polar craters of the moon

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BENGALURU

A study by Indian space scientists has found evidence of enhanced possibility of water ice occurrence in the polar craters of the moon.

The study was done by scientists of ISRO's Space Applications Centre (SAC) in collaboration with researchers of IIT Kanpur, University of Southern California, Jet Propulsion Laboratory and IIT (ISM) Dhanbad.

The study suggests that the amount of sub-surface ice in the first couple of metres is about five to eight times larger than the one on the surface in both



This picture, taken by Chandrayaan-1's terrain mapping camera on November 15, 2008, shows craters in the moon's polar region. ISRO

poles. As such, drilling on the moon to sample or excavate that ice will be primordial for future missions and long-term human presence. Moreover, the study

suggests that the extent of water ice in the northern polar region is twice that in the southern polar region.

The study confirms the hypothesis that the primary source of sub-surface

water ice in the lunar poles is out-gassing during volcanism in the Imbrian period. The results also conclude that the distribution of water ice is likely governed by mare volcanism and preferential impact cratering.

Accurate knowledge of the distribution and depth of water ice occurrence in the lunar poles, as presented in the investigation, is crucial for constraining the uncertainties in selecting future landing and sampling sites for missions aimed at exploring and characterising lunar volatiles. This study is crucial for supporting ISRO's future in-situ volatile exploration plans on the moon.



## Israel's Likud among foreign parties to witness election

**Kallol Bhattacharjee**  
NEW DELHI

Representatives of 18 political parties from 10 countries have arrived in India on the invitation of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to witness the Lok Sabha election. This is the first time that so many parties have been invited by the BJP that had earlier hosted heads of missions stationed in India and political parties from the neighbourhood. The delegation includes representatives of Israel's ruling Likud party, though no Arab political party was on the list shared by the BJP.

Israel's Likud party is at the centre stage of global politics because of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's campaign against the Gaza Strip. India's official position supports a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian crisis.

The current team being hosted by the BJP includes the Liberal Party of Australia, Likud party of Israel, Awami League of Bangladesh, Uganda's National Resistance Movement, Tanzania's Chama Cha Mapinduzi and Russia's United Russia Party.

Political parties from Sri Lanka that have sent delegates for the visit are Podujana Peramuna and the Un-

**Likud party is at the centre stage of global politics because of Netanyahu's campaign on the Gaza Strip**

ited National Party. From Nepal, the Nepali Congress is among the visitors along with the Janamat Party and Rashtriya Swatantra Party.

The BJP, that often has a combative line on the Communist movement in India, has invited three Communist parties - Communist Party of Vietnam, Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). From Mauritius, Militant Socialist Movement, Mauritius Labour Party, Mauritian Militant Movement and Parti Mauricien Social Democrite are part of the visiting delegation.

On Wednesday, BJP president J.P. Nadda and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met the delegation at the party headquarters.

India does not have a policy of hosting observers during the election but visitors from other countries are known to fly in during the poll season to experience the unique election system of India.

## Manipur groups to mark one year of ethnic conflict

Kuki-Zo organisation calls for shutdown in Churachandpur on May 3, marking the day as one of 'remembrance' for their fallen; Meitei groups appeal to track down 35 of their missing people

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

**K**uki-Zo and Meitei civil society organisations in Manipur have planned to hold events on Friday to mark one year of the ethnic conflict in the State, though in completely different terms.

While the Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF) in Churachandpur and the Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM), apex body of Kuki tribes in the State, are marking the day as one of "remembrance" for their fallen and for "awakening" of their people, the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), a valley-based civil society organisation, is observing it as "the day illegal immigrants backed by narco-terrorists began their aggression", making an appeal to track down over 35 of their people who are still missing.

The ethnic conflict between the valley-based Meitei people and the hills-based Kuki-Zo tribal communities began on May 3, 2023 amid rising tensions over an order of the Manipur High Court, which di-



**Temporary home:** A relief camp for internally displaced people from the Meitei ethnic group on April 27, in Manipur. GETTY IMAGES

rected the State government to consider the inclusion of the Meiteis on the Scheduled Tribes list.

In the one year since, over 220 people have been killed in the conflict, thousands of people injured, and tens of thousands displaced, many of them living in relief camps within the State and outside.

The ITLF, Churachandpur on Wednesday issued a public appeal calling for a district-wide shutdown on Friday.

The ITLF Committee, which issued the appeal, said, "As part of this solemn occasion, we urge all members of the Kuki-Zo community to hoist a black flag on every household as a mark of remembrance

and solidarity. Additionally all business establishments, institutions, and markets are requested to remain closed on this day as a sign of respect and homage to our fallen heroes."

"Let us come together as one community to reflect on our journey, reaffirm our oneness, and strengthen our resolve towards a brighter future for the Kuki-Zo people," it added.

Leaders of Kuki-Zo civil society organisations in Kangpokpi district told *The Hindu* that a similar shutdown might be observed across the district on Friday. "There will be an event to honour our fallen at the Martyrs' Cemetery

in Phaijang and later in the evening we will be lighting candles for them as well," Janghoulun Haokip, of the KIM in Kangpokpi, said.

In Churachandpur too, the ITLF has planned a remembrance event to be held at the "Wall of Remembrance" near the DC Office in the district.

The KIM has also passed a resolution to mark May 3 as the "Kuki-Zo Awakening Day".

"It will be remembered as a day of great awakening for the Kuki-Zo people from the ruins of the systemic persecution and oppression of our people under the Manipur State government towards revolutionary transformation of our land and our society," the KIM in Churachandpur had said in a public appeal issued last week.

Dhananjay Singh, assistant media coordinator for the COCOMI in the Imphal Valley, said that an event would be held at Shumang Lila Sanglen in Imphal East, where an appeal will be made to track down the over 35 Meitei people who are reported to have gone missing in the course of the conflict.

## Centre asks States not to procure CCTVs from dubious sellers

**Vijaita Singh**  
**Aroon Deep**  
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry has asked all States and government departments to avoid procuring CCTVs, its allied solution, and hardware from suppliers who have a "history of security and data breaches".

The memorandum comes in the wake of a series of guidelines issued by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeiTY) since March after various Ministries raised concerns regarding the security implications associated with CCTVs and other Internet of Things (IoT) devices. In a March 11 advisory, MeiTY said that "various incidents have also been reported due to security flaw in the surveillance cameras".

The advisory, titled "Threat of Information Leakage through CCTV/Video Surveillance system (VSS)/Digital Video Recorders (Network Video Recorders)", said that "while surveillance technologies undoubtedly offer a range of benefits and are valuable tools for monitoring and security, they also raise certain concerns and risks. Some of the growing risks associated with CCTV systems include data se-

curity, privacy breach, hacking and cyber-attack etc".

On March 6, MeiTY amended the public procurement order for CCTVs and video surveillance systems and on April 9 amended the Electronics and Information Technology Goods (Requirement of Compulsory Registration) Order, 2021 to tighten the norms.

**'Follow Indian norms'** While MeiTY did not mention any specific brands of CCTV cameras to avoid in its March memorandum, it urged States to procure cameras made in India, or equipment that was certified in accordance with norms set by the Bureau of Indian Standards.

However, last March, the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-in) flagged "vulnerabilities" in some foreign firms' equipment. These are Chinese firms Hikvision, Milesight and Dahua; and Germany-headquartered Mobotix, ABUS and Bosch.

The MeiTY advisory also suggested restricting physical access to the CCTV control room and equipment and to ensure all communication between cameras and viewing devices is encrypted.

## April temperatures in east and south India posted record highs; heatwaves to prevail

**Jacob Koshy**  
NEW DELHI

The searing April temperatures were the highest over eastern and northeastern India and the second highest over south India since 1901, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said in a press conference on Wednesday.

These record-breaking temperatures were due to the combined effect of a prevailing El Nino and a weather system - called an "anticyclone" - that blocked moisture-laden sea breeze from the Bay of Bengal, which in other years brought rainfall and eased temperatures, said M. Mohapatra, Director-General, IMD.

Average temperatures over eastern and north-eastern India were 28.1 degrees Celsius and maximum temperatures at 34 degrees Celsius, both nearly or two degrees above what is typical for the month.

**Anomalous increase** Some places also witnessed anomalous increases in temperature; for instance, Panagarh in West Bengal recorded 45.6 degrees Celsius, which was 10 degrees above normal, and Kalaikunda, also in West Bengal, registered 47.2 degrees Celsius - 10.4 degrees above normal.

In southern peninsular India, average temperatures were as high as 37.25



**Small respite:** A man quenches his thirst on a hot summer day near the Light house in Chennai on Tuesday. M. SRINATH

degrees Celsius or about 1.35 degrees above normal. This was only slightly below the 37.57 degrees Celsius recorded in 2016 - the all-time high since 1901.

Odisha saw as many as 18 heatwave days and West Bengal 16, while Karnata-

ka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala saw eight, seven and five days, respectively. India's 36 meteorological subdivisions - as defined by the IMD for weather and climate-based analysis - cumulatively see 71 heatwave days on average dur-

ing April. This April, they saw 118 - the third highest since 2010. April 2022 saw 198 heatwave days and April 2010 saw 337 such days.

In contrast, northwestern India did not see any heatwave day on account of regular incursions of "western disturbances" which are spells of rain that originate from Central Asia.

The hot conditions are likely to persist through most of May over most of India and this time, northwestern States and Union Territories such as Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi are also expected to register more than their usual quota of heatwaves, the agency predicted.

## BJP video removed from Instagram on hate speech complaint

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

A BJP video posted from its official handle @bjp4india on Instagram on April 30 reiterating Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks on Muslims was taken down from the platform after many users reported the clip for hate speech. The video repeats the BJP's rhetoric on the Congress "empowering people who belong to the very same community [of] invaders, terrorists, robbers and thieves [who] used to loot all our treasures."

The voice-over says, "If Congress comes to power, it will snatch all the money and wealth from non-Mus-

lims and distribute them among Muslims." The video garnered over one lakh likes before being taken down.

Users who reported the clip received a notification from Instagram saying that the video had already been removed. It is unclear whether the animated clip was removed by the BJP itself or by Instagram's moderation team. A spokesperson for the firm's parent Meta was not immediately available for comment.

On top of the rhetoric, the video featured Congress leader Rahul Gandhi holding what appeared to be the party's election manifesto with crescent-and-star iconography.

## Plea in SC for probe panel for vaccine's 'risk factors'

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The controversy over the safety aspects of the Covishield vaccine reached the Supreme Court on Wednesday with a petition filed by advocate Vishal Tiwari seeking the constitution of an expert medical panel to study the risk factors.

The plea pointed out that AstraZeneca, the company which developed the vaccine, has said in a U.K. court that its AZD1222 vaccine against COVID-19, which was made under licence at the Serum Institute of India as Covishield, could cause low platelet counts and formation of blood clots in rare cases.

## SC reserves verdict on community wealth query

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

A nine-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court reserved judgment on Wednesday on the question whether material resources created by individual human labour would constitute the resources of the community.

The hearing by a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud fundamentally centered on the contours of Article 39(b) of the Constitution, including whether privately-owned resources could be considered as "material resources of the community".

Attorney General (A-G) R. Venkataramani, appearing for the Union of India, submitted that "if it goes beyond the boundary of private consumption, there is an element of the community having a call on the resource".

## 'Not facing a tough fight... this is not my last poll'

It will be a one-sided contest with victory for BJP, says Union Minister contesting from Ratnagiri-Sindhudurg constituency in Maharashtra; he says the people are ready to support projects like refinery in Barsu and the nuclear power plant in Jaitapur

**INTERVIEW**

**Narayan Rane**

**Ateeq Shaikh**

**U**nion Minister for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Narayan Rane is contesting the Lok Sabha election as a BJP candidate from the Ratnagiri-Sindhudurg constituency in Maharashtra. He is pitted against Shiv Sena (UBT) leader and two-time MP Vinayak Raut.

Mr. Rane spoke about the issues he is focusing on in this poll. Edited excerpts:

**You are contesting elections after 10 years.**

But I have been a Rajya Sabha MP and a Minister as well. I am not sitting idle.

**Your son Nilesch Rane had contested the seat**

previously.

Yes, and he became an MP once [in 2009].

**Given that Nilesch lost in the 2014 and 2019 polls, are you facing a tough fight this time?**

It will be a one-sided contest with victory for the BJP. I don't have a tough fight here.

**In the Konkan region, one big issue is unemployment and the other is the farm crisis.**

There is definitely poverty here, but not like that in Marathwada or Khandesh. This is a coastal area, so a lot of fishing activity goes on here. Mango, cashew, jackfruit... so many fruits are exported from here. Today's youth are in this business.

We want to bring the industry here. About 90% of the children are educated.



They study here and migrate to Mumbai or Pune, which should not happen. They should stay back. This is our aim.

**There have been protests against projects such as the refinery in Barsu and the nuclear power plant in Jaitapur.**

It is only Vinayak Raut and his leader Uddhav Thackeray who are opposing it. People are ready to support these projects.

**Does Mr. Thackeray have any sympathy**

among voters?

What has Uddhavji done? There are corruption charges against him for work done during the pandemic. Why should he get sympathy? He does not even follow Balasaheb's [Thackeray] ideology. Balasaheb protected Hindutva all his life. To become CM, he [Uddhav] betrayed [the BJP] and went along with Sharad Pawar and the Congress. He is a liar, abuses people, and a bad person. You people [the media] have been drawing sympathy towards him.

**The Shiv Sena (UBT) has also promised to set up major projects.**

How many MPs does it have? Five. After this election how many will it have? Zero. How will they come to power?

**What are the local and national issues you are**

focusing on?

International, national, all issues. Modi ji has said we have to win over 400 seats to develop India. The Indian economy should stand third in the world after the U.S. and China. We are attempting to do this.

**Do you feel it took a lot of time to announce your candidature?**

No. I was told to start working [on my campaign] and I did so 15 days before my name was announced.

**You have said in some interviews that this is your last election.**

No, I never said that. Some journalists said it.

**Will you stand as a candidate again?**

Why should I talk about the future? We'll talk about it when the time comes.

## Vice-Admiral Krishna Swaminathan is now Vice-Chief of Navy

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Vice-Admiral Krishna Swaminathan on Wednesday took charge as Vice-Chief of the Indian Navy. He was earlier serving as the Chief of Personnel.

In the Indian Air Force (IAF), Air Marshal Nagesh Kapoor assumed the post of Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief (AOC-in-C) of the Training Command of the IAF in Bengaluru.

Vice-Admiral Swaminathan was commissioned into the Navy on July 1, 1987 and is a specialist in communication and electronic warfare. On assuming charge, he paid homage at the National War Memorial and later inspected a Guard of Honour on South Block lawns.

**Extensive career** He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Khadakvasla; the Joint Ser-



Vice-Adm Krishna Swaminathan

vices Command and Staff College, Shrivernham, U.K.; the College of Naval Warfare, Karanja; and the United States Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, U.S.

He has held several key operational, staff and training appointments in his naval career, including the command of missile vessels *INS Vidyut* and *INS Vinash*; the missile corvette *INS Kulkish*; the guided missile destroyer *INS Mysore* and the aircraft carrier *INS Vikramaditya*, the Navy said.



# ELECTIONS 2024



## Sajad Lone files papers from Baramulla

J&K Peoples Conference (JKPC) chief Sajad Gani Lone on Wednesday filed his nomination papers for the Baramulla Lok Sabha seat and pledged to fight for "equal rights and bringing J&K at par with other States of India". Mr. Lone, who has managed a pre-poll alliance

with the J&K Apni Party and support of many other smaller players like Yasir Reshi, Safina Beig and Nizam-ud-Din Bhat, is a strong contender against the National Conference's Omar Abdullah. Mr. Lone's party bagged 1.03 lakh votes against the NC's 1.33 lakh in the 2019 Lok Sabha election. The Peoples Democratic Party has fielded Fayyaz Mir, a former Rajya Sabha member, as its candidate. Mr. Lone targeted Mr. Abdullah and the INDIA bloc in his address after filing the nomination papers.



After filing papers, Sajad Lone targeted Omar Abdullah and the INDIA bloc. FILE PHOTO

## Mufti, Omar raise questions over poll delay

National Conference (NC) vice-president Omar Abdullah and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chief Mehbooba Mufti on Wednesday raised questions about the Election Commission's move to delay the election in Anantnag-Rajouri, and alleged "it was aimed at manipulating the

voting pattern". "We are seeing a conspiracy [in the EC move]. The people who are not participating in the election were talking about postponing it. The BJP and J&K People's Conference were talking. It is the conspiracy of the BJP," Mr. Abdullah said. "The authorities deliberately delayed elections to manipulate voters in favour of BJP allies and frighten the people not to exercise their franchise against the ongoing onslaught of J&K's identity and resources," Ms. Mufti said.



Today, Cong. is conspiring to break the quota of SCs, STs and OBCs. The Mahagathbandhan is actually a Mahasamasya (problem) of the country  
YOGI ADITYANATH  
Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister

## Television actor Rupali Ganguly joins the BJP

TV actor Rupali Ganguly, famous for her roles in *Sarabhai vs Sarabhai* and *Anupamaa*, joined the BJP on Wednesday. Her entry into the party ahead of the third phase of the Lok Sabha election is being seen as part of the BJP's outreach to women.



Was Modi ignorant about it...absolutely not. He [Mr. Modi] knew exactly who this man [Prajwal] is, he knew exactly what he had done  
SUPRIYA SHRINATE  
Congress Spokesperson



Key region: Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalit Prasad has represented Madhepura Lok Sabha constituency twice, in 1998 and 2004. PTI

## It's a Yadav vs Yadav contest in flood-prone Madhepura

Amarnath Tewary  
MADHEPURA

It's a typical April day: the sun blazes out of a blank sky and scorching heat hammers the earth, leaving the roads deserted, silencing even the birds. Magan Yadav of Bhelwa-Ramnagar village in the Madhepura Lok Sabha constituency is busy chopping fodder for his three buffaloes. Some things never change.

"Only Yadavs win from Madhepura seat and it will be the same this time as well, whether it's the incumbent MP or the Opposition's candidate," he says.

Madhepura, which lies in the flood-prone Kosi river valley, is known as the 'Yadavland of Bihar'; only candidates from the Yadav caste have been able to win this Lok Sabha seat since 1968. Of the constituency's more than 14 lakh voters, five lakh are Yadavs, followed by nearly two lakh Muslims and 1.5 lakh Rajput voters. A popular adage says, "Rome Pope ka, Madhepura Gope ka (what Rome is to the Pope, Madhepura is to the Yadav)"

### Socialist past

The first of those influential Yadavs was none other than B.P. Mandal, who chaired the Second Backward Class Commission. Popularly known as the Mandal Commission, its recommendations were implemented by the then-V.P. Singh government at the Centre in 1990, a pivotal decision that led to the emergence of formidable regional parties in Bihar and neighbouring Uttar Pradesh. Decades earlier, Mr. Mandal, who hailed from an influential Yadav family of Murho village, was elected MP from Madhepura twice, in 1968 and 1977; he also served as the seventh Chief Minister of Bihar during a 30-day period in 1968.

Later, veteran socialist leader Sharad Yadav won four times, in 1991, 1996, 1999, and 2009, though he also lost four times from Madhepura, in 1998, 2004, 2014, and 2019. Rashtriya Janata Dal chief Lalit Prasad represented the constituency twice, in 1998 and 2004.

Madhepura has also been a bastion for socialist leaders, including Karpoori Thakur and Kirai Musahar, who represented the undivided Madhepura seat in 1952 and 1967.

In the shade of a bamboo grove at Jhitkia village, Sahyog Yadav, Sudan Yadav, and Janardan Yadav are playing cards as a tractor loaded with cattle fodder idles on the road. "The Madhepura seat result may surprise you," they say. No matter what surprises lie in store, however, the man left standing at the end of the day will still be a Yadav.

This time the incumbent NDA MP Dinesh Chandra Yadav of the Janata Dal(U) is pitted against mahagathbandhan candidate Kumar Chandradeep Yadav of the RJD, an English professor in a Patna college, but also son of former Madhepura MP Ramendra Kumar Yadav 'Ravi'.

After delimitation in 2008, the Madhepura seat includes six Assembly constituencies: Madhepura, Alamganj, and Bihariganj in Madhepura district, and Sonbarsa, Saharsa, and Mahishi in the neighboring Saharsa district. Of the six, JD(U) MLAs represent four Assembly segments while the RJD and the BJP represent one each. Madhepura goes to the polls on May 7.

## 'Our candidates are very good, and we have good coordination among allies'

The Maharashtra Chief Minister says NDA is in prime position to win and that the work of the Mahayuti government in the State has been exemplary; he adds that there are no differences between his Sena faction and BJP, but the Opposition MVA is facing rebel candidates in various seats

### INTERVIEW

## Eknath Shinde

Nistula Hebbar

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde is facing his first big electoral test after splitting the Shiv Sena and forming a new government in the State. He speaks on his government, the NDA, and poll prospects. Excerpts:

**The Maharashtra poll is being seen as the most challenging for the NDA among all States.**

Not at all, we are in prime position, we are winning all five seats in the first phase. In the past two years, the kind of work that our Mahayuti government has done in reviving projects such as the Metro, the Nagpur-Mumbai Samriddhi Express, the Atal Setu, the Jalyukta Shivir, has been exemplary, especially looking at how all work was at a stop under the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government. The work done by Prime Minister [Narendra] Modi in his 10 years at the helm was not seen before, even [during] 60 years under the Congress.

**Politically, however, there have been unprecedented political**

**alliances in Maharashtra that confuse the situation.**

It is true that nobody could have dreamt before 2019 that the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) and the Congress could come together. The ideology of our leader, the late Balasaheb Thackeray, was against the Congress ideology, and he had even said that if it ever happened that the Sena moved towards the Congress, he would disband the party itself. But the opposite happened, and the Shiv Sena (UBT) formed a government with them, only with the aim of [Uddhav Thackeray] becoming Chief Minister, and solely for the purpose of fulfilling a personal ambition.

**But your splitting the party has also elicited sympathy for Uddhav Thackeray...**

Is betraying your party colleagues and abandoning your ideology going to elicit sympathy from the people? The way the Shiv Sena (UBT) completely gave up the ideology of Balasaheb Thackerayji, to give up Hindutva, will this not be seen by the people as a betrayal? What is the Shiv Sena's ideology as enunciated by Balasaheb Thackerayji? It is Hindutva, 80% social work, 20%



politics, which has now been forgotten by the Shiv Sena (UBT), so how will they gain people's sympathy? People want development, and you [referring to Uddhav Thackeray] ran the government, or tried to, from home. Who will people vote for, those who work or those who sit at home?

**It was suggested that the MVA would have more trouble finalising its list, but it is the Mahayuti list that has been delayed.**

Only where the chances of victory are high, there are competitive claims. Our candidates are very good and we have good coordination among our allies. Look at the MVA; despite early declaration, there are many rebel candidates in different seats.

**It appears that the addition of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP-Ajit Pawar**

**faction) has lessened the BJP's dependence on your party.**

Look, we have an ideological alliance; the Shiv Sena and the BJP are both committed to the same ideals, and our alliance is more than a quarter century old. Ajit Pawarji also saw Prime Minister Modi's work and came over to our side. There is something to be said for political adjustment, and Shiv Sena and BJP have no differences.

**Mumbai is India's premier commercial city but the industry was spooked because of certain incidents such as the presence of a bomb outside a prominent industrialist's house. Has any outreach been made to improve the mood of the industry?**

It is true. If bombs are placed outside the residence of an industrialist or

a *morcha* is taken out against him/her, why would industrialists not fear to be here? But that was under the MVA government, and we have done much to restore the faith of industry as no one can dare to carry out such acts; law and order is restored; incentives are being given to industry. We have huge potential and connectivity for industry to thrive.

**But Foxconn-Vedanta went out of Maharashtra under your regime...**

That happened when we had barely been two months into government. You need more time than that to prepare. But in the past two years, we have signed MoUs worth ₹5 lakh crore in two [World Economic Forums in] Davos. Industry is coming to Maharashtra, as they have an assurance that they will be welcomed and treated well.

**The knotty question of Maratha reservations hovers over the polls, with some in your alliance also worried that the OBC share of the pie may shrink if Marathas are given reservations.**

As a government, I and both the Deputy Chief Ministers are committed to

providing reservations for Marathas and we have cleared the way for 10% reservations by calling a special session of the Assembly as well. Now some people, who had never provided this reservation when they had the chance, and only did politics in the name of Marathas, have gone to court. We, on our part, have given the reservations and the courts have not granted any stay on that till now. This has all been done without hurting the interest of any other groups; we want the support of all groups - Maratha, OBC, SC/ST, Dhangar, minorities - who all live in Maharashtra.

**Keeping on the topic of reservations, it's being said that the BJP's slogan of "400 paar" is raising fears that such a majority will be used to do away with reservations and therefore there is low polling as well.**

This is all Opposition propaganda. Mr. Modi has made it very clear that reservations are here to stay. As for low polling, there is a heat wave on as well. Despite that, polling hasn't gone below 50% in any State so far. Rahul Gandhi is a fine one to talk of low polling when he takes off for cooler climes as soon as the heat hits.

## Hindutva and caste calculations overtake issues of drought and backwardness in north Karnataka

Girish Pattanashetti  
HUBBALLI

Under a scorching sun and amid a severe drought, 14 constituencies in northern and central Karnataka are going to the polls on May 7. Complaints about regional imbalances and unkept promises - especially related to irrigation projects - are an undercurrent, though constantly overshadowed by communal narratives and a blame game between parties in the last leg of the campaign.

The emergence of right-wing activism in the aftermath of the 1992 Idgah riots in Hubballi and the subsequent political realignment in the region, with members of the Janata Parivar shifting to the saffron party, has severely affected the Congress's prospects in the region. The party's efforts to regain its glory have not yielded big results yet.

In the 2004, 2009, and 2014 elections, the Congress never got more than three seats out of the total 14. Despite aligning with



In the spotlight: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge addressing a rally at Afzalpur in Kalaburgi district. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the Janata Dal(S) in 2019, the Congress was washed out in the region, with the BJP making a clean sweep. Under the changed political equations, the JD(S) has tied up with the BJP this time around, but is not contesting any seats in this region.

The BJP candidates are heavily dependent on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's popularity and, in certain pockets, the Hindutva agenda. The Congress is trying to minimise its effect by using its "new guarantee card" and highlighting the "meagre drought relief" from the Centre for which it had to

approach the Supreme Court.

### New names, old issues

North Karnataka was broadly categorised into Hyderabad Karnataka and Bombay (Mumbai) Karnataka, now renamed Kalyana Karnataka and Kittur Karnataka, respectively. The change in name has not changed the issues. For instance, out of 39 taluks across Karnataka identified as "most backward" by the D.M. Najundappa Committee report on regional imbalances, 26 are from north Karnataka. The situation in these taluks has not changed much. Impor-

tant issues, such as the promise of making the Upper Krishna Project a national project, still remain a dream.

A host of national- and State-level leaders have addressed scores of rallies across this region, but very few have spoken about the debilitating drought and water scarcity that the region has been suffering from since the 2022 kharif season. Any debate on the lack of industries or other means of employment in north Karnataka, compared with the south, is also not to be heard.

The issues that are being raised instead, are the castes and sub-castes of candidates, the murder of student Neha Hiremath on a college campus in Hubballi, and the Bengaluru cafe blast case, used to speak of wider threats to national security. Over the past few days, though the JD(S) is not a big force to reckon with in most parts of north Karnataka, the alleged sex scandal involving party leader Prajwal Revanna has somewhat shift-

ed focus from the Neha Hiremath murder.

Under pressure to make inroads into these constituencies which have remained with the BJP, the Congress has fielded many children and relatives of Ministers in this election.

Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge has taken on the task of getting his son-in-law Radhakrishnan Doddamani elected from his home constituency of Kalaburgi.

Two ex-Chief Ministers - Jagadish Shettar and Basavaraj Bommai - are contesting Lok Sabha elections for the first time on BJP ticket. Union Minister Pralhad Joshi is striving for reelection and so are former Union Minister Ramesh Jigajinagi and P.C. Gaddigoudar, MP. Another former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa is under pressure to get his son B.Y. Raghavendra elected, amid a rebellion by his one-time party colleague K.S. Eshwarappa.

(With inputs from Rishikesh Bahadur Desai and Kumar Buradikatti)

## RJD leader rewinds PM's old speeches at poll rally

Amit Bhelari  
PATNA

Rashtriya Janata Dal leader and former Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav has taunted Prime Minister Narendra Modi by playing an audio clip of the PM's old speeches and the promises made during meetings in the past in Bihar.

Playing the recording in front of a large gathering during an election rally in Madhubani on Tuesday, Mr. Yadav asserted that a leader of high stature like the PM should not speak such lies in public life.

On Wednesday, Mr. Yadav posted a message on X saying: "Yesterday in the election meeting, a friend brought it to me. What is in it? You should also listen to it and make others listen. The public is now listening to it and telling others to listen to the promises made by the Prime Minister in the past 10 years. So many lies have been told and now it is hard to rearrange it."



## INBRIEF



## Shinde's Sena fields Shrikant Shinde from Kalyan LS seat

The Shiv Sena (Shinde faction) has fielded Shrikant Shinde, MP and Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's son, from the Kalyan Lok Sabha constituency. The BJP had shown interest in the seat for former Minister Ganesh Naik or his son former MP Sanjeev Naik. Former Thane Mayor Naresh Mhaske has been nominated as the party's contender for the Thane seat against Rajan Vichare, MP, of the Shiv Sena (UBT). The party has fielded Hemant Godse from Nashik. The announcement of Mr. Shrikant's nomination as a candidate of the *Mahayuti* was made last month by Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis.

## Modi's photograph removed from CoWIN certificates

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's photo has been removed from CoWIN certificates issued for COVID-19 vaccinations. The certificates, issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, have long borne images of Mr. Modi, with a quote saying, "Together, India will defeat COVID-19." The quote remains, with an attribution to the Prime Minister, without his name. The removal was pointed out by social media users on Wednesday. Mr. Modi's photos were also summarily taken down from all government websites when the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) came into force ahead of the election.

## Trinamool removes Kunal Ghosh from key party post

The Trinamool Congress on Wednesday removed Kunal Ghosh from the post of general secretary, hours after he was seen sharing the stage with the BJP's Kolkata North candidate, Tapas Roy, at an apolitical event in the city. "Kunal Ghosh has been expressing views that don't align with the party... Mr. Ghosh was previously relieved from his role as party spokesperson. Now he has been removed from the position of general secretary of the State organisation," the party said in a statement. The statement, signed by Rajya Sabha member Derek O'Brien, asked media outlets not to conflate Mr. Ghosh's views with those of the party, and warned that such actions might invite legal action.

## Vistara aircraft returns after getting hit by hailstorm

A Delhi-bound Vistara flight from Bhubaneswar was forced to return to the airport immediately after takeoff as it encountered a hailstorm resulting in cracks in its windshield and minor damage to the nose of the plane. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has ordered an inquiry into the incident. "The crew was taking a deviation when it was hit by hailstorm. The investigation is in progress," a DGCA official said. Confirming the incident, Vistara said the pilots decided to turn back and the aircraft landed safely at Biju Patnaik International Airport, Bhubaneswar. The airline arranged an alternate aircraft for the passengers to reach New Delhi.

## PM throws challenge at Cong. for its stand on Muslim quota

Modi launches LS campaign in his home State of Gujarat; tells public 'if you have two buffaloes, Congress will take away one if voted to power' in reference to alleged proposal of inheritance tax

The Hindu Bureau  
GANDHINAGAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday asked the Congress to give in writing to the people of the country that it would not introduce religion-based reservations. He also asked the grand old party to take a pledge that it would not try to change the Constitution.

Mr. Modi slammed the Opposition party for the idea of "imposing inheritance tax", and told people at an election rally in Gujarat's Banaskantha that "if you have two buffaloes, Congress will take away one if voted to power".

"This is my challenge to the Congress *shehzada* (prince, a reference to Rahul Gandhi), his party, and supporters. If they have the courage, let them announce and give it in writing that they will never offer reservations based on religion. They should pledge to not tamper with the Constitution," the PM



On home turf: Prime Minister Narendra Modi waves to people at an election rally in Himmatnagar, Gujarat on Wednesday. VIJAY SONEJI

said as he launched his electoral campaign in his home State of Gujarat on the State's foundation day.

**Dairy farming mainstay** Mr. Modi launched the campaign from Banaskantha where Congress candidate Geniben Thakor has been targeting the Banas Dairy and its chairman and BJP leader Shankar Chaudhary, whose protegee Rekha Chaudhary is the BJP candidate from the north Gujarat seat where dairy farming

as a livelihood is a mainstay for rural farmers.

The PM addressed two rallies — at Deesa in Banaskantha, and at Himmatnagar in Sabarkantha, a neighbouring district, where dairy farming is also a major source of income and livelihood for rural communities.

"Recently, a Congress leader from abroad (referring to Sam Pitroda) suggested a proposal where more than half of your inheritance will be taken

away from you and given to the government. A 55% inheritance tax will be imposed. For example, if you have 10 acres of land and you want to hand it over to your children; half of it will be taken over by the government. Similarly, if you have two buffaloes and want to leave them for your children, one will be taken away by the government if Congress is voted to power," he said, continuing his vitriolic attack on the Opposition party.

He repeated his charges against the Congress regarding spreading fake videos to target the BJP government, its plans to allow religion-based quota and curtailing the existing reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs and how its government was timid in fighting terrorism. Mr. Modi also said that as long as he was alive, he would not allow religion-based quotas in the country. "The party which ruled the country for 60 years has become a fake factory," Modi said.

## Decision on Amethi, Rae Bareilly candidates in 24 hours: Congress

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Maintaining suspense over their candidates for the Amethi and Rae Bareilly Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh, Congress general secretary (communication) Jairam Ramesh on Wednesday said party president Mallikarjun Kharge would finalise the candidates for the two seats, and a decision would be in place in 24 hours.

"The Congress Election Committee empowered Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge to decide the candidates for Amethi and Rae Bareilly and he will take the decision soon. You will know in the next 24 hours," Mr. Ramesh said at a press conference in Delhi.

On why there was a delay in taking a decision and if the Congress was "scared" of fielding former Congress president Rahul Gandhi and general secretary Priyanka Gandhi from those seats, Mr. Ramesh said: "There is no delay. Has the BJP announced its candidates in Rae Bareilly? Smriti Irani is a sitting MP.

Nobody is scared, discussions are ongoing. There is no delay. There is time till May 3."

Mr. Gandhi had earlier said that he would follow "whatever order" he got from the party.

At its April 27 meeting, the Central Election Committee, heeding the suggestion of the party's Uttar Pradesh unit, strongly urged the Gandhi siblings to contest from the two seats, though it left the final decision to Mr. Kharge.

May 3 is the last day for filing nominations for the two seats that go to the polls in the fifth phase of the Lok Sabha election on May 20.

Various conclusions are being reached based on Mr. Gandhi and Ms. Vardra's schedule for the next two days. On May 3, Mr. Gandhi is scheduled to address a rally in Pune.

In 2019, Mr. Gandhi lost the Amethi seat that he had been representing for 15 years to Ms. Irani, who filed her nomination papers on Monday. Mr. Gandhi is also in the race from Wayanad, which went to the polls on April 26.

## EC bars KCR from campaigning for 48 hours over speech

M. Rajeev  
HYDRABAD

The Election Commission (EC) has barred Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) president K. Chandrashekar Rao from holding any public meetings, rallies, shows, and interviews as well as making "public utterances" in print, electronic, and social media for a period of 48 hours starting 8 p.m. on Wednesday.

The EC strongly condemned the statement made by him at a press conference in Sircilla on April 5 and reprimanded the BRS president for his misconduct. Accordingly, it barred Mr. Rao from holding public meetings and other election-related activities under Article 324 of the Constitution.

The poll body referred to a complaint filed by Congress State vice-president G. Niranjana, alleging that the BRS president violated the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) by making de-



K. Chandrashekar Rao

rogatory and objectionable comments against the party. It quoted Mr. Rao abusing Congress leaders.

The Commission said the MCC provides that "criticism of other political parties, when made, shall be confined to their policies and programme, past record and work. Parties and candidates shall refrain from criticism of all aspects of private life, not connected with public activities of the leaders or workers of other parties. Criticism of other parties and their workers based on unverified allegations or distortion shall be avoided."

## EC brings out protocol on symbol loading units as mandated by top court

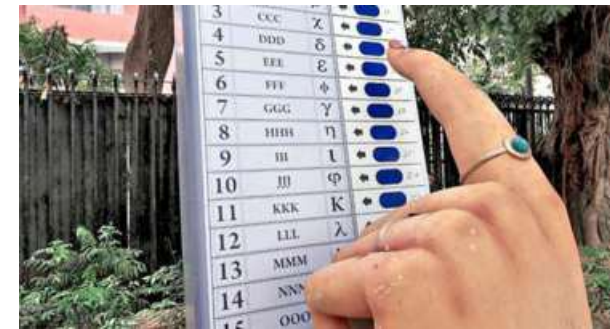
The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on Wednesday brought out a detailed protocol for the handling and storage of symbol loading units (SLU) in compliance with the Supreme Court's order of April 26.

The top court issued directions to seal and store the SLUs in a container, and store them in a strongroom along with the electronic voting machines (EVMs) for at least 45 days after the declaration of results.

The SLU uploads the name and symbol of the candidates contesting a particular seat on Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) or paper trail machines.

The SLUs had till now been handed over to local election officials by engineers of Bharat Electronics Ltd. (BEL) or the EC before voting. A day after the



A model of an electronic voting machine is displayed outside the Election Commission office in New Delhi on April 15. REUTERS

polls, the SLUs used to be returned to the engineers of the two public sector undertakings that manufacture the ballot unit, the control unit, and the VVPAT, along with the SLUs.

The EC, in a statement on Wednesday, said that it had directed all State Chief Electoral Officers to create the necessary infrastructure for the handling and storage of the SLUs in the EVMs in accordance with the new protocols being implemented from May 1

as mandated by the SC.

"Enough number of SLU containers, generally two to four per Assembly constituency, are to be kept ready in advance based on the requirements," the EC said.

The revised protocols are applicable in all cases of completion of the symbol loading process in VVPATs undertaken on or after May 1. The top court had also paved the way for verification of micro-controllers embedded in the EVMs.

## BJP's efforts to tamper with Constitution not new: Cong.

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

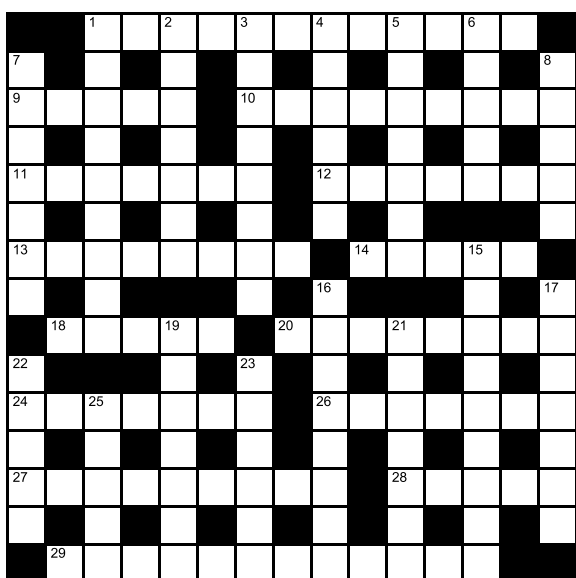
Flagging a November 1949 edition of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)-linked publication *Organiser*, which while critiquing the Constitution lamented that it ignored Indian legal texts such as the *Manusmriti*, the Congress on Wednesday said the BJP's efforts to tamper with the Constitution were not new.

The party also asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to clear his stance on whether he would remove the 50% cap on reservation for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, and the Other Backward Classes.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi urged all party candidates to carry a copy of the Constitution with them while filing nomination papers, and at public meetings and outreach programmes. Mr. Gandhi has been carrying a copy with him while addressing election rallies.

## THE CROSSWORD+ 14164

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

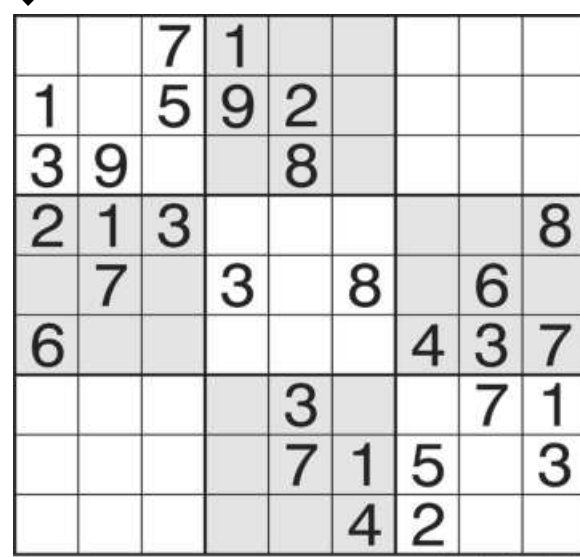


- 13 Crush of Arkansas and Wichita (8)  
14 Wearing wool gives recurring protection for Inuits (5)  
18 Revolutionary practice at a place for athletic abilities gets an expression of awe (2,3)  
20 Star-shaped satellite crashed after loss of essential engines (8)  
24 Briefly think about appeal in public performance (7)  
26 Mineral from extremely rare seaweed, close to Mercur (7)  
27 Drunken cine-goer obstructed by first-class gatekeeper (9)  
28 Greeting word used to express irritation and trouble (5)  
29 Which event a marathoner will participate finally? (2,3,4,3)

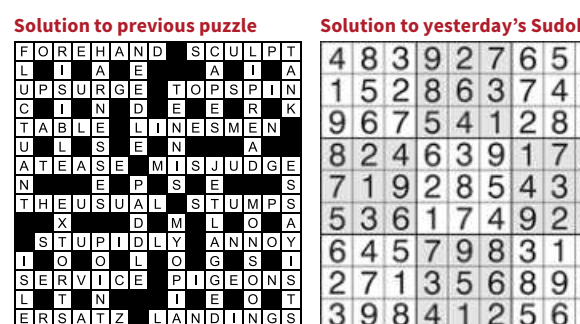
- Down**  
1 Say why some need working capital? (4,5)  
2 How small is small to derive properties of power (4,3)  
3 Spooner says 'Idiot, hang bag' (8)  
4 Bed and breakfast in Lesotho mostly in a mess (6)  
5 Breaking into an association of criminals getting funding (7)  
6 Quiet sound when it is fired (5)  
7 Curling shark? (7)  
8 Government regulation drops basic duty (5)  
15 Oscar hunted to remove the contents of an animal (5-4)  
16 Doctor! Nurse got bony fish (8)  
17 Wants to protect the world in digital shield primarily (7)  
19 Some almost-richest person who ignores unpleasant facts (7)  
21 Take advance in rent from that woman with kid (7)  
22 I hear small creature's smut (4)  
23 Extremely fateful test relating to baby's breath, say (6)  
25 Field gun killed national minister (5)

- Across**  
1 Thrash key cop brutally. It's a way of treating cases (5,7)  
9 Maybe solution from volume cooked up, volume destroyed (5)  
10 Money stolen by missing person, who denies food and drinks (9)  
11 Iron men? On the contrary (7)  
12 Well-known Indian man stops for drug on the way (7)

## SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆



## FAITH

## Rama lists duties of a king

Rama offered advice to Bharata about the duties of a king, said Navalpakkam Vasudevachariar in a discourse. Rama hopes Bharata consults his council of ministers before making a decision. Once a decision has been made, Bharata must ensure that the details of the discussions do not reach the ears of other kings. Caution should be exercised when a king employs people. They should be wise, because the unwise will be a burden on a king. Good performers must be in high positions. Ministers must be incorruptible.

The army chief must have the trust and affection of soldiers who serve under his command. Those in the army must be paid sufficiently and in time. Those selected as ambassadors must be eloquent, must have presence of mind, and must be precise in their speech.

Rama warns Bharata to never underestimate a foe. An enemy may be defeated in a battle, but he may bounce back and pose a threat to Ayodhya. Those who pretend to be scholars and confuse people must never be honoured. A king's duty does not end with keeping his citizens comfortable. He must check whether animals are doing well too, whether it is horses, or wild animals like elephants.

Rama hopes that Ayodhya, which had always flourished under the rule of the Ikshvaku clan, continues to be prosperous. He hopes Ayodhya continues to provide facilities like drinking water for travellers. He hopes agriculture thrives in the country and wants agriculturists to be looked after.



# Particles called quarks hold the key to the final fate of some stars

In neutron stars, the strength with which the core collapses fuses protons and electrons into neutrons. Neutron stars are extremely dense, creating immense pressure that could be forcing the neutrons into a new state of matter. An old open problem asks whether this state could be quark matter

Qudsia Gani

**W**e know that all matter is composed of atoms, and atoms are made of protons and neutrons inside the nucleus and electrons outside. But unlike electrons, protons and neutrons are composite particles because they are further made up of quarks.

Quarks can't exist in isolation. They can only be found in groups of two or three, if not more. Such clumps of quarks are called hadrons. Protons and neutrons are common examples. Physicists have mostly studied quarks based on the behaviour of hadrons, and are also interested in how quarks clump together.

## When quarks clump

Two recent findings revealed new insights on this count. One, published on February 20, reported that three-quark clumps are more likely to form than two-quark clumps when a particular type of quark is more densely surrounded by some other particles. According to the international team of researchers that conducted this study, the finding rejects "conventional particle-physics models in which the consolidation of quarks is independent of the particle environment".

Another study, published on March 15, reported observing clumps composed entirely of the heavier quarks. Protons and neutrons are clumps of lighter quarks and are thus more long-lived. Heavy-quark clumps are very short-lived and harder to study, requiring more sophisticated tools and computing power. Yet understanding them is important to complete our understanding of all quarks, and by extension how these elusive particles affect what we know about nuclear fusion and the fate of stars.

In fact, in the particular and unusual case of quark stars, understanding quarks could have a more direct impact.

## The tension of every star

A star is a globe of matter that has found a way to strike a balance between two forces. The force of gravity – arising from the star's mass – encourages the star to collapse under its own weight and implode. The nuclear force, expressed in the explosive energy released by fusion reactions at its core, pushes the star to blow up and outwards. In a star, the two forces are equally matched and it shines in the sky.

But once a star runs out of material to fuse, nuclear fusion weakens and gravity starts to gain the upper hand. Eventually, the star will 'die' and implode. Its fate in its afterlife depends on how large and massive it was when it lived, as a result forming a white dwarf, a neutron star or a black hole.

Scientists have estimated that if the Sun were 20-times more massive, it may collapse into a black hole when it dies. If it were only eight-times heavier, it could become a neutron star. But could there be stars that are too heavy to form a neutron star yet not too heavy to form a black hole, and thus form a quark star?

## Enter 'quark matter'

In neutron stars, the strength with which the core collapses will fuse all protons and electrons inside into neutrons, thus its name. Physicists understand neutron



An artist's conception of the pulsating neutron star PSR B1257+12, with a planet orbiting it nearby. NASA

stars well – on paper. The problem is they can't run any direct experiments on them in any laboratory on the earth. They also don't know either the masses or the radii of most neutron stars in the universe. So astrophysicists are very interested in studying them.

The matter inside neutron stars is extremely dense. For example, two Suns' worth of mass is packed into a sphere only 25 km wide. This creates an immense pressure that could be forcing the neutrons into a new state of matter.

An old open problem in physics asks whether this state could be quark matter – when there are no longer any neutrons, only quarks.

In December 2023, researchers from the University of Helsinki reported in the journal *Nature Communications* that the insides of most massive neutron stars have an 80-90% chance of being made of quark matter.

The research team combined astrophysical observations with theoretical *ab initio* (from scratch) calculations to develop a model that they ran using a supercomputer, and arrived at this result. However, these astrophysical observations were small in number, meaning the result is not so reliable. Astrophysicists need more observational data to understand quark matter and how exactly it forms.

## The need for quarks

A popular way of calculating the bulk properties of any material is to use an equation of state – an equation that, when solved with data about some of a material's physical properties, reveals the values of other properties. For neutron stars, this is the



Once a star runs out of material to fuse, nuclear fusion weakens and gravity gains the upper hand. Eventually, the star will implode. Its fate in its afterlife will depend on how large and massive it was when it lived

Tolman-Oppenheimer-Volkoff equation: it is very complex but it assigns a probability to the presence of quarks within neutron stars.

Physics has a rich tradition of giving quirky names to things physicists find. For example, quarks come in six 'flavours' – three are called charm and strange; quarks themselves have a property called colour charge; and so on. The name 'quark' itself is courtesy physicist Murray Gell-Mann, who named these particles after a line in James Joyce's 1939 masterpiece, *Finnegan's Wake*.

Protons are positively charged and therefore have a magnetic moment (a turning force exerted by a magnetic field) associated with them. But neutrons have a magnetic moment, too, yet they are neutrally charged. So physicists in the 1960s figured neutrons must be made of smaller particles that gave rise to the magnetic moment but whose electric charges cancel themselves out. Gell-Mann called them quarks and their existence was confirmed in the 1970s.

## Setting quarks free

There are six types of quarks: up, down, top, bottom, strange, and charm. Each quark can have one of three types of

colour charge. Then there are also antiquarks, their antimatter versions. A quark-antiquark clump is called a meson (they don't annihilate each other because they are of different types, e.g. up + anti-down). Three-quark clumps are called baryons and they form the normal matter surrounding us.

Quarks are further held together by another set of particles called gluons. Because nuclear forces are very strong, quarks are always tightly bound to each other and are not free, even in the vacuum of empty space.

The nuclear force that holds quarks together is explained by a theory called quantum chromodynamics. It predicts that at sufficiently high (by all means extreme) energies, nuclear matter can become 'deconfined' to create a new phase of matter in which quarks don't have to exist in clumps.

Physicists have been able to obtain evidence of deconfinement by smashing lead ions against each other at very high energies in machines like the Large Hadron Collider. In these experiments, a state of matter called a quark-gluon plasma exists for a brief moment; the 'plasma' means the quarks are independent. According to the Big Bang theory, the universe was filled with this plasma before the particles clumped and formed the first blobs of matter.

This clumping process may release energy or modify its surroundings in a way that astrophysicists can look for, and eventually discover a quark star. Until then, the possibility will live on as one of the many open problems of physics.

(Qudsia Gani is an assistant professor in the Department of Physics, Government Degree College Pattan, Baramulla.)



A public art installation outside a United Nations conference on plastics, in Ottawa, Ontario. AP

## Plastic treaty talks conclude in Ottawa with little progress

Jacob Koshy

Activist and environmentalist groups have termed the Global Plastics Treaty negotiations that concluded in Ottawa, Canada, on Tuesday as "disappointing". Nearly 192 member countries deliberated for nearly a week to iron out a legally binding agreement to "end plastic pollution". This was the fourth round of talks since countries resolved in 2022 to eliminate plastics and formed an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC), which consisted of government representatives tasked with drawing up a timeline for countries to not only eliminate plastic use but also halt production.

However the close connection between plastics and the oil economies of prominent countries, the vast manufacturing businesses that revolve around making and supplying different grades of plastics, the near ubiquity of the polymer's use in a variety of applications and the paucity of affordable, equivalent alternatives constitute the biggest roadblocks to its elimination. Because plastics do not easily degrade organically, they pollute marine and terrestrial ecosystems and have been long characterised as among the toughest environmental contaminants.

"The INC has once again failed to ask the most fundamental question to the success of the future treaty: how do we tackle the unsustainable production of plastics?" said Jacob Kean-Hammerson, Environmental Investigation Agency, United Kingdom and who was present at the talks.

The fourth round of talks was expected to deliver a timeline whereby primary plastic production was to halt. This didn't happen, though countries agreed to move forward with and come up with more detailed assessments of emissions,

## The close connection between plastics and the oil economies of prominent countries constitutes the biggest roadblock to its elimination

production, product design, waste management, problematic and avoidable plastics, financing, and a just transition.

"We came to Ottawa to advance the text and with the hope that members would agree on the inter-sessional work required to make even greater progress ahead of INC-5. We leave Ottawa having achieved both goals and a clear path to landing an ambitious deal in Busan ahead of us," said Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). "The work, however, is far from over. The plastic pollution crisis continues to engulf the world and we have just a few months left before the end of year deadline agreed upon in 2022," she noted.

Inter-sessional work is expert meetings that take place between the official INC sessions and expected to catalyse agreement on key issues. The next meeting, expected to be the final one, is scheduled for November 2024 in Busan, South Korea.

"India opposed restrictions on producing so called primary plastic polymers or virgin plastics, arguing that production reductions exceed the scope of UNEA [United Nations Environment Assembly] resolutions. While acknowledging the chemicals used in plastic manufacturing, India highlighted that some are already subject to prohibition or regulation.

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## THE SCIENCE QUIZ

### The travails of going to space

Vasudevan Mukunth

#### QUESTION 1

Name the imaginary line in the earth's atmosphere, 100 km up from sea level, beyond which the United Nations holds that any human activity would be astronautic, not aeronautic. This line was first defined by the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale.

#### QUESTION 2

At a little over 19 km above the ground, the pressure on the human body drops to a value that's equal to the vapour pressure of water at the body's temperature (around 37 degrees C). As a result, any water exposed to the environment at this altitude – like tears and saliva – will boil away. This is why astronauts require pressurised suits. Name the line demarcating this altitude.

#### QUESTION 3

Following on from Q2: while water can boil away at this altitude, fluids inside the body don't because the tissue and skin can withstand the pressure difference. Nonetheless, bubbles of water vapour accumulate in the fluids. What is this phenomenon called?

#### QUESTION 4

For every month spent in space, space medicine research has found that astronauts lose around 1% of their mass. This loss is very difficult to regain. Astronauts who spend a long time in space are thus required to take supplements like vitamin D once they return. Fill in the blank.

#### QUESTION 5

Many travellers experience space adaptation syndrome when they go to space for the first time. The syndrome is

characterised by motion that the traveller sees but can't feel. What is this syndrome called when it happens on the ground?

#### Answers to April 30 quiz:

- Substances that cause plants' leaves to fall off – **Ans: Defoliant**
  - Most infamous example of a defoliant in the Vietnam War – **Ans: Agent Orange**
  - Toxin present in defoliant used by the British in Malayan Emergency – **Ans: Dioxins**
  - Hardy plants that required a special mixture to be destroyed – **Ans: Rice**
  - Substance whose effects were depicted in photo by Nick Ut – **Ans: Napalm**
- Visual: **Olof Palme**  
First contact: P.N. Moorthy | ViswanadhaRao Batchu | K.N. Viswanathan | Brahanya Sankar | Shiva Nigam



Visual: Name this NASA spacecraft that, in 1966, managed to create a small amount of artificial gravity by rotating a capsule. NASA.

Please send in your answers to [science@thehindu.co.in](mailto:science@thehindu.co.in)





## The services story

India's intangible exports growth faces risks that warrant a nuanced response

A deep-dive research report from global investment banking major Goldman Sachs, evocatively titled 'India's rise as the emerging services factory of the world', has captured India's recent success in providing global services and sought to forecast growth prospects and risks in the medium term. The take-off trajectory of the country's IT services sector, unleashed after critical economic reforms in 1991, is well known. The firm takes a broader view of India's services exports over the last 18 years, including professional consulting, that have grown the fastest, travel services which have grown the slowest, and financial services that could gain if initiatives such as the GIFT City click. While global services exports tripled over 18 years, such intangible exports from India grew at twice the pace to reach nearly \$340 billion last year. In fact, its exports growth has been the third fastest globally since 2005, behind Singapore and Ireland. The country's share in global services outflows has risen from under 2% in 2005 to 4.6% in 2023. India's share in goods exports increased from 1% to 1.8% during this period.

The services trade boom has also served as an invaluable cushion for India's external account balances against shocks such as pricey oil imports. Goldman Sachs expects that buffer to remain in play with services exports projected to rise to \$800 billion by 2030. While this is slightly lower than the government's target of \$1 trillion by 2030 for both services and merchandise exports, a continuing uptick in high-value services would also drive top-end discretionary consumption and real estate demand, the firm reckoned. In the immediate term, the outlook is tentative as top firms in IT services, still India's most dominant export segment, have shed employees over the past year and their growth guidance for this year is far from bullish. Infosys, for instance, expects revenues to rise 1% to 3% this year in constant currency terms. The rise of global capability centres offers some comfort. However, the firm's analysts stress it would be imprudent to take India's services growth for granted. Constraints that need attention include training graduates to be job ready, and the stress on natural resources in regions where growth is concentrated, as reflected in the water crisis at Bengaluru. A protectionist tendency in destination countries could hurt exports, just as irrational domestic policy interventions such as attempts to "manage" IT hardware imports. India needs a calibrated approach to sustain the services success story. That should include a hard push for global market access and opportunities for all professional services, as well as a light-touch regulatory approach to let new ideas and enterprises bloom across areas such as artificial intelligence, manufacturing-linked services, and blockchain applications.

## Sea also rises

India must collaborate with Indian Ocean countries for data on warming

India may be roiling in heatwaves but the possibility of a monsoon, as envisaged by the India Meteorological Department, may be contributing to some psychological relief. In the long run, however, there is much to be worried about. A recent study led by scientists at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, and other international institutions has forecast – based on expected global carbon emission trends – the likely impact on the Indian Ocean. They report that the Indian Ocean warmed 1.2° C and will likely heat up 1.7° C-3.8° C from 2020 to 2100. While heatwaves are a lived experience, the study warns of 'marine heatwaves', their counterparts in the sea and linked to the rapid formation of cyclones, as likely to increase tenfold from the current average of 20 days per year to 220-250 days per year. This will push the tropical Indian Ocean into a "near-permanent heatwave state", accelerate coral bleaching and harm the fisheries sector. The heating of the ocean would not be merely confined to the surface but actually increase the heat content of the ocean. When measured from the surface to 2,000 meters below, the thermal capacity of this ocean is now rising at the rate of 4.5 zetta-joules per decade, and is predicted to increase at a rate of 16-22 zetta-joules per decade in the future. Joule is a unit of energy and 1 zetta joule is a billion-trillion joules (10<sup>21</sup>).

The consequences of a warming Indian Ocean extend very much into mainland India with the frequency of severe cyclones rising and the monsoon becoming more erratic and uneven with long spells of drought followed by intense rain and concomitant flooding. These are linked to global warming with anthropogenic sources such as fossil fuel burning playing a significant role in nudging the planet closer to cataclysmic tipping points. Current global commitments to stem greenhouse gas emissions are unlikely to make a significant dent in the state of the oceans capacity as unlike on land, the seas respond slower to changes in external inputs. Therefore, a realistic way out is to fine-tune the understanding of the Indian Ocean's local impact. India needs to form a collaborative association with countries bordering the Indian Ocean to invest in data gathering – currently this pales in comparison to what is in the Pacific, for instance – and projections to guide the development and protection of infrastructure and people.

French economist Thomas Piketty, along with a few other economists, recently came out with some startling findings on economic inequality trends in India over the last century. In *Income and Wealth Inequality in India, 1922-2023: The Rise of the Billionaire Raj*, Piketty and his co-authors estimate that inequality in India today is far worse than during the inter-war British colonial rule.

In 2022, the top 1% of the Indian population owned 40.1% of total wealth and earned 22.6% of total income, while the bottom 50% owned 6.4% of total wealth and earned 15% of total income. The fate of the bottom 50% looks even worse when compared with the top 10% who owned 65% of total wealth and earned 57.7% of total national income.

The authors use their findings to argue that India's tax system, which is mostly based on people's incomes, is regressive, and call for a wealth tax on the rich. While Piketty's data might look alarming, it is crucial to question its use to justify wealth redistribution.

### The economic pie has grown

To understand why, it is important to study two important trends noted by Piketty and his co-authors. First, income and wealth inequality in India began to rise sharply only from the 1980s when India gradually began to adopt markets. For example, the share of the bottom 50% in total national income dropped from 23.6% in 1982 to 15% in 2022, while the income share of the top 10% rose from 30.1% to 57.7% during the period. Second, economic growth in India was stagnant in the socialist decades, and began to rise only after 1990. Piketty and others note that India's economy grew at a miserable 1.6% per year between 1960 and 1990, but at a much stronger 3.6% per year between 1990 and 2022.

So, what do these trends tell us? First, they tell us that the fall in the bottom 50%'s share of total national income does not mean that there was a fall in their real income levels or standard of living. Data from the World Inequality Lab suggest that the total real income of the bottom 50% increased over four-fold between 1991 and 2022 even though their share of total national income dropped from 23.6% to 15% during the same period. In other words, the size of India's total economic pie has grown so much in the last 30 years that the bottom 50% now enjoys higher real income despite receiving a much lower share of national income.

Second, the trend in income shares of different groups since the 1980s shows that the bottom 50% does not enjoy as much economic freedom



Prashanth Perumal J.

What is required is not higher taxes on high-income earners but greater economic freedom for India's poor

as the top 1% or even the top 10%. The income share of any group in a market economy, it should be noted, depends on the ability of the group to compete against others in the market for a share of the total national income. Piketty estimates that the top 1% income earners in India earn ₹53 lakh on average annually while the bottom 50% earners earn just ₹71,000.

In a free market economy, such stark differences in income levels would present lucrative arbitrage opportunities and help close the gap between the richest and the poorest. So, for example, seeing that neurosurgeons in India earn several millions of rupees each year, more people from lower income groups would try to become neurosurgeons.

But we know that such arbitrage does not happen so easily in the real world because of various barriers, including the poor's lack of access to capital and the high cost of medical education. If so, liberalising the financial sector and the medical education sector would be the right way forward as it would allow the poor to invest in building the skills for high-paying jobs. A hefty tax on neurosurgeons to redistribute income, on the other hand, will only impede the movement of labour towards high-paying jobs and even shrink the current supply of neurosurgeons.

It should also be noted that the bottom 50% enjoy very little protection of their property rights, which makes it hard for them to even make a living, let alone to climb up the income ladder. So, what is required is greater economic freedom for India's poor, not higher taxes on high-income earners.

### Wealth inequality is inevitable

Trends in wealth inequality also paint a similar picture. India's top 1%, on average, possesses a net wealth worth ₹5.4 crore while people in the bottom 50% are worth just ₹1.7 lakh. To be sure, wealth inequality is inevitable in a market economy as the market rewards people who are better at investing or allocating capital; investors who make profits see their wealth share grow over time while investors who suffer losses see their wealth share shrink. An entrepreneur with an innovative product that benefits billions of people, for instance, would enjoy massive profits and see his or her wealth share rise. Thus, the market ensures that capital is in the hands of the best investors, and resources are used in the best way possible to create a bigger economic pie. And it is a bigger economic pie, one should note, that allows the bottom 50% to enjoy higher real income despite their falling income and wealth shares.

The extreme wealth disparity we see in India today, however, is largely not because of the free market rewarding the top 1% for their entrepreneurial capabilities. Instead, much of it is due to the top 1% enjoying special privileges from the government, which protects them from competition in the marketplace that could erode their wealth share significantly. So, the way forward then is to get rid of such special privileges and allow more competition in the economy. This would naturally reduce the wealth share of the top 1% and also benefit the wider economy since competition ensures that the best investors rise to the top of the wealth hierarchy and enlarge the size of the economic pie in the process. Free competition would also ensure no one would stay at the top forever by enjoying special privileges.

### Impact of a wealth tax

A wealth tax, on the other hand, will have unintended consequences. Contrary to common belief, investors can actually shield themselves from higher taxes (including wealth tax) by lowering the amount of capital they invest in any venture based on their expected post-tax income. So, people who would really be affected by higher taxes on the wealthy would then be workers and landowners who will be paid lesser in order to maintain investor returns. The tax would thus indirectly affect the income of ordinary workers, most of whom belong to the bottom 50% or the middle 40% of the population, and hence also affect their output. A wealth tax on labour and land owners would have a similar negative effect. In effect, a wealth tax on the rich would eventually turn out to be a tax on lower income groups.

It should also be noted that most of the wealth that the top 1% possess is in the form of the capital assets such as advanced factories and real estate, and not consumer goods and services. It is thus incorrect to believe that the poor suffer low living standards because the rich have cornered most consumer goods. In fact, capital assets owned by the wealthy, by massively increasing the productivity of workers, help boost the output of consumer goods and services and improve the living standards of the masses.

Overall, the wealth tax will have a negative effect on economic growth and living standards. The right way to fight inequality and help the poor is thus not to tax the rich but to offer more economic freedom to the poor so that they can compete better in the marketplace for a bigger share of the economic pie.

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# An animal protection Bill that must be moved in June

Countries across the world are reforming their animal cruelty laws and enhancing punishments for animal cruelty. Recently, Croatia imposed stricter penalties for acts of cruelty, especially the abandonment of domestic pets. Amendments to the Croatian Penal Code, which came into effect on April 2, enhance the punishment for causing unnecessary pain or suffering to animals, and for killing or severely abusing animals.

Around the same time, in India, an incident involving the killing of a community dog, Jai, by a resident of a housing society in Mumbai has galvanised the demand for enhancing punishments that Indian law prescribes for animal cruelty. #JusticeForJai has been circulating on social media platforms apart from prayer meets and candle light vigils demanding stricter criminal laws against animal cruelty.

### On punishment theories

Over the years, much has been discussed about the inadequacies in the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act (1960), the primary piece of legislation that criminalises various forms of cruelty towards animals in the country. Poor enforcement of this law and the meagre penalties it prescribes are often cited as reasons for its failure to achieve its main objective of preventing cruelty to animals. While this is true, there is more to this issue than meets the eye. When looked at through the lens of theories of punishment, the PCA Act seems woefully ineffective. According to the various theories of punishment, punishing someone for committing a crime could have three main goals: retribution (punishment imposed to avenge the crime committed); deterrence (punishment imposed to



Apoorva is the Founder and Director of Animal Law & Policy Network (ALPN) Research Foundation, an independent intersectional think-tank

Even with its limitations, the enactment of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animal (Amendment) Bill could prove to be a huge step forward

deter the perpetrator and the general public against committing such crimes in the future), and reformation or rehabilitation (punishment imposed to reform and shape the future behaviour of the perpetrator).

### Bailable offences, weak fines

In its present form, the PCA Act fails to achieve all of these. First, most of the offences under the Act are bailable (the accused can seek bail from the police as a matter of right) and non-cognisable (which means that the police can neither register a first information report nor investigate or effect arrest without the express permission of or directions from a competent court). Second, the amounts prescribed as fines under the PCA Act are the same as the ones prescribed in its predecessor, the PCA Act 1890. This means that the fines are insignificant (as low as ₹10 in many cases) as they have not undergone revision in over 130 years.

Third, the law is worded in such a manner that the court dealing with the issue has the discretion to choose between imposing imprisonment or imposing a fine on the accused. This allows perpetrators of animal cruelty to get away with the most brutal forms of animal cruelty by just paying a fine in most cases. Finally, the law itself does not contain any provision for 'community service' such as prescribing volunteering at an animal shelter as a form of punishment, that could potentially reform the perpetrators. These shortcomings contribute towards making the PCA Act ineffective in punishing the crimes of animal cruelty.

In November 2022, the Draft PCA (Amendment) Bill, 2022 was published by the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying

for public comments. Despite widespread public support for the Draft Bill, it was not tabled in Parliament. The Draft Bill includes significant amendments to the 1960 Act such as the inclusion of the five fundamental freedoms for animals, enhancement of the punishments and the amounts of money to be paid as fines for various offences, and addition of new cognisable offences. While it is certainly a major improvement over the present law, for certain offences such as gruesome cruelty and the killing of an animal, the draft Bill continues to provide for imprisonment and fines as two options available to a court dealing with a case of animal cruelty. Therefore, even if the draft Bill someday becomes law, it will still be possible for perpetrators to just pay the paltry fine and avoid imprisonment for committing certain acts of extreme cruelty.

### Words to heed

It is important, however, to recognise that even with its limitations, the enactment of the Draft Bill could be a huge step forward for animal law in India. In 1954, while moving a Private Member's Bill to replace the archaic PCA Act (1890), its proponent Rukmini Devi Arundale had said in Parliament, "India must set a great example to all countries in the world. We must set the example not because I think we are superior but because we have spoken about ahimsa far more than any other country... So the more we talk about it, the greater is the responsibility to put into practice..." When the new government comes to power in June this year, it should accept this responsibility so that the amendments to the PCA Act (1960) will finally see the light of day.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Top court to ED

That the Supreme Court of India has asked the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) to justify the timing of the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on March 21 in the excise policy case was quite expected (Page 1, "Come clean on timing of Kejriwal arrest: SC to ED", May 1). As a citizen of India, I found it difficult to comprehend the ED's action, as an election without a level-playing field in a democracy is an exercise in futility. The nation expects a clear answer.

S. Ramakrishnasayee, Chennai

With the continued incarceration of the Delhi Chief Minister, it seems that the central agencies such as the Enforcement Directorate only do the bidding of the government of the day. How is it that when 'tainted people' join the ruling party, charges against them are dropped? The Bharatiya Janata Party seems to be trying every method to uproot the Opposition through unfair means. An independent judiciary is the only saviour for a moribund democracy.

Aanya Singhal, Noida, Uttar Pradesh

Questioning the timing of

the arrest of the Delhi Chief Minister amounts to casting aspersions on the integrity of the Enforcement Directorate. How can we forget that the agency had issued several summons to Mr. Kejriwal, which he chose to ignore? Mr. Kejriwal is the sole architect of his own ignominious plight.

Ravi Mathur, Noida, Uttar Pradesh

### Student protests

Joe Biden is the President of the leading democratic country in the world ('World' page, May 1, "Columbia locks down campus after anti-war student protests escalate").

He is also from a democratic party. But his "ironfist"-like approach against university students in the U.S. who are demanding peace in West Asia is very "undemocratic". The young should not be harassed for raising their voice against the genocide in Gaza.

P.H. Hema Sagar, Secunderabad

It is bizarre that a leading democracy has suppressed the voice of its own youth even while it delivers lectures to other democracies on 'flaws'. The United States should be more mindful of the

situation at home before sticking its nose into another nation's business.

Balagopal Gopinath, Keerikkad, Alappuzha, Kerala

### Quota remark

It is no secret that the top leader of this country, India, is dead against Muslims, come what may. There needs no debate on this subject. Whether Muslims deserve quota or not is not his prerogative. A Prime Minister making an immature statement such as "No quota as long as I am alive..." exposes his ignorance.

C.K. Prem Kumar, Palakkad, Kerala

### T20 World Cup team

While the selection for the T20 World Cup Championship looks well balanced, the omission of Shubman Gill, who, unfortunately, finds himself in the reserves, is shocking. He is a big hitting, aggressive and time-tested batter in international fixtures and in the IPL. It is still too early for Shivam Dube to play at the highest level ('Sport' page, May 1).

A. Mohan, Chennai

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.



# The trouble with the SC's EVM verdict

The 2022 Nobel Prize for physics was unusual because it was awarded not for a scientific discovery or technological innovation. Instead, it went to three physicists who proved that a peculiar natural phenomenon, called quantum entanglement, is real and that it isn't the result of hitherto unknown physics, meaning whatever physics we already know should be able to explain it. Many physicists still lack an intuitive understanding of how this phenomenon happens physically, but thanks to the Nobel laureates' work, they know it does.

The Supreme Court's verdict on the petition brought by the Association for Democratic Reforms and Arun Kumar Agarwal against the processes by which the Election Commission (EC) ascertains the security of its electronic voting machines (EVMs) and the integrity of the voting process could learn something from this Nobel-winning effort. Hearing the matter on April 24, the Bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta had an eye-opening exchange with the lawyers, particularly in two instances.

In the first instance, advocate Santhosh Paul for the petitioners said EVMs have a "source code" that should be disclosed for independent verification, to which Justice Khanna replied, "The source code should never be disclosed. If it is disclosed, it will be misused." Second, when asked whether the microcontrollers in the EVM's three components could be reprogrammed, an EC official said they couldn't. Advocate Prashant Bhushan, for the petitioners, disputed this claim saying the microcontrollers' manufacturer's data suggested they could be. Justice Khanna then said, "He [the official] has clarified the doubt" and that "we have to rely on them [EC] on technical data". In a final instance, the Bench passed the order on April 26, refusing to revert to paper



Vasudevan Mukunth

Software intended for public use in a democracy needs to be open source so it's always reliable and doesn't demand trust in a single vendor

ballots and said "blind distrust" of the system is bad for progress.

Across these instances, two impressions shine through; that the security of the EVMs depends on some unspecified "source code" and that knowing how something works could compromise its normal operation. Both these notions are inimical to democracy.

Why do we "have to" take the EC's word on the "technical data"? The petitioners' prayer to return to paper ballots was patently infeasible. However, while it's unreasonable to submit to doubts every time they're expressed if assuaging the doubters is expensive, it wasn't so here. By only asserting the EVMs are safe, which they may well be, they have declined the opportunity for the machine to be seen to be safe. This is a dubious precedent, but it also matters because the fundamental issue in this matter is trust in the electoral process.

In his concurring judgment, Justice Datta suggested a "critical as well as constructive approach guided by evidence and reason" in place of "blind distrust", but the EC's and the court's approach has championed blind trust instead. Distrust is bad for progress but blindness is bad for accountability.

Second, knowing how some software works doesn't also compromise it. For example, by the sheer scale of its use on millions of websites, the WordPress content management system faces more (unethical) hacking attempts, yet it continues to remain popular and secure. This may be all the more surprising because WordPress is open source; its "source code" is freely available to download. There are several thousand people who know how WordPress works but that doesn't mean they also know how to "hack" WordPress websites.

It's not unreasonable to expect the software operating inside EVMs to meet the same standard. If it did, it would be independently verifiable and be able to benefit

from the expertise of ethical testers to become more fail-proof, rather than rely on a secret that's privy to the EC and whose modes of failure may remain unknown.

There are well-established cryptographic techniques to allow outside verification without increasing an EVM's vulnerability, such as tests that challenge the system's schematics without forcing them to be revealed – the way a website's server can verify if your password is correct without knowing what it is. It's not for nothing that the software underlying electronic voting systems in Germany, the U.S., and Venezuela, among other countries, is open source.

However, the EC hadn't had the source code audited by a public authority as of 2023. The Technical Expert Committee had suggested in 1990 and 2006 that the EC reveal the source code. In 2013, it recommended a test of the software's security without revealing its specifics. But the poll body has consistently refused to share the "source code" when members of civil society have approached courts asking for it. The trouble here is that courts have examined these claims from a constitutional perspective whereas the systems that execute the "code" are mathematical, and thus less protected by constitutional safeguards alone.

A software program being proprietary doesn't make it more secure; in fact, it may be less so by virtue of fewer people being able to vet it. Fundamentally, software intended for public use in a democracy needs to be open source so it's always reliable and doesn't demand trust in a single vendor. It needs to be trustworthy – bearing a reputation that doesn't constantly come under question – and trustless – not requiring someone to just take someone else's word for it as to its integrity. Trustless software in particular eliminates the room not for trust but for distrust.

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# Conserving tapestry of heritage

Despite initiatives, urbanisation poses challenges to heritage preservation in T.N.

## STATE OF PLAY

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"We shape our buildings. Thereafter, they shape us." This famous statement of Winston Churchill, British statesman and former Prime Minister in the context of rebuilding of bombed House of Commons in 1941 still holds relevance. Heritage buildings have a pivotal role in shaping the identity of a place or region.

Tamil Nadu boasts of a deep-rooted heritage culture. While the State government had initiated measures to protect its rich historical tapestry a few decades ago, urban planners and heritage enthusiasts point out the challenges in balancing the rapid urbanisation changing the face of the State and heritage preservation.

The Madras High Court's recent intervention to enforce the Tamil Nadu Heritage Commission Act of 2012 (amended in 2017) has brought to the fore the need to make comprehensive heritage management a ground reality. The Court has now directed the government to constitute the commission that would act as an advisory body to the government on the preservation of heritage structures in the State.

### To safeguard structures

With no Act in place and no commission remaining on paper, some of the famous heritage structures were demolished or replaced.

The issue of the constitution of a commission came into the limelight when the Indian National Trust for Arts and Cultural Heritage took the



matter to court.

The need for a commission was stressed to safeguard structures outside the purview of the Archaeological Survey of India Act.

The State government had already formed a Heritage Conservation Committee (HCC) under the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority and had even documented some of the heritage sites listed in the Justice E. Padmanabhan Committee report along with heritage experts and architects.

In 2010, the Madras High Court directed the HCC to recommend to the State government to notify such historic structures and issue cause notices to private building owners. However, the HCC is restricted to Chennai.

It was after the iconic Kalas Mahal in Chepauk complex, Chennai, was ravaged in a fire accident some years ago that concerted conservation efforts of the Public Works Department (PWD) picked up pace. Building Centre and Conservation Division, a dedicated wing for heritage restoration was created in 2017. With subdivisions in various places, the wing has been raising 81 dilapidated historic structures across the State from the rubble since then. The government recently sanctioned ₹50 crore towards restoring renowned structures for the current fiscal.

The PWD's team of conservation engineers is compiling a list of old buildings in the State and chalking out plans to breathe fresh life into them with the assistance of conservation architects and *stha-pathi* (traditional architects).

But constituting a heritage commission and framing statutory rules would go a long way in protecting buildings that are in disuse and in dire need of conservation across Tamil Nadu and also hold owners of private heritage property owners accountable for heritage revival. While some aspects of the West Bengal Heritage Commission Act, 2001 are said to have been incorporated in the Tamil Nadu Heritage Commission Act, comprehensive laws providing legal framework in other States such as West Bengal and Telangana show the path for sustainable heritage conservation.

There is more groundwork involved in compiling exhaustive and integrated data for built heritage in Tamil Nadu. The statutory rules for the State should also consolidate provisions of Tamil Nadu Combined Development and Building Rules 2019. Heritage planning experts recommend the provision of incentives to private structures like the transfer of development rights certificates beforehand rather than after preservation efforts.

While the PWD is confident that the State Heritage Commission would help fine tune its work, the act must be enforced with technical and financial support as well as with experts drawn from various quarters. In the absence of a strong delegation to protect the State's wealth of heritage, the commission faces the risk that it might turn into a non-functional entity.

# Budgets and Bills passed with little deliberation

Madhya Pradesh passed 85% of its Budget without discussion in 2023 followed by Kerala and Jharkhand

## DATA POINT

### The Hindu Data Team

In 2023, of the ₹18.5 lakh crore budget presented by 10 States, close to 40% was passed without discussion. In five States, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), which examines accounts of State governments, did not table any reports in the year considered. Moreover, five State legislatures passed all Bills on the day they were introduced or the next day. As many as 20 States also saw 84 Ordinances being promulgated in 2023.

These observations are based on PRS Legislative Research's Annual Review of State Laws 2023. The report analyses the performance of State legislatures in various key functions.

Once the Finance Minister announces the Budget, it goes for general discussion. Following this, there is a scrutiny of demands by committees. After this, there is discussion and voting on Ministry expenditure. However, in 10 States for which data was available, 36% of the expenditure demands were voted on and passed without being discussed. Madhya Pradesh passed 85% of its ₹3.14 lakh crore Budget without discussion, the highest among the ten States. Kerala came second with 78%, followed by Jharkhand (75%) and West Bengal (74%). **Chart 1** shows the proportion of the Budget passed without discussion in 10 States.

The PAC, typically chaired by the Leader of the Opposition or a senior member from the Opposition, scrutinises the accounts of State governments and State reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General. However, in 2023, the PAC held 24 sittings and tabled 16 reports on average in the States considered. In five of the 13 States for which data was available – Bihar, Delhi, Goa, Maharashtra and Odisha – the PAC did not table any

reports. Alarming, the PAC in Maharashtra neither met nor released a report during the year. In contrast, the PAC in Tamil Nadu tabled 95 reports followed by Himachal Pradesh where the committee tabled 75 reports. Both Uttar Pradesh and Bihar had 50 sittings or more by the PAC though not a single report was tabled in the latter. **Chart 2** shows the number of sittings and reports tabled by the PAC in 2023.

An analysis of the time taken by State legislatures to pass Bills shows that many were passed quickly with minimal debate. In fact, 44% of the Bills were passed either on the same day they were introduced in the Assembly or the next day. The figure is consistent with the trend observed in 2022 (56%) and 2021 (44%). In Gujarat, Jharkhand, Mizoram, Puducherry, and Punjab, all Bills were passed on the day of introduction or the next day. In 13 of 28 State legislatures, Bills were passed within five days of introduction. Kerala and Meghalaya took more than five days to pass more than 90% of their Bills. About 55% of Bills in Rajasthan were also passed after more than five days of deliberation. **Chart 3** shows the time taken by the State legislatures to pass Bills in 2023.

The Constitution grants the Governor the power to promulgate Ordinances, ie, formally announce certain temporary laws, when the State Legislative Assembly is not in session.

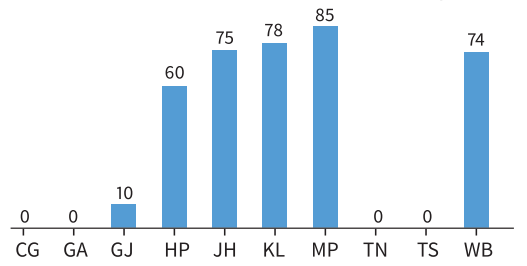
**Chart 4** shows the Ordinances promulgated by States in 2023. 84 Ordinances were promulgated in 20 States covering a range of subjects including, new universities (Uttar Pradesh), public examinations (Uttarakhand), and ownership of apartments (Maharashtra). The highest number of Ordinances was promulgated by Uttar Pradesh (20), followed by Andhra Pradesh (11), and Maharashtra (9). In 2023, only four Ordinances were promulgated in Kerala, compared to 15 in 2022, and 144 in 2021.

## State of affairs

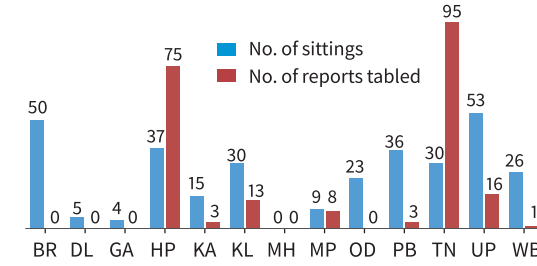
The data for the charts were sourced from PRS Legislative Research's Annual Review of State Laws 2023



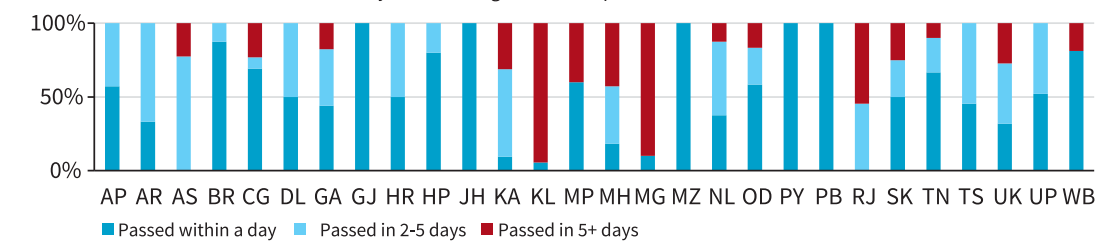
**Chart 1:** The chart shows the proportion of the Budget passed without discussion in 10 States in 2023. Figures in %



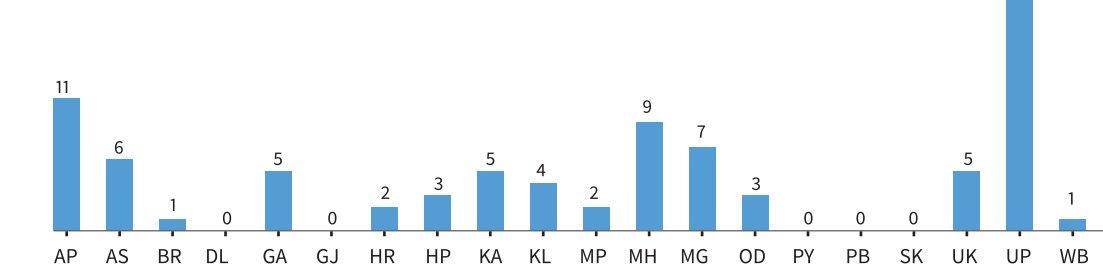
**Chart 2:** The chart shows the number of sittings and reports tabled by the PAC in 2023



**Chart 3:** The chart shows the time taken by the State legislatures to pass Bills in 2023



**Chart 4:** The chart shows the Ordinances promulgated by States in 2023



Andhra Pradesh: AP, Jharkhand: JH, Puducherry: PY, Karnataka: KA, Punjab: PB, Assam: AS, Kerala: KL, Rajasthan: RJ, Bihar: BR, Madhya Pradesh: MP, Sikkim: SK, Chhattisgarh: CG, Maharashtra: MH, Tamil Nadu: TN, Delhi: DL, Telangana: TS, Goa: GA, Meghalaya: MG, Gujarat: GJ, Mizoram: MZ, Uttarakhand: UK, Haryana: HR, Nagaland: NL, Uttar Pradesh: UP, Himachal Pradesh: HP, Odisha: OD, West Bengal: WB

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

### The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 2, 1974

## Hitch with Sri Lanka over territorial sea limit

New Delhi, May 1: A new hutch over the definition of the territorial sea limit between India and Sri Lanka in the Palk Straits is holding up the settlement of the Kachativu issue.

It was agreed during Mrs. Bandaranaike's recent visit to Delhi that the Kachativu dispute should be resolved soon on the basis of a fresh delimitation of the territorial waters between the Palk Straits and Adam's Bridge, which would automatically settle the issue without the historical claims of either side being gone into.

The officials of the two countries entrusted with the determination of the new Meridian Line in these historic waters have run into difficulties over the definition of the sea limit in this region.

India wants the commencing points for the 12 mile limit from either side to be their actual shore lines, not the off-shore islands in the Palk Straits.

But Sri Lanka contends that its sea limit should extend 12 miles from its farthest territorial jurisdiction in these narrow straits.

As Kachativu is one of the many off-shore islands in the Palk Straits which will lie on either side of the new Meridian Line, there is a need for greater clarity on the definition of the Indian and Sri Lanka sea limits in these narrow waters for avoiding further controversies.

India is anxious that the whole issue should be settled in a clear-cut fashion with no legal loopholes left for any misunderstanding later about the scope of its settlement.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 2, 1924

## Who is an "Indian"?

Colombo, May 1: The Registering officer, Indian electorate, held an enquiry yesterday into the objection lodged by Mr. Money to the name of Mr. I. X. Pereira appearing in the register of Indian voters. The objector alleged that Mr. Pereira was not an Indian under the Order in Council, because his domicile was Ceylon. The order was delivered today holding that Mr. Pereira has clearly proved that his domicile is India and declaring that the name of Mr. Pereira be retained in the register. Mr. I. X. Pereira is a candidate for one of the Indian seats in the reformed Legislative Council of Ceylon.



# Text & Context

THE HINDU

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

### The number of people killed in the Gaza Strip in the past 24 hours

**33** The health ministry estimates the overall Palestinian death toll from the Israel-Hamas war to at least 34,568. The war has flattened huge swaths of Gaza's north, and famine is imminent for the hundreds of thousands of civilians who remain there. AP

### The period after which abortions are banned in Florida

**6** in weeks. Florida's ban on most abortions after six weeks of pregnancy, before many women even know they are pregnant, has gone into effect. Some doctors are concerned that women in the state will no longer have access to needed health care. AP

### The share of India in global CO2 emissions from aviation

**3** In percentage. India was among the top five economically developing countries in terms of carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions from aviation in 2019, a new research has found. India's share in global CO2 emissions from domestic aviation was the third highest at 1.5%. PTI

### The cost of quality concerns over India's spice exports

**700** in \$ million. With concerns threatening over half of the shipments, swift action is crucial to restore global trust and uphold the reputation of India's spice trade amid recent regulatory actions and health violations. PTI

### Increase in petrol sales in April compared to the year-ago period

**12.3** In percentage. Petrol sales were up mostly due to an increase in the use of personal vehicles on the back of a price cut, crop harvesting season and the onset of summer. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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# Analysing labour on a warming planet

The link between labour productivity, human health and climate change gets scant attention, as the focus remains on economic and infrastructure resilience. The International Labour Organization's latest report points to the need to ensure that labour becomes climate proofed

## FULL CONTEXT

**Kunal Shankar**

### The story so far:

The International Labour Organization's (ILO) latest report, 'Ensuring safety and health at work in a changing climate', is an urgent call to ensure the future of labour is climate proofed and to address the constantly evolving work environment as the planet warms. The UN body states that well over a third of the world's population, are exposed to excessive heat annually, leading to almost 23 million work-related injuries.

### What are the emerging hazards?

The ILO has identified six key impacts of climate change. They are — excessive heat, solar ultraviolet radiation, extreme weather events, workplace air pollution, vector-borne diseases and agrochemicals. These could lead to a range of health issues such as stress, stroke and exhaustion. The ILO mentions agriculture workers, workers in the construction sector, conservancy workers in cities and those employed in transport and tourism as most affected by climate change. It is also important to take note of the global rise in gig employment, which is highly heat-susceptible. Gig workers constitute about 1.5% of India's total work force, which is projected to grow to about 4.5% by 2030, according to a Nasscom study. In the Indian context, all these segments put together suggest that about 80% of the country's 2023 workforce of 600 million is susceptible to heat-related hazards.

### Which sectors are affected?

Agriculture is by far the most heat susceptible sector globally, particularly so in the developing world, where informal farm labourers work with little to no weather protection. The NSSO data of July 2018-June 2019 reveal that almost 90% of Indian farmers own less than two hectares of land, and earn an average monthly income of a little over ₹10,000 with farmers in the bottom three States of Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal earning as low as ₹4,895, ₹5,112, and ₹6,762. This leaves little room for them to invest in adapting to a warming planet.

Agriculture is followed by India's sprawling Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector that employs about 21% of the country's workforce, or more than 123 million workers. The overwhelming informalisation of the sector has meant little to no oversight of worker conditions by State Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) departments, leaving them highly vulnerable to heat hazards. This sector is followed by the building and construction segment which constitutes about 70 million workers, almost 12% of India's workforce. Workers here must cope with the urban heat island effect, as construction is a highly urban-centric economy, with rising growth in cities. Construction workers are also the most prone to physical injuries and air pollution related health hazards, like asthma, as several Indian cities are among the most polluted globally.

### What laws address workplace safety?

A range of more than 13 central laws in India including, the Factories Act, 1948, the Workmen Compensation Act, 1923, the Building and Other Construction Workers Act, 1996, the Plantations Labour Act, 1951, the Mines Act, 1952 and the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979, regulate working conditions across several sectors. These laws were consolidated and amended in September



Scorching heat: A vendor selling coconut water at a beach in Mumbai on April 29. REUTERS

2020 under one law — the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 (OSH Code, 2020). While several unions are critical of the new law for watering down safety and inspection standards, the Union government is yet to officially notify its enforcement. This has meant that unions and the judiciary continue to rely on the older laws to seek redress and accountability.

The Indian Factories Act defines a factory as an enterprise with "10 or more" workers, but those registered under this law are less than a quarter of a million based on the latest available data. The Labour Bureau in its 2020 report observes "an increase of 2.48% in the number of total registered factories that is, from 2,22,012 in the beginning of the year to 2,27,510 at the end of the year 2020." This means the overwhelming majority of India's 64 million MSMEs are not registered under this law, and are therefore outside the purview of governmental inspections.

### What do they say about heat hazards?

When it comes to dealing with occupational heat, the Factories Act broadly defines "ventilation and temperature" and leaves it to the States to decide optimal standards based on specific industries. However, these regulations were framed more than five decades back. For instance, Maharashtra framed its rules under the law in 1963, while Tamil Nadu did so in 1950. Both these rules mention a maximum wet bulb temperature of 30°C on a shop floor with a height of 1.5 metres and also mention provisioning "adequate air movement of at least 30 meters per minute".

But these rules lack a breakdown of thermal comfort based on the level of activity, nor do they mention air conditioning, or other cooling alternatives. This is not surprising as the

rules were framed much before air conditioning became common as a heat coping method. But in the developing world, air conditioning is still a luxury at homes and a significant expense for businesses. With a warming climate, the government predicts 50% of Indian homes would have ACs by 2037, but we lack these numbers for businesses, indicating an urgent need to update India's Factories Act to incorporate technological changes in provisioning thermal comfort at businesses and add more categories of industries based on evolving production processes. Brazil for instance, mandates a stoppage of work "in cases where the WBGT (Wet Bulb Global Temperature) rises above 29.4°C for low intensity work, 27.3°C for moderate intensity work, 26.0°C for high intensity work, and 24.7°C for very high intensity work," the ILO mentions.

Speaking about extreme heat and instances of friction with top corporate management, S. Kannan, the leader of the recognised union at the BMW assembly plant at Mahindra World City, Chennai (which represents more than 200 of the 350 employees), pointed to an instance at the company where workers demanded additional "lemon juice, buttermilk, and tender coconuts at the canteen" to ensure hydration last year. He claimed that the workers concerns were scoffed at by the management as "petty" issues for "high income earners". Moreover, Mr. Kannan said that unions are pressured to submit not only from the management but from the State's bureaucracy who point to the "difficulty" in getting top class industries to set up shop in Tamil Nadu. They accuse unions of disincentivising MNCs from their expansion plans.

### What about other climate hazards?

Amendments are also required to address the handling of effluents and byproducts

disposal, as they could significantly impact human health based on temperature. Hindustan Unilever's thermometer manufacturing plant in Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu was shut in 2001, as it was found disposing mercury-laced glass waste in the centre of the town. *Frontline* reports that the company dumped 7.4 tonnes, leaving townspeople exposed to a highly toxic and vapourable chemical that causes a range of diseases from birth defects to several types of cancer. "This was our main case in the Madras High Court against the company," tells S. Meenakshi, who was among a battery of lawyers representing retrenched workers and townspeople seeking redress for the serious illnesses caused across Kodaikanal that were attributed to Mercury exposure. A charge denied by Unilever, even as it reached an out of court settlement with workers in 2016 after a decades-long battle.

Another significant occupational illness to be addressed in the coming decades would be the possible rise in silicosis cases. Silicosis is a fatal and incurable pulmonary disease caused by what is commonly called "lung dust", the fine particulate matter emitted in the mines of coal, precious gems like quartz and diamonds and stone quarries. India is set to record its highest coal production ever in the financial year 2023-24 and has expanded the number of mines to meet rising power demand, leading to an increase in the probability of silica exposure. In 2016, the Supreme Court ordered the Gujarat government to pay ₹3 lakh as compensation to the families of 238 victims who died of silicosis while working at a quartz mine in Godhra. The Court blamed Gujarat's bureaucracy for "neglecting" to protect the adivasi migrant labourers who worked in the mines.

It would have been the job of inspectors under the Factories Act to inspect and enforce the provisioning gears that protect employees from silica exposure. While the T.N. and Maharashtra rules under the Factories Act elaborate on silica exposure prevention, they do not mandate the use of silica removal technologies at stone quarries or mines. Again, these technologies were not available when these rules were framed. Mr. Kannan says that, "labour conciliation, industrial safety and worker welfare are weak wings of the government. There are several vacancies, both at the inspector level, and at the clerical level, and our main concern is training, sensitisation and the competence of inspectors to conduct specialised inspections." He spoke about instances where inspectors fear the "influence that private sector management, particularly, MNC's wield" with State bureaucrats. However, a retired official from Tamil Nadu's Directorate of Industrial Safety and Health, R. Jayakumar countered the charge of incompetence and unfilled job posts in the department he headed. He stated vacancies might have been temporary. "In fact, when the BOCW Act (Buildings and Construction Workers Act, 1996) was enacted, we formed a new wing and created new posts to look into its implementation," Mr. Jayakumar said, referring to the law that regulates employment in the construction sector. But he admitted that climate change raises concerns about working conditions.

Often the link between labour productivity, human health and climate change gets scant attention, as the focus remains on economic and infrastructure resilience. The ILO report points to the need to ensure a universally accepted regulatory framework to climate-proof work and workers.

## THE GIST

▼ The ILO has identified six key impacts of climate change. They are — excessive heat, solar ultraviolet radiation, extreme weather events, workplace air pollution, vector-borne diseases and agrochemicals.

▼ When it comes to dealing with occupational heat, the Factories Act broadly defines "ventilation and temperature" and leaves it to the States to decide optimal standards based on specific industries. However, these regulations were framed more than five decades back.

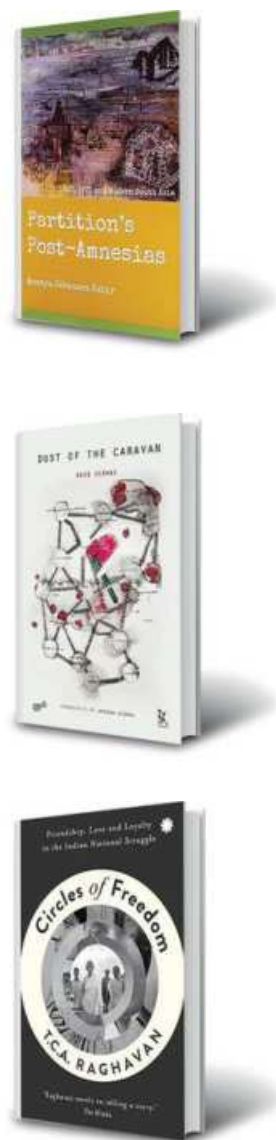
▼ Amendments are also required to address the handling of effluents and byproducts disposal, as they could significantly impact human health based on temperature.



BIBLIOGRAPHY



On remembering: The Partition Museum at the Dara Shikoh Library, Ambedkar University, in New Delhi. FILE PHOTO



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

K. Subrahmanian

“Bed-ridden, good riddance (M. Gurudass, Madras).”  
 “‘Ridden’ in ‘bed-ridden’ is from ‘ride.’ Ride-rode-ridden. ‘Bed-ridden’ means ‘confined to bed by illness.’ When it is used in a combination, ‘ridden’ means ‘inflicted or afflicted.’  
 He is conscience-ridden.  
 This is a rat-ridden house.  
 ‘Riddance’ in ‘good riddance’ is from the verb ‘rid’ which means ‘to make free, relieve.’ It is followed by ‘of.’ From this we get ‘to get rid of.’  
 I managed to get rid of him. He was such a nuisance.  
 ‘Good riddance’ means ‘welcome relief from an unwanted person or thing.’  
 She has left at last. Good riddance!  
 Rid is also the past tense and past participle of ‘rid.’ ‘Ridden’ is also used as the past tense of ‘rid’ occasionally, but it is archaic. ‘Riddance’ is the noun form of ‘rid.’”

“Addicted (S. Sarojini, Srirangam).”  
 “‘Addicted’ is followed by the preposition ‘to’ and a noun or a gerund.  
 He is addicted to drugs.  
 She is addicted to watching TV.  
 You can also say ‘She is a drug addict, He is a drug addict’. But don’t say ‘He is addicted to take drugs.’ ‘Addicted’ goes with something bad. It is also used humorously for what is not harmful.  
 She is addicted to detective novels.  
 He is addicted to jogging.”  
 “Possible, probable”.  
 “‘Possible’ means ‘that may or may not happen.’  
 It is possible that he will win.  
 ‘Probable’ means ‘that may be expected to happen, that has a good chance of being true or correct.’  
 There is greater certainty in ‘probable’ than in ‘possible.’  
 Rain is possible, but not probable.”  
 “Bundle of nerves (A. Siddilingam, Wanaparthy)”  
 “‘Bundle of nerves’ is an idiom which means ‘in a very nervous state.’  
 He is a bundle of nerves before any examination.  
 She was a bundle of nerves at the interview.”  
 “Pull one’s punches (S. Siddappa, Tumkur)”  
 “‘It is an idiom used in informal contexts. It means ‘to soften the blow and to avoid’ offence by holding back a little.’ When a boxer intentionally gives a soft blow to avoid hurting the other boxer, he is said to pull his punches. Figuratively, ‘to pull one’s punches’ means ‘to criticise someone or something less severely than one would normally do.’  
 He pulled his punches when he talked about the plays of his friend.  
 It is the negative ‘pull no punches’ that is more frequently used.  
 She pulled no punches when she discussed the affairs of her party.  
 It means she did not spare her party.  
 Published in *The Hindu* on November 5, 1991.

# The memories of Partition in the contemporary imagination

Historians and writers of the subcontinent continue to discover different aspects of the Indian national movement for Independence, and Partition, looking beyond stereotypes and opening new flanks in the reading and understanding of history

Saleem Rashid Shah

British historian Eric Hobsbawm once remarked that “History is to nationalism what a poppy is to a heroin addict.” History is not something that can be comprehended just as a form of knowledge about the world we live in. It’s often effectively used for political purposes, and also at times invented, should this be necessary for the purpose.

This past is so constructed as to sustain a particular political ideology for which it is foundational. The colonial obsession towards understanding India and its past was instrumental in strengthening their political control over India. James Mill wrote *The History of British India* and maintained that this history was essentially that of two nations, the Hindu and the Muslim, quite distinctly separate and constantly in conflict. It is significant to understand that this reading of history substantially strengthened colonial rule over India. Its single and universally applied explanation of religion as the prime cause of every major historical activity is often discarded by professional historians.

The divide

Over seventy years after India’s independence from British rule and the subsequent partitioning of the country into India and Pakistan, discussions about this area of history continue to thrive in the contemporary imagination of the subcontinent. Writers and historians continue to discover different aspects and layers of the Indian national movement

and Partition.

The Indian national movement, argues T.C.A. Raghavan in his new book, *Circles of Freedom*, was a vast stream made of numerous and frequently contrarian little rivulets. Millions participated in it and there were many leaders, all well known in their time but who became invisible in the dazzle of Gandhi, Nehru, Patel and others who headlined the soundtrack of India’s struggle for freedom. His book puts the limelight on a veteran freedom fighter Asaf Ali and also on the circle he was embedded in and those with whom he associated himself at various points of his life and for different reasons. Sarojini Naidu was pre-eminent in this circle, her vibrant personality, her passionate championing of Hindu-Muslim unity made her one of the earliest standard bearers of the national movement.

The moderate’s predicament

Syed Hossain and Syed Mahmud – the journalist and the politician – complete this circle. Asaf’s story illustrates the predicament of the moderate Muslim in the national movement, viewed with suspicion by many in the Congress and as a renegade by many in his own community. Through the eyes of Asaf and his friends we encounter an alternative perspective on events, one rarely found in the mainstream narratives of India’s national movement.

The Partition of 1947 and 1971 marked significant chapters in South Asia’s history, characterised by migration, violence, bloodshed, and societal estrangement that often overshadow the enduring cultural bonds weaving through

the region. In her work, *Partition’s Post-Amnesia*, Ananya Jahanara Kabir links these partitions, revealing a collective amnesia ingrained in the post-Partition narrative that tends to fixate on stereotypical themes of violence and suffering. Kabir proposes a novel perspective by exploring objects, material culture, and artistic expressions, offering a fresh lens beyond the conventional narratives of Partition. By delving into cultural elements such as cuisine, artefacts, maps, and folk music, she illuminates a shared cultural heritage rooted in pre-Partition India, presenting a holistic view that transcends the compartmentalised histories of South Asia’s nations. The book prompts readers to look beyond the convenient assumptions of the post-Partition selves created by nationalist paradigms Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi.

Personal, political

Anis Kidwai in her book, *Dust of the Caravan* or *Ghubar-e-Karwan*, translated into English by her granddaughter Ayesha Kidwai, presents a cohesive narrative detailing the journey of a Muslim woman who integrates herself into the Indian freedom struggle. Initially viewing the world through a purdah and questioning the essence of a religious existence, she transforms into an advocate for women’s rights as an activist and parliamentarian. Kidwai’s memoir delves into her personal and political life, shedding light on forgotten figures of India’s freedom movement like Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew and Mridula Sarabhai. Kitchlew’s pivotal role as a mass leader of the Congress in Punjab

and a key figure in the Khilafat Movement faded into obscurity in the post-Partition era, while Sarabhai, a staunch advocate for women’s rights and dissent in democracy, faced marginalisation due to her opposition to Sheikh Abdullah’s arrest in 1953 and her vigorous campaign for his release.

Kidwai laments that despite India’s independence, the envisioned freedom did not materialise as expected. Sarabhai’s tireless efforts in assisting distressed women, initiatives for rural training, support for displaced women post-Partition, and establishment of a Women’s Service Home for Muslim girls were overshadowed by a persistent societal amnesia and remain unrectified.

The partition of India and Pakistan followed the hard-fought struggle for freedom, culminating in 1947. This freedom was the result of a long and protracted effort by numerous freedom fighters against British imperial rule. However, amidst the grand narrative of India’s journey to freedom, the lesser-known contributions of many unsung heroes often go unnoticed. Asaf Ali’s unwavering resolve for India’s freedom and Sarojini Naidu’s passionate advocacy for women’s rights are as significant as the more widely recognised milestones of the Indian national movement.

To clear the cobwebs and to have a more nuanced understanding of the Indian national movement and Partition, these three books serve as an excellent initial step.

Saleem Rashid Shah is a book critic and an independent writer based in Kashmir.

THE DAILY QUIZ

Some significant events occurred on May 2. Here is a quiz on observances, birthdays and everything else that happened on the day

Abhinava. K

QUESTION 1

This British football legend who was the runner up for the Ballon D’Or in 1999, was born on this day. He is married to a singer of a well-known pop group. Identify the footballer.

QUESTION 2

Tony Blair took charge as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom on this day in 1997. Which party did he belong to and how many terms did he serve as the PM?

QUESTION 3

Identify this best selling

novel about rural life in turn-of-the-century-China that won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1932. Also name the author of the book.

QUESTION 4

The first movie in a popular comic book saga was released on this day in 2008. The superhero is based on a comic book co-created by Stan Lee. Name the movie.

QUESTION 5

This song by Pink Floyd was banned in South Africa on this day by the Apartheid government as students had begun using it as a protest anthem. Identify the song.



Visual question:

May 2 is celebrated among fans as International Harry Potter day. What is the significance of May 2 in the Pottverse?

Questions and Answers to the previous day’s daily quiz:

- The reason why May 1 was chosen as labour day. **Ans: May 1 was chosen by the American Federation of Labour to commemorate a general strike in the U.S. which had begun on May 1, 1886**
  - This incident is considered significant to the origins of the International Workers’ Day. **Ans: Haymarket affair**
  - This was a social movement to regulate the length of a working day, preventing excesses and abuses of working time. **Ans: Eight-hour day**
  - The U.S. celebrates labour Day on this date as well. **Ans: September 1**
  - This political party first organised the May Day celebration in India. **Ans: Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan**
- Visual: The location where this statue is located. **Ans: Triumph of Labour in Marina Beach, Chennai. The statue is installed close to the site where the country’s first commemoration of May Day was held**
- Early Birds: K.N. Viswanathan| Rajmohan. V| Jyot Prakash Gulati| ViswanadhaRao Batchu| C. Saravanan

Word of the day

**Tendentious:** having or marked by a strong tendency, especially a controversial one

**Synonyms:** inclination, disposition

**Usage:** He gave them a tendentious account of recent elections.

**Pronunciation:** bit.ly/tendentiouspro

**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /ten’denʃəs/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to [letters@thehindu.co.in](mailto:letters@thehindu.co.in) with the subject ‘Text & Context’



## IN BRIEF



## Coal India production rose 7% to 61.8 MT in April

State-owned Coal India Ltd. (CIL) on Wednesday said its production increased 7.3% to 61.8 million tonnes in April. The company had produced 57.6 million tonnes of coal in the corresponding month of the previous fiscal, CIL said in a filing with the BSE. CIL accounts for more than 80% of domestic coal production. The company's coal offtake also registered a rise of 3.2% to 64.3 million tonnes last month, from 62.3 million tonnes in the year-earlier period. PTI

## SEBI makes nomination optional for joint MF accounts

Capital markets regulator SEBI on Wednesday made the nomination optional for jointly-held mutual fund (MF) accounts to promote ease of doing business. Additionally, SEBI allowed fund houses to have a single fund manager to oversee commodity and foreign investments. This would reduce the cost of managing the fund. These came after a working group constituted by SEBI reviewed MF regulations and recommended measures to promote ease of doing business. PTI

## FPIs withdrew ₹8,700 crore from Indian equities in April

Foreign investors turned net sellers in April, selling Indian equities worth almost ₹8,700 crore on concerns over a tweak in India's tax treaty with Mauritius and amid a sustained rise in U.S. bond yields. This followed a staggering net investment of ₹35,098 crore in March and ₹1,539 crore in February. The total inflow for 2024 so far stood at ₹2,222 crore in equities and ₹44,908 crore in debt. Net FPI outflows in equities was ₹8,671 crore, data with depositories showed. PTI

## Ambuja Cements posts Q4 net of ₹1,525.78 cr.

Press Trust of India  
NEW DELHI

Adani Group firm Ambuja Cements Ltd. on Wednesday reported consolidated net profit of ₹1,525.78 crore for the fourth quarter ended March.

The company had clocked a net profit of ₹763.30 crore in the January-March quarter a year earlier, the company said.

According to Ambuja Cements, the consolidated results for the quarter and the financial year ended March include the financial results of Sanghi Industries, which was acquired by the Adani Group firm last quarter. Hence, the results 'are not comparable.'

## Godrej firms to continue working on Vikhroli land development post split

The Hindu Bureau  
MUMBAI

Firms of the two groups that have been proposed to be formed post the split of the Godrej Group would continue to work together to execute development projects at Vikhroli, a Mumbai suburb, where Godrej & Boyce (G&B), the entity controlled by Jamshyd Godrej, owns 3,000 acres of land.

"Future development of Vikhroli presents a unique opportunity to create a holistic space in the metropolis of Mumbai where urban development and biodiversity co-exists harmoniously."



Jamshyd Godrej

ly," said Mr. Godrej, CMD, (G&B). "Godrej Construction and Godrej Properties bring complementary strengths, and this has translated into the launch of successful real estate projects in Vikhroli," the

## 'India one of key geographies affected by phishing attacks'

The Hindu Bureau  
BENGALURU

India is one of the key countries affected by phishing attacks, where employees often click on malicious links or attachments that appear to be from legitimate sources, often leading to severe financial losses, reported Verizon Business, a New Jersey-based provider of cybersecurity solutions and products.

However, Verizon Business said, there was a silver lining as far as India was concerned as reporting practices have improved, with 20% of users now identifying and reporting phishing during simulation tests. This was only the



first stepping stone, as enterprises can significantly reduce human error in cybersecurity by adopting a multi-pronged approach.

The company also said in its 2024 Data Breach Investigations Report that espionage attacks dominate APAC's cybersecurity landscape, including that of India. Some 25% of APAC cyberattacks are motivated by espionage, significantly

greater than the 6% and % in Europe and North America, respectively, and the region experienced a 180% growth in vulnerability exploitation.

On an average, it took organisations surveyed about 55 days to patch 50% of their critical vulnerabilities and the non-malicious human element was involved in more than two-thirds of these breaches.

The report, was prepared after analysing 30,458 security incidents and 10,626 confirmed breaches in 2023 (two-fold increase over 2022) in the APAC region. System intrusion, social engineering, and basic web-application attacks represent 95% of the breaches in APAC.

Jagriti Chandra  
NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Wednesday deregistered all 54 Go First aircraft following a Delhi High Court order last week, in which the court had given the country's aviation regulator five days to do so.

"All 54 aircraft... have been deregistered," a senior DGCA official said.

A total of 14 aircraft lessors including SMBC Aviation Capital Limited, Sky Leasing, GY Aviation Lease, ACG Aircraft Leas-

ing, BOC Aviation and China Development Bank Financial Leasing Company had moved the Delhi High Court last year seeking to regain control over the airline's fleet of leased planes. This had followed the National Company Law Tribunal's decision on May 10, 2023, to admit Go First's plea for voluntary insolvency and the consequential moratorium to protect the airline from adverse actions by its creditors.

Allows maintenance Last week, the Delhi High Court directed the DGCA to "forthwith and no later

## End of the runway

DGCA deregisters all 54 planes in Go Air's fleet after Delhi High Court orders regulator to act following a plea by aircraft lessors



Lessors including SMBC Aviation Capital, ACG Aircraft Leasing and China Development Bank Financial Leasing moved court

HC allowed lessors to inspect the planes and undertake maintenance of their aircraft  
Uncertainty over who will bear the parking charges owed to Airports Authority of India

than the next five working days process the Deregistration Applications", as well as facilitate their "export by providing an Export Certificate of Airwor-

thiness, a Ferry Flight Permit and all other documents and permissions as the Petitioners/Lessors may require". The court had also allowed lessors to

inspect the aircraft and undertake maintenance of the planes.

Industry officials said while the court had asked the Airports Authority of India to inform the DGCA of the parking charges owed, it was not clear whether these dues would have to be paid by the lessors or the Resolution Professional overseeing Go Air's affairs during the insolvency process.

Some said lessors were liable only for airport dues for three months preceding the filing of the insolvency plea as per the aeronautical information

circular. The aircraft were also not expected to fly out soon, as at least half of them had engine issues at the time Go First had halted operations, adding that lessors had had very limited visibility into the maintenance status of these planes since then, the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, added.

Wednesday's development marks exactly 365 days since Go First on May 2, 2023, announced it was filing for voluntary insolvency because of its dispute with Pratt and Whitney over the grounding of almost half of its fleet.

## 'Maruti Suzuki's total sales rose 5% to 1.68 lakh units in April'

Press Trust of India  
NEW DELHI

Automaker Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) on Wednesday reported a 4.7% increase in total sales at 1,68,089 units in April. The company had dispatched a total of 1,60,529 units to its dealers in the same month last year, MSI said in a statement.

Total domestic passenger vehicle sales were 1,37,952 units compared with 1,37,320 units in the year-earlier period, the carmaker added.

Sales of mini segment cars comprising Alto and S-Presso, declined to 11,519 units as against 14,110 units



in April 2023.

Sales of compact cars, including Baleno, Celerio, Dzire, Ignis, Swift, Tour S and WagonR, also fell to 56,953 units last month over 74,935 units in the year-earlier month.

Utility vehicles, consisting of Brezza, Ertiga, S-Cross and XL6, clocked a sales of 56,553 units last

month from 36,754 units earlier.

Sales of vans were 12,060 units in April as against 10,504 units a year earlier, while that of light commercial vehicle Super Carry stood at 2,496 units from 2,199 units in April 2023.

MSI said its exports last month stood at 22,160 units compared with 16,971 units in the same month last year.

Tata Motors sales rise Tata Motors on Wednesday said its total wholesales rose 11.5% year-on-year to 77,521 units last month as compared with 69,599 units in April 2023.

## 'IL&amp;FS MF makes on-time redemption of ₹606 crore'

The Hindu Bureau  
MUMBAI

IL&FS Mutual Fund, among the largest infrastructure debt funds in the Mutual Fund format, on Wednesday said it made an on-time redemption in IL&FS Infrastructure Debt Fund Series 1C (IDF Scheme 1C), redeeming ₹606 crore against the original invested capital of ₹275 crore giving an annual return of 8% to investors since inception.

The IDF scheme 1C was redeemed on 30 April. Previously, IL&FS Mu-

Total funds returned to investors over the past five years since April 2019 has been ₹1,580 crore'

tual Fund had redeemed schemes on time as per schedule 1A in April 2019, 1B in April 2021 and 3A in January 2023.

"Total funds returned to investors of the mutual fund over the past five years since April 2019 has been ₹1,580 crore," IL&FS Mutual Fund said in a statement.

## April petrol sales rises 12%, diesel slips 2%

Press Trust of India  
NEW DELHI

India's petrol consumption soared 12.3% in April, but diesel sales continued to slide (by 2.3%) despite India entering hectic electioneering for general elections, preliminary data of state-owned firms showed.

## Correction

The headline for a story on core sector output (May 1, 2024) erroneously said output 'slid 5.2% in March'. It should have read 'Core sectors' growth slid to 5.2% in March'.

## Private refiners' crude-oil imports from Russia said to be at 12-month high in April

Rishi Ranjan Kala  
NEW DELHI

Private refiners Reliance Industries (RIL) and Rosneft-backed Nayara Energy imported about 7,70,000 barrels per day (b/d) of crude oil from Russia in April, the highest in a year.

Analysts and trade sources attribute the numbers to more export volumes shipped out of Russia and lifting of lower cargoes by Chinese refiners.

Sensing the opportunity to procure more barrels, public refiners such as Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation (HPCL), too, imported as much as 1.02 million barrel per day (mb/d) last month, a seven-month high.

According to energy intelligence firm Vortexa, India imported more than 1.72 mb/d crude oil from Russia in April, which is also the highest in the last nine months. Imports last month were 26% higher m-o-m and almost flat on an annual basis (April 2023: 1.74 mb/d).

More Russian barrels

Vortexa's Head of APAC Analysis, Serena Huang told *businessline*, "Higher Russian crude exports in February and March as well as lower imports by Chinese refiners have made available more volumes for Indian refiners. Given that Russian crude cargoes are likely to be more discounted than Middle-East grades, Indian refiners are likely to opt for the former."

When asked about the impact of sanctions, she



Well-oiled supplies: RIL and Nayara Energy imported 7,70,000 barrels per day of crude oil from Russia in April. REUTERS

explained that the biggest impact of western sanctions on selected shipping companies and vessels carrying Russian crude to India has been the disruption on Russian Sokol deliveries. But, it had minimal impact on India's overall imports of Russian crude.

Vortexa's Senior Oil Risk Analyst Armen Azizian, in an April 16 commentary, said, "Russian crude STS (ship-to-ship) activity (excluding CPC Blend & KEB-CO) reached 3,10,000 b/d in April (days 1-15), a 1,20,000 b/d increase m-o-m and a 10-month high. Russian Urals is the sole grade transferred via STS in April so far, which has reached a 12-month high."

In 2024 so far, Vortexa observed nine very large crude carriers (VLCCs) transferred Russian crude via STS.

Driving force

VLCCs have been the driving force behind Russian Urals STS activity moving upwards in recent months, especially in April. More than 60% of Urals transferred in April were because of VLCCs loading via STS from Aframax, which increased STS vol-

umes (three Aframax feed one VLCC), he added.

"This return of VLCCs to the Russian trade, specifically these tankers involved in the sanctioned trade, suggests there is surplus tonnage in the VLCC segment of the opaque fleet," Mr. Azizian said.

Vortexa data show crude-oil imports from India's traditional suppliers in the Middle East fell in April. India imported 7,76,000 b/d from its second-largest supplier Iraq last month compared with 1.09 mb/d in March.

Imports from Saudi Arabia were down for the second month in April at 6,80,000 b/d (March: 7,68,000 b/d). "The move to import more Middle-Eastern crude has been a backdrop for potential disruption in purchasing Russian crude. But prices of Middle-East grades have been rising amid limited export volumes and robust demand from Asian refiners, which is likely to cap Indian refiners' appetite if they are able to secure sufficient discounted Russian volumes," Ms. Huang said.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

## NaBFID expects loan sanctions to top ₹2-lakh cr. in FY25

K. Ram Kumar  
MUMBAI

Government-owned National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID) expects its loan sanctions pipeline to double to about ₹2 lakh crore by March-end 2025 against about ₹1 lakh crore as of March-end.

To support loan growth, the development financial institution (DFI) is planning to mop up about ₹53,000 crore this year via bond market, bank and multilateral credit lines.

The All India Financial Institution was set up in 2022 under the NaBFID Act, 2021, as the principal entity for infrastructure financing in the country.

"We started our operations in December 2022. We sanctioned ₹18,560 crore in January-March '23 quarter and ₹83,280 crore in FY24. We crossed the ₹1-lakh crore (cumulative) loan sanctions mark in March 2024.

Brownfield projects

"Within this sanctions pipeline, about 35% is for greenfield projects (predominantly in the power and roads segments) and 65% is for brownfield (expansion) projects, refinancing existing infrastructure assets, lending to NBFCs (in the infrastructure space such as PFC and REC) and Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs)," MD Rajkiran Rai G. said. NaBFID's outstanding loan book as of March-end 2024 was about ₹36,000 crore against about ₹10,000 crore as of March-end 2023.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)



## Retail traders turn to riskier options writing



**New avenue:** Daily, weekly expiry raises the probability of making money for options writers. GETTYIMAGES/ISTOCK

**Ashley Coutinho**  
MUMBAI

Retail and wealthy individuals are gravitating towards writing options contracts – the more riskier side of the options market and once the preserve of large institutions or expert traders. The comes amid regulatory concerns on rising retail participation in the derivatives segment, where odds are stacked against them. Options trading gained momentum in the aftermath of the pandemic. Until now, most individuals focussed on options buying, given the lower risks as losses are limited to the premium paid, which could be a few hundred or thousand rupees. Options writers face unlimited risk and need to pay high margins, as much as to ₹1-2 lakh per trade. “There has been a 20-30% uptick in the number of wealthy and retail individuals that have taken to options writing in the past six months or so,” said Soni Patnaik, AVP - Derivative Research, JM Financial Services.

### Decline in volatility

The advent of daily and weekly expiry has raised the probability of making money for options writers. Market volatility slid considerably over the past three years, which is why options writers have not had many episodes of losing significant money. “We haven’t seen large corrections of 10-15% during this period. The low intra-month volatility significantly raised chances for options writers to make money,” said Devarsh Vakil, Deputy Head - Retail Research, HDFC Securities. (The writer is with *The Hindu* businessline)

# Phones, currency exchange... some businesses capitalise on Taliban rule

Taliban takeover sent Afghanistan's economy into a tailspin, billions in international funds were frozen, tens of thousands of highly-skilled Afghans fled the country taking their money with them; but, even amid difficult conditions, some businesses are making money out of the Taliban rule

### NEWS ANALYSIS

**Associated Press**  
KABUL, AFGHANISTAN

**Y**unis Safi, a businessman in Kabul, knows very well the importance of showing off your phone if you want something done. “In Afghanistan, your phone is your personality,” he said, smiling, a jewel-encrusted ring on each hand. One boasts an emerald, the other a fat Russian diamond.

“When you go to a meeting with the government, the better your phone, the more they respect you.”

Mr. Safi runs a phone shop in the posh Shar-e-Naw neighborhood. An armed guard stands outside. The iPhone 15 Pro Max adorns the shelves, retailing for \$1,400. He has customers ready to part with this sum of money, which may come as a surprise to some given the country's economic woes and more than half the population relying on humanitarian aid to survive.

Afghanistan's finances were on shaky ground even before the Taliban seized power in 2021. The budget relied heavily on foreign aid and corruption was rife. The takeover sent Afghanistan's economy into a tailspin, billions in international funds were frozen, and tens of thousands



**Zest for money:** About \$10 million changes hands daily at the currency-exchange market. AP

of highly skilled Afghans fled the country and took their money with them.

But, even amid difficult conditions, some businesses are making money out of Taliban rule. Women are reduced to clients however, as authorities barred them from most jobs.

### Diverse client base

He has tapped into a diverse consumer base – the ones hungry for the latest iPhone release and those happier with simple handsets, which make up the bulk of his sales and sell for between \$20 and \$200.

The Taliban used to attack phone towers and threaten telecom firms, accusing them of colluding with U.S. and other international forces in helping track insurgents' move-



Afghanistan's finances were on shaky ground even before the Taliban seized power in 2021; the budget relied heavily on foreign aid and corruption was rife

ments through mobile phone signals. Now, they're investing in 4G.

The Communications Ministry says two million new SIM cards have been issued in the past two years and subscriber numbers are increasing. Ministry spokesperson Enayatullah Alokozai said the government was ploughing \$100 million into telecom sector and had fully res-

tored hundreds of towers.

There are 22.7 million active SIM cards in a country of 41 million people. Of these, 10 million are for voice calls and the rest for mobile Internet.

According to Trade Ministry, more than 1,584 tonne of phones came into Afghanistan in 2022. Last year, it was 1,895 tonne.

Mr. Safi said he has many Taliban customers and it's the younger ones who prefer iPhones. “Of course they need smartphones. They use social media, they like making videos. The iPhone has better security than Samsung. The camera resolution, processor, memory are all better. Afghans use their smartphones like anyone else.”

Mr. Safi has the iPhone 15 Pro Max, wears an Apple

Watch Ultra and owns three cars. Business was bad immediately after the Taliban takeover but it's improving, he said. “The people buying the new-release iPhones are the ones with relatives abroad sending money to Afghanistan.”

Remittances are a lifeline, although they're less than half of what they were before the Taliban took power and the banking sector collapsed.

At the raucous Shahzada Market in Kabul, hundreds of money exchangers clutch stacks of local currency, the afghani, and noisily hawk their wares. They occupy every floor, stairwell, nook and cranny.

Abdul Rahman Zirak, a senior official at the money exchange market, estimates \$10 million changes hands daily. The diaspora sends mostly U.S. dollars to families, who exchange it for the afghani.

There used to be more ways to send money to Afghanistan before the Taliban seized control. But there are no more links to SWIFT or international banking and that's a major reason why business is brisk at the market. “The work of money exchangers has increased and strengthened,” Mr. Zirak said.

Trade becomes hectic during the holidays. During the holy month of Ramadan, 20,000 people visited the market daily and it took more than 90 mi-

nutes to enter, he said.

“If the sanctions are lifted and assets unfrozen, then, maybe our business will drop. But I don't see it happening. Many don't have bank accounts. Unemployment is high, so people send money. Our business will be needed for years to come.”

### Islamic texts

Irfanullah Arif, who runs Haqqani Books, a specialist retailer of Islamic texts, is also upbeat about his fortunes. The majority of his customers are teachers and students at religious schools, or madrassas. There are at least 20,000 madrassas in Afghanistan.

While Mr. Arif's business suffered like everyone else's in the chaotic aftermath of the takeover, there was another reason. “All the students left the madrassas and went to work for the (Taliban) government,” said Mr. Arif.

The Taliban's push for religious education has given him some relief. Last year, he sold 25,000 textbooks. But there's a price to pay for success. Mr. Arif imports everything and the Taliban are laser-focused on collecting revenue, even on Islamic literature.

M. Arif pays a tax of 170 afghanis (\$2.36) on a carton of 100 books, the shipping cost for which is 500 afghanis (\$6.95). Taxes on his bookstore have tripled under Taliban rule.

## Music to ears



**Old is gold:** Operators work in the pressing stage of vinyl records production at the Polysom factory in Belford Roxo, Brazil. Vinyl's comeback in Brazil follows a global trend over the last 15 years. In the U.S. alone, revenue from vinyl records hit \$1.4 billion in 2023, according to the Recording Industry Association of America. AP

## China travel surges for May holiday but consumers remain cautious

### Reuters

Travel by rail and car across China surged on Wednesday, the first day of a major public holiday, as consumers remained focused on keeping expenses down in a challenged economy.

In the run-up to the five-day holiday that began with May Day, domestic airline fares were falling and forecasts suggested more travellers were opting to drive rather than fly, or booked early to save.

Travel of all kinds has rebounded since China lifted strict COVID control measures at the end of 2022, but consumer spending on those trips has failed to keep up, limiting the boost



**Missing momentum:** Consumer spending on trips has failed to keep up, limiting the boost to the broader economy. AFP

to the broader economy.

China has set an economic growth target for 2024 of around 5%, which many analysts say will be a challenge to achieve without much more stimulus.

China's manufacturing and services activity both

expanded at a slower pace in April, official surveys showed, suggesting some loss of momentum. “There is indeed significant pressure,” Lin Yu, 38, who was visiting Beijing.

“Every family's situation is different, and it clearly

also depends on the industry you work in.”

By the fourth week of April, the average price for an economy flight in China slid 38% from the first week of the month to the equivalent of just under \$97, according to VariFlight, an aviation data service provider.

“Chinese airlines must adapt to these changes,” said Zheng Hongfeng, VariFlight, who said the fare declines showed travellers were booking early in a highly-competitive market.

About 58 million cars are likely to be on roads every day during the holiday while railways carried more than 20 million passengers on Wednesday alone, as per State media.

# BoJ's hawkish whispers drowned out by rowdy yen sell-off

### NEWS ANALYSIS

**Reuters**  
TOKYO

The Bank of Japan's decision to keep policy unchanged last week gave yen bears plenty of sell cues, but largely overlooked in the stampede were signals the central bank could raise rates in several stages in years ahead, with a hike possible in autumn.

The yen hit a fresh 34-year low as markets focused on the BoJ's decision on Friday to keep interest rates around zero and a lack of signals from Governor Kazuo Ueda that the currency's falls may quicken the timing of the next rate hike.

BOJ watchers say while the central bank's quarterly report and comments from Mr. Ueda clearly suggest consecutive rate hikes are on the table, its failure to effectively communicate its policy intentions has exacerbated the yen's selloff.

### Inflation projection

In the quarterly report released on Friday, which serves as a basis for long-term monetary policy, the BOJ projected inflation to stay around its 2% target in the next three years, and said price growth was likely to be at “a level generally consistent” with its target from around late 2025.

The report also included for the first time language that the central bank would “adjust the degree of monetary accommoda-



**Quiet undercurrent:** Yen bears overlooked signals the BoJ could raise rates in the years ahead. REUTERS

tion” – code for rate hikes, according to BOJ watchers – if the economy and prices meet projections.

“Taken together, the BOJ is essentially declaring it has a consecutive rate-

hike plan in mind,” said former BOJ official Nobuyasu Atago, who expects the next hike to come in September.

“It's clear the central bank is steadily laying the

groundwork for a rate-hike path that could take short-term rates up to around 1% by the end of 2026,” said Atago, currently chief economist at Rakuten Securities Economic Research

Institute.

While ignored by traders who were looking for stronger warnings on the weak yen, Mr. Ueda said the BOJ could preemptively hike rates if the boost to inflation until around autumn this year,” said a source familiar with the BOJ's thinking.

“In sum, the BOJ is signalling there's a pretty good chance the next rate hike will come around that time,” the source said.

### Communication fumble

Having ended eight years of negative interest rates and other remnants of its

massive stimulus programme in March, the BOJ now sets the short-term policy rate in a 0-0.1% range.

Many market players expect the BOJ to raise the rate to 0.2% or 0.25% later this year, though they are divided on how quickly it could move thereafter.

In a sign the BOJ might not wait too long after its next hike, Mr. Ueda said he expects short-term rates to rise near Japan's neutral rate of interest – seen by many economists as being anywhere between 0.5% and 1.5% – around late 2025 through 2026.

“If one were to take the report and Mr. Ueda's comments at face value, the BOJ's short-term target rate could reach 1% in the latter half of fiscal 2025,” said

Naoya Hasegawa, chief bond strategist at Okasan Securities Research.

### Neutral rates

The BOJ currently does not disclose its estimates on Japan's neutral rate of interest, which is the rate at which monetary policy is neither contractionary nor expansionary.

But Mr. Ueda said last month the BOJ will be “extracting insights on the neutral rate” in the process of raising rates.

He also said on Friday the BOJ would continue work to narrow the estimated neutral rate, suggesting the level would be crucial not just in judging the pace of future rate hikes but the bank's communication on the monetary policy outlook.



## LONDON

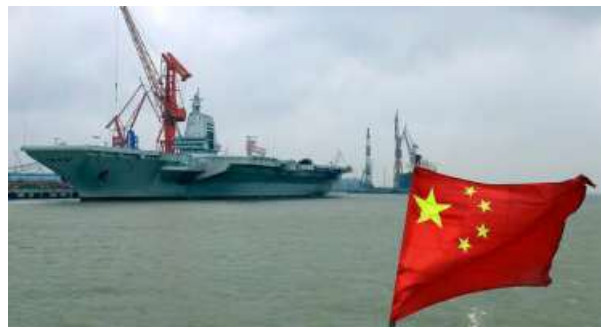
## 17-year-old held as 'broken glass' attack injures duo at U.K. school



A 17-year-old boy was arrested on Wednesday after three persons including a child were attacked with a "sharp object believed to be broken glass" at a school in northern England, police said. The attack came days after a similar incident in Wales. Two adults suffered minor injuries but did not require hospital treatment. AFP

## BEIJING

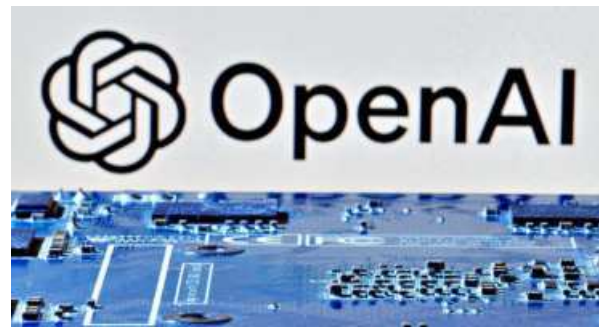
## China's third aircraft carrier Fujian conducts first sea trials



China's Fujian aircraft carrier held maiden sea trials on Wednesday, a key next step in a vast naval build-up by Beijing as it carves out a more assertive role for itself in the Pacific and beyond. The Fujian is China's third aircraft carrier after the Liaoning and the Shandong vessels and is the Chinese navy's largest-ever ship. AFP

## SAN FRANCISCO

## U.S. newspapers sue OpenAI, Microsoft over AI chatbots



Eight U.S. newspapers sued OpenAI and Microsoft in a New York federal court for violating their copyright to train the technology behind ChatGPT and Copilot chatbots. The papers, which include The New York Daily News and The Chicago Tribune, are owned by Alden Global Capital, a Florida-based investment firm. AFP

## NEW YORK

## U.S. novelist Paul Auster, known for 'The New York Trilogy' dies at 77



Paul Auster, 77, the prolific American novelist whose works included 'The New York Trilogy', has died of complications from lung cancer. Auster died on Tuesday at his home in Brooklyn. He made his name with noirish, existentialist novels about lonely writers, outsiders and down-and-outers that were a hit in Europe particularly. AFP

## In Israel, Blinken asks Hamas to accept 'very strong' deal

The Secretary of State reiterates U.S. opposition to Israel PM's Rafah invasion plans as he meets Netanyahu and Opposition leader Yair Lapid; we will not rest until everyone is back home, he says

Agence France-Presse  
TEL AVIV

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken called on Wednesday on Hamas to accept a "very strong" ceasefire-for-hostages offer as he vowed to put a priority on families seeking to reunite with loved ones.

In rare scenes for the top U.S. diplomat, who has faced furore at home and abroad over President Joe Biden's support for Israel in its campaign against Hamas, Mr. Blinken was greeted outside his Tel Aviv hotel by Israelis waving U.S. flags and chanting, "Thank you, Biden! Thank you, Blinken!"

Mr. Blinken, who also met privately with hostage families, told them that freeing the hostages seized by militants on October 7 was "at the heart of everything we do".

"There is a very strong



Reassurance: Antony Blinken meets with families of hostages kidnapped in the October 7 attack, in Tel Aviv on Wednesday. AFP

proposal on the table right now. Hamas needs to say yes, and needs to get this done," Mr. Blinken told the protesters, many of whom chanted for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to halt the war.

"We will not rest until everyone - men, women, soldier, civilian, young, old - is back home," he said.

Following a meeting with Mr. Blinken, Israel's

Netanyahu's coalition government, including those from the far-right, have criticised the negotiations, throwing doubt on the government's unity.

## Ceasefire 'now'

In Jerusalem on Wednesday, Mr. Blinken spoke at length with Mr. Netanyahu, who despite calls for a ceasefire has been vowing to go ahead with an offensive in Rafah - the city in southern Gaza where around 1.5 million Palestinians have taken shelter - regardless of U.S. opposition or the fate of hostage negotiations.

In that discussion, Mr. Blinken reiterated the U.S. opposition to a Rafah incursion, a U.S. official said.

Speaking earlier with Israeli President Isaac Herzog, Mr. Blinken said the U.S. was "determined to get a ceasefire that brings the hostages home - and to get it now".

Opposition leader Yair Lapid insisted that Mr. Netanyahu "does not have any political excuse not to move to a deal for the release of the hostages".

"He has a majority in the Knesset, and if needed, I'll make sure he has a majority in the government," he said on X, formerly Twitter.

Various members of Mr.

## 'Australia has laws to deal with foreign interference'

Kallol Bhattacharjee  
NEW DELHI

Australia will uphold its democratic values in the face of "foreign interference", Foreign Minister Penny Wong said on Wednesday in response to a question on reports that India at one point in the recent past had a "nest of spies" on Australian soil. The response came after the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) had earlier reported that Indian "spies" were "kicked out" after they were "caught trying to steal secrets about sensitive defence projects and airport security".

"[...]You would be unsurprised to hear me respond that we don't comment on intelligence matters. But at a level of principle about the democracy, I think you would have heard me and other Ministers on many occasions assert the importance of our democratic principles, assert the importance of ensuring that we maintain the resilience



Penny Wong

of our democracy, including in the face of any suggestion of foreign interference, and we have laws to deal with that," Ms. Wong said in response to a question from the Australian media.

Australia and India are close strategic partners and both are members of the Quad formation along with Japan and the U.S.

That apart, Australia and India have also signed an ECTA - Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement, and are in talks for a comprehensive trade pact. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation earlier reported that Indian operatives were

caught while they were trying to access "classified information on Australia's trade relationships", indicating the broad nature of the alleged Indian network that reportedly also surveilled upon members of the Indian diaspora. Despite growing ties, India in recent years has faced repeated difficulties with the Khalistan movement that caused irritants in New Delhi's relationship with Australia where the pro-Khalistan movement has held protests in major cities.

Last week, ABC's India bureau chief Avani Dias said, she had to leave India "abruptly" indicating difficulties in getting a visa extension. Officials here, however, indicated later that she was given the required visa extension. Ms. Dias had informed The Hindu earlier that her in-depth research into the Khalistan issue which led her to the home of the slain pro-Khalistan ideologue Hardeep Singh Nijjar had drawn an aggressive response from the Indian officials.

## U.S. expects accountability from India in Pannun case

Suhasini Haidar  
WASHINGTON

The U.S. expects "accountability" and is raising concerns over the Pannun case with New Delhi regularly, the State department said, responding for the first time to the latest details reported by the Washington Post this week. The report named an Indian intelligence official for allegedly ordering the assassination of a Khalistani activist in New York in June 2023, and also claimed that U.S. authorities believe that the then R&AW chief and NSA Ajit Doval were aware of the plot.

"We continue to expect accountability from the Government of India based on the results of the Indian inquiry committee's work, and we are regularly working with them," State Department Principal Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel said, in response to a question about the Post's article, where he did not deny its content.

## 'S. Korea discussing participation in AUKUS tech pact'

Agence France-Presse  
SYDNEY

South Korea's Defence Minister on Wednesday said his country was actively discussing participation in a landmark defence technology pact between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

"During today's meeting we also discussed the possibility of partnering with AUKUS pillar two," Shin Won-sik said, referring to a pact focused on developing hypersonic weapons, drones and other advanced technologies.

Mr. Shin was speaking after a meeting of Australian and South Korean Defence and Foreign Ministers in Melbourne.

AUKUS was established in 2021 with two main goals in mind: "Pillar one"

aims to provide Australia with nuclear-powered attack submarines. South Korea is not expected to be part of that project.

## Pillar two

"Pillar two" focuses on developing advanced war-fighting capabilities such as artificial intelligence, undersea drones and hypersonic missiles.

Australia, the U.K. and the U.S. have said they are open to other partners taking part, with Japan, South Korea and New Zealand all said to be in consideration.

"Korea is obviously a country with deeply impressive technology," said Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles. "So as AUKUS pillar two develops, I think there will be opportunities in the future".

## Protest in Tbilisi



Riot police use a water cannon during a protest against "the Russian law" in Tbilisi in Georgia on Wednesday. Clashes broke out between the police and demonstrators protesting a new Bill intended to track foreign influence that the Opposition denounced as Russia-inspired. AP

## No evidence cipher was in Imran Khan's custody: Pak. court

Press Trust of India  
ISLAMABAD

In a fresh twist in the cipher case, the Islamabad High Court observed that the Federal Investigation Agency has nothing to prove that jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan retained the confidential diplomatic cable and it went missing from his possession.

An Islamabad High Court (IHC) Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb, who on Tuesday resumed hearing appeals filed by 71-year-old Mr. Khan and his then Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi against their conviction in the cipher case, questioned whether on not there was any record available to prove that the Mr. Khan retained the cipher.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder was sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment along with Mr. Qureshi in the cipher case in which Mr. Khan showed a piece of paper - allegedly a copy of a diplomatic cipher - at a public rally in Islamabad, claiming it as proof of a conspiracy against his government by a foreign power.

Mr. Khan had brandished the cipher paper just two weeks before the ouster of the PTI government in April 2022 through a vote of no-confidence.

Earlier, a Foreign Ministry report suggested that



Imran Khan

almost every recipient of the cipher, including the former Army chief and the chief justice, returned the confidential document after a case was registered against Mr. Khan.

While special prosecutor Hamid Ali Shah explained the cipher movement from the Foreign Ministry to the PM Office, Justice Farooq asked: "Is there any record of the cipher's movement that it was handed over to the Prime Minister by the principal secretary?" Mr. Shah replied that Azam Khan, the then-principal secretary, testified that the cipher was handed to Mr. Khan and was never returned.

"We believe it's hearsay," remarked the chief justice, adding that there was a possibility that Mr. Khan had asked the secretary to return the cipher.

Shah, however, said the court had ample reason to believe that Mr. Khan received and perused the cipher based on which he made public speeches and even sent a demarche to the U.S.

## Turkiye sees May Day protests

Agence France-Presse  
ISTANBUL

The Turkiye police fired tear gas and rubber bullets at protesters and arrested more than 200 people while skirmishes broke out in France, as May 1 rallies around the world drew tens of thousands of demonstrators on Wednesday.

## In a first, U.K. sends asylum seeker to Rwanda

Sriram Lakshman  
LONDON

In a first, a migrant whose asylum application was rejected by the United Kingdom was sent to Rwanda under a voluntary scheme, according to reports in the British press.

The unnamed man, who was relocated under a scheme that pays migrants £3,000 to leave, took a commercial flight out of the U.K. on Monday night

He took a flight from the U.K. to arrive in Kigali under a scheme that pays £3,000 to leave

and arrived in the Rwandan capital of Kigali, according to The Sun, which first reported the story.

U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak had vowed to begin forcibly removing migrants with failed asy-

lum claims to Rwanda starting in July in a bid to deter migrants from crossing the English Channel on boats to enter the U.K.

This is separate from the voluntary scheme that was announced in March and is a variant of an existing scheme where those without a right to remain in the U.K. are given financial assistance if they agree to leave the country.

The move was criticised by the Opposition. Yvette

Cooper, Labour's Shadow Home Secretary, called it an "extortionate pre-election gimmick costing U.K. taxpayers".

As the U.K. heads towards an election, the Conservative government is keen to show that it is curbing migration to the U.K. Three major food delivery companies - Deliveroo, Just Eat and Uber Eats will begin checking substitute drivers' right to work documents.

A government Minister, on Tuesday, defended the deportation agreement with Rwanda, despite a Home Office impact assessment which said that only 2,143 of the 5,700 migrants who were identified for deportation could be located.

The individuals not reporting to the Home Office "will be located by law enforcement and be put on the planes as well", Health Secretary Victoria Atkins said in an interview.





Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese attends a rally against violence on women in Canberra on April 28. AP

## Violence against women a 'national crisis': Australia PM

Agence France-Presse  
SYDNEY

Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Wednesday declared violence against women a "scourge" and a "national crisis", after protests in several major cities.

Meeting State Premiers, the Prime Minister announced a raft of measures and funding to tackle "toxic male extremist views", curb deepfake pornography and fund help for victims. Mr. Albanese told Australians that "we all have to take responsibility" for stamping out violence.

So far this year, 28 women have been killed in the country — an average of one death every four days. By comparison, 14 women died in the same period last year.

The deaths have sparked a reckoning, with domestic violence survivors and support services demanding stricter laws at nationwide protests last week. New data from the Australian government showed that between 2022 and 2023, there were 34 women killed by a former or current partner, a 28% increase from the previous year.

Mr. Albanese on Wednesday announced new legislation to ban deep fake pornography and additional funding for the country's online watchdog to pilot age assurance technologies.

He also announced Aus\$925 million in funding to bolster support services for those fleeing violent situations.

Domestic violence services said the announcement was a step in the right direction.

# Months after TikTok ban, Nepalese fight in court while finding ways around it

The hugely popular video-sharing platform, which has faced restrictions in several countries for allegedly breaking data rules, was banned in Nepal in November last year; some have skirted the ban entirely via virtual private networks, while others have moved the country's top court against it

Agence France-Presse  
KATHMANDU

When Nepal suddenly announced a ban on TikTok in November last year, lawyer Sunil Rajan Singh was determined to fight what he said was a government effort to hide its wrongdoings.

The hugely popular video-sharing platform has faced restrictions in several countries for allegedly breaking data rules and for its supposed harmful impact on youth.

Last week the United States became the latest nation poised to ban the app outright, unless Chinese parent company ByteDance agrees to divest it.

Efforts to restrict access to TikTok have prompted vocal opposition wherever they have been attempted but especially so in Nepal, where the platform had been used to mobilise anti-government demonstrations.

Some Nepalese have skirted the ban entirely by accessing TikTok via virtual private networks (VPNs), which use a remote connection that obscures their location. Others like Mr. Singh are determined to fight.

"The government's move is against freedom of speech and expression



Alternative route: A Nepalese influencer makes videos to promote her garment business through TikTok via virtually private networks in Kathmandu. AFP

guaranteed by Nepal's constitution," said the attorney, who is leading a legal challenge to the ban in the Himalayan republic's top court.

### 'Not helpful for govt.'

"On TikTok the public would learn about corruption, financial embezzlement and other immoral activities of leaders," he said. "That was not helpful for the government."

Nepal's Communications Minister justified the ban by accusing the platform of spreading content that damaged the country's "social harmony".

The announcement came days before a huge rally called by a prominent businessman who was using TikTok to organise a campaign demanding the reinstatement of Nepal's monarchy.

The case before the Supreme Court is due to be heard next week with a decision expected later this year.

TikTok is one of the most popular social media platforms on the planet with more than one billion users.

Its explosive growth has given its content creators and influencers an im-

mense audience, and its editing features and AI-powered algorithm have proved particularly attractive. But the platform has also been blamed for spreading disinformation, and ByteDance's alleged ties to the Chinese government have prompted alarm in foreign capitals.

Multiple countries have sought to tighten controls on TikTok, and it was banned about four years ago in neighbouring India.

AFP, along with more than a dozen fact-checking organisations, is paid by TikTok to verify videos that potentially contain false

information.

Nepal's ban was condemned not just by free speech advocates like Mr. Singh but the owners of popular accounts whose lives were transformed by the platform, which had about 2.2 million users in the country.

### 'Giving hope'

Sangmo Bomjan, 28, was running a lucrative business reselling children's clothes on the platform that began when the COVID-19 pandemic put her husband out of work, saving her household from financial ruin.

"We were worried, but TikTok gave us hope," she said.

Orders kept the couple busy packing clothes even at night to deliver across the country, and they were able to earn more than \$2,000 every month.

After the ban, Ms. Bomjan used a VPN to keep posting videos to her account, circumventing the block on TikTok imposed by local Internet service providers.

But her orders have shrunk to less than half of what they were before the ban and her videos get a fraction of their earlier viewers.

"They do not reach my customers in remote areas. They don't know how to

use VPNs," she said.

The collapse in her earnings prompted her husband to migrate to South Korea, sending back money to support Ms. Bomjan and their two children.

Industry workers said last year that Nepal's TikTok ban had torpedoed a market worth an estimated \$5 million each year for advertisers and content creators, and which was set to grow rapidly.

After joining the platform in 2018, twin sisters Prisma and Princy Khatiwada built a following of nearly eight million on TikTok with videos of their synchronised dance routines.

Their popularity has netted them endorsement deals and modelling contracts in music videos and advertisements.

Both sisters still post to their individual accounts but their recent videos have been watched just tens of thousands of times on average — minuscule compared to the 70 million views one of their biggest viral hits got before the ban.

"Where we stand today is because of TikTok... so many people were earning and getting opportunities through it," Ms. Prisma said. "We are hopeful that the ban will be lifted."

## Watery grave



In plenty: A fisherman collects dead fish from a reservoir in southern Vietnam's Dong Nai province on Tuesday. Hundreds of thousands of fish have died in the reservoir with locals and media reports suggesting a brutal heatwave and lake's management are to blame. AFP

# Hezbollah's fight with Israel has left Lebanon in tatters: Christian leader

Associated Press  
MAARAB

The leader of a main Christian political party in Lebanon blasted the Shia militant group Hezbollah for opening a front with Israel to back up its ally Hamas, saying it has harmed Lebanon without making a dent in Israel's crushing offensive in the Gaza Strip.

In an interview on Tuesday night, Samir Geagea of the Lebanese Forces Party said Hezbollah should withdraw from areas along the border with Israel and the Lebanese Army should deploy in all points where militants of the Iran-backed group have taken positions.

His comments came as Western diplomats try to broker a de-escalation in the border conflict amid fears of a wider war.

Hezbollah began launching rockets toward Israeli military posts on October 8, the day after Ha-



Samir Geagea, head of the Christian Lebanese Forces party, appears on a screen as he addresses his supporters on April 12. REUTERS

mas militants stormed into southern Israel in a surprise attack that sparked the crushing war in Gaza.

The near-daily violence has mostly been confined to the area along the border, and international mediators have been scrambling to prevent an all-out war.

The fighting has killed 12 soldiers and 10 civilians in Israel. More than 350 people have been killed in Le-

banon including 273 Hezbollah fighters and more than 50 civilians.

### 'Fate of the country'

"No one has the right to control the fate of a country and people on its own," Mr. Geagea said in his heavily guarded headquarters in the mountain village of Maarab. "Hezbollah is not the government in Lebanon. There is a government in Lebanon in which

Hezbollah is represented." In addition to its military arm, Hezbollah is a political party.

Mr. Geagea, whose party has the largest bloc in Lebanon's 128-member parliament, has angled to position himself as the leader of the opposition against Hezbollah.

Hezbollah officials have said that by opening the front along Israel's northern border, the militant group has reduced the pressure on Gaza by keeping several Israeli army divisions on alert in the north rather than taking part in the months-long offensive in the enclave.

"All the damage that could have happened in Gaza ... happened. What was the benefit of military operations that were launched from south Lebanon? Nothing," Mr. Geagea said, pointing to the death toll and massive destruction in Lebanon's border villages.

# Finland's schools turn away from Russian language, culture as Ukraine war drags on

Agence France-Presse  
LAPPEENRANTA

Two Finnish towns near the Russian border plan to close schools offering Russian language and culture classes, upsetting parents and students who say cross-cultural understanding is needed more than ever.

Finland's relations with its powerful eastern neighbour have soured since Russia's 2022 invasion.

The war prompted Helsinki to reverse its decades-long policy of military non-alignment and join NATO in April 2023, a decision that angered Moscow.

When the towns of Lappeenranta and Joensuu announced this year they

would close their two schools focusing on Russian language and culture due to a lack of resources, school representatives saw it as fallout from the rise of anti-Russian sentiment in Finland since the war in Ukraine.

The headmaster of the School of Eastern Finland, Katri Anttila, said town officials were no longer keen to maintain Russian language studies after the invasion.

### 'Sad trend'

"This is part of the same trend, which is very sad. I am happy we have parents and students who do not link the Russian language to Russian President (Vladimir) Putin and the Rus-

sian government, because language should never be linked to politics or a certain country," Ms. Anttila said.

The School of Eastern Finland has three branches in the towns of Lappeenranta, Imatra and Joensuu, the only schools outside the capital Helsinki that offer Russian culture and language studies in addition to the Finnish curriculum. The state-funded schools founded in 1997 have 700 students aged six to 18.

During a recent visit to the Lappeenranta school located 30 km from Finland's 1,340 km border with Russia, classrooms were bustling with students chatting in Finnish



Last bell: Finnish students attend a lesson of Russian language at the itä-suomen school in Lappeenranta on April 17. AFP

and Russian, colourful posters hanging on the walls with writing in the two languages.

Both students and teachers were upset about Lappeenranta's recent decision.

"I was shocked when I heard the school will close," Eetu Varis, an 18-year-old at the upper secondary school, said.

A city official in charge of Lappeenranta educational services, Juhani Jun-

nilainen, said the closure was due to a school network reform. "We do not have enough resources to maintain all the schools we have," he said.

In addition, "interest for the Russian language has decreased for more than a decade" while "Spanish has become more and more popular" in Lappeenranta schools.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine, almost two million Russian tourists crossed Finland's border to visit the Lappeenranta region annually. Now, Russian licence plates are a rare sight on the streets of Lappeenranta.

In late 2022, Finland imposed entry restrictions on

Russian tourists, allowing only essential travel.

"Before the ongoing situation in Ukraine you heard Russian everywhere," said student Varis, adding: "It is important in this area."

Like the majority of his classmates, Varis is a native Finnish speaker interested in learning about other languages and cultures.

Finland closed its entire eastern border with Russia in December, five months after Moscow began pushing undocumented migrants over the border in what Finnish officials labelled a "hybrid attack". Russia has denied the charge.

Tuomas Laitinen, a parent of two children at the

Lappeenranta school, accused the towns of miscalculating the need for an understanding of the Russian culture and language in Finland.

### 'Geographic necessity'

"Finland has been known for decades for our knowledge of Russia, and it benefits the EU and NATO," he said. "Geographically we are not moving anywhere. Russia is next to us, and we have to know about their culture," he added.

Ms. Anttila meanwhile underlined that Finland must be able to "understand the language of the Russian opposition", emphasising that the school would continue to fight to keep its doors open.



## NOT LOOKING GOOD

### Deepak Chahar's injury a cause for concern, says Fleming



FILE PHOTO

CSK coach Stephen Fleming sounded bleak about Deepak Chahar's chances for the rest of the campaign after the pacer walked off the field without completing his first over. "He doesn't look good. The initial feeling wasn't great. I'm hoping for a more positive report after the physio and doctor have a look," said Fleming.

## PENALISED

### Hardik and other MI players fined for slow over rate against LSG



SANDEEP SAXENA

Mumbai Indians captain Hardik Pandya has been fined ₹24 lakh after his team's second slow over-rate offence in the IPL during their match against Lucknow Super Giants in Lucknow on Tuesday. All the other players were each individually fined either ₹6 lakh or 25% of their respective match fees, whichever is lesser.

## BIG BOOST

### Mayank Yadav all set to get BCCI's pace bowling contract



SANDEEP SAXENA

Pace sensation Mayank Yadav is all set to be given a pace bowling contract by the BCCI alongside Umran Malik, Vidwath Kaverappa, Vyshak Vijaykumar, Yash Dayal and Akash Deep. The contract will put Mayank under the supervision of NCA's Sports Science and Medical team which will take charge of his injury management.

## COUNTRY FIRST

### Buttler wanted England players to withdraw from IPL playoffs: Key



K. MURALI KUMAR

Captain Jos Buttler pushed for withdrawal of English players from the IPL playoffs ahead of the T20 World Cup, the team's MD Rob Key said. "I asked him (Buttler), 'You're going to have this series against Pakistan. How do you see it?' He said, 'I want to come back, start getting ready for the World Cup in that series that's just before it'.

# Punjab Kings continues to rule Chennai Super Kings

Spinners Harpreet Brar and Rahul Chahar put the skids on the Chennai side by picking up four wickets for just 33 runs in their eight overs; Rituraj's half-century lone bright spot for the host

IPL-17

S. Dipak Ragav  
CHENNAI

Punjab Kings spinners Harpreet Brar and Rahul Chahar's miserly spell during the middle overs set the foundation for their side's seven-wicket win over Chennai Super Kings at the MAC Stadium on Wednesday.

Opting to bowl first, PBKS restricted CSK to just 162 for seven as the spinners squeezed the runs dry without conceding a single boundary.

Chasing 163, cameos from Jonny Bairstow 46 (30b, 7x4, 1x6) and Rilee Rossouw (43, 23b, 5x4, 2x6) ensured PBKS got its fifth straight win over the five-time champion.

It was not an ideal start when CSK set out to defend the modest total, as Deepak Chahar limped off in pain on his run-up after two balls into the innings. Despite losing Prabhshimran Singh early, Bairstow and Rossouw quickly put



Double blow: Dube was done in by a Harpreet Brar delivery for zero soon after the left-arm spinner had accounted for Rahane. S.R. RAGHUNATHAN & SPORTSPICS/IPL

the pressure back on the Super Kings bowlers as they added 64 for the second wicket. Rossouw straight drove and pulled Richard Gleeson before finding two more boundaries off Mustafizur Rahman in the next over.

The Chennai side's only chance to stage a fightback was with its spinners, especially in the absence of the in-form Matheesha Pathirana (niggle) and Tushar Deshpande (illness). But Bairstow smashed Ravindra Jadeja and Moeen Ali



for four boundaries and a six. Though both missed their half-centuries, Sam Curran and Shashank Singh guided their side home without further trouble.

Earlier, Super Kings started strongly and got to

55 for no loss at the end of the PowerPlay. But what followed was a phase of play that is unthinkable in modern-day T20 cricket, as the hosts failed to score a single boundary off the bat for 55 deliveries.

Brar (two for 17) and Rahul (one for 13) sent in seven overs during this phase on a two-paced pitch that offered some turn for the tweakers.

Left-arm spinner Brar struck twice in the eighth over, slowing it down to

## SCOREBOARD

## CHENNAI SUPER KINGS

Ajinkya Rahane c Rossouw b Harpreet Brar 29 (24b, 5x4), Rituraj Gaikwad b Arshdeep 62 (48b, 5x4, 2x6), Shivam Dube lbw b Harpreet Brar 0 (1b), Ravindra Jadeja lbw b Rahul Chahar 2 (4b), Sameer Rizvi (Impact Player in place of Rahane) c Harshal b Rabada 21 (23b, 1x4, 1x6), M.S. Dhoni run out 14 (11b, 1x4, 1x6), Daryl Mitchell (not out) 1 (1b); Extras (lb-5, nb-1, w-12): 18; Total (for seven wickets in 20 overs): 162.

## FALL OF WICKETS

1-64 (Rahane, 8.2 overs), 2-65 (Dube, 8.3), 3-70 (Jadeja, 9.5), 4-107 (Rizvi, 15.3), 5-145 (Rituraj, 17.5), 6-147 (Moeen, 18.4), 7-162 (Dhoni, 19.6).

## KINGS BOWLING

Rabada 4-0-23-1, Arshdeep 4-0-52-1, Curran 3-0-37-0, Harpreet Brar 4-0-17-2, Rahul Chahar 4-0-16-2, Harshal 1-0-12-0.

## PUNJAB KINGS

Prabhshimran Singh (Impact)

## Player in place of Arshdeep c

Rituraj b Gleeson 13 (10b, 1x4, 1x6), Jonny Bairstow c Dhoni b Dube 46 (30b, 7x4, 1x6), Rilee Rossouw b Shardul 43 (23b, 5x4, 2x6), Shashank Singh (not out) 25 (26b, 1x4, 1x6), Sam Curran (not out) 26 (20b, 3x4); Extras (lb-1, nb-2, w-7): 10; Total (for three wickets in 17.5 overs): 163.

## FALL OF WICKETS

1-19 (Prabhshimran, 3.1), 2-83 (Bairstow, 9.2), 3-113 (Rossouw, 11.6).

## SUPER KINGS BOWLING

Deepak Chahar 0.2-0-4-0, Shardul 3.4-0-48-1, Gleeson 3.5-0-30-1, Mustafizur 4-1-22-0, Jadeja 3-0-22-0, Moeen 2-0-22-0, Dube 1-0-14-1.

## ToSS: PBKS.

PoM: Harpreet Brar.

PBKS won by seven wickets with 13 deliveries remaining.

## Next assignment

May 5: PBKS vs CSK  
Dharamshala, 3.30 p.m.

## Faltering Sunrisers face the high-flying Royals' test



Worried look: Klaasen, seen with Hetmyer, could be wondering about SRH's revival. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

V.V. Subrahmanyam

HYDERABAD

Table-topper Rajasthan Royals takes on fifth-placed Sunrisers Hyderabad even as the home team desperately needs to regain the winning touch in the IPL league match at Rajiv Gandhi Stadium here on Thursday.

Royals batting line-up – comprising Yashasvi Jaiswal and Jos Buttler, No. 3 captain Sanju Samson, clean-hitting Riyan Parag, followed by Shimron Hetmyer and Dhruv Jorel – is one which can easily test the best of bowling attacks in any conditions.

The fact that Royals lost just one game from nine so far is testimony to the all-round skills of the team even as the fear of peaking

## Today's match



Hyderabad, 7.30 p.m.

## HEAD-TO-HEAD

PLAYED: 18

SRH 9 | RR 9

## PREVIOUS MEETING

SRH won by four wickets, 2023

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 (SD &amp; HD) &amp; JIO CINEMA

CM

YK

SRH

RR

SRH

RR

SRH

RR

SRH

RR

SRH

RR

SRH

RR

SRH

RR

SRH

RR

## Players have taken up the responsibility, says Sangakkara



Ready to strike: Buttler, who has made two hundreds this season, will be eyeing a big one against Sunrisers. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

V.V. Subrahmanyam

HYDERABAD

Rajasthan Royals Director of Cricket Kumar Sangakkara felt that the players taking up the responsibility had been the key to the team's remarkable campaign so far.

Ahead of the game against Sunrisers Hyderabad, Sangakkara said the players had done the basics right. "It becomes very easy as a coaching group when the players take leadership and the responsibility... right from Sanju Samson as captain to everyone else, they had been very good at repeating the processes and being very disciplined. That's why we are in control after nine

matches," he said.

"SRH is a great side. They've been playing very good cricket; so have we. Ultimately, in cricket, it's about skill versus skill. So everyone will have to be up for whatever is going to happen out there on Thursday," Sangakkara said.

Sunrisers assistant coach Simon Helmot said the side just needed to maintain its brand of aggressive cricket.

"Obviously we're searching for those extra partnerships that helped us in the early victories and continuously work on being as tight as we can with the ball. Hopefully, that can put us in a good spot against Rajasthan," said Helmot.

## Lee not impressed with Mayank Yadav injury management by LSG

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

Former Australia fast bowler Brett Lee feels Lucknow Super Giants did not manage Mayank Yadav's injury well, suggesting that the young tearaway pacer was brought back to IPL action prematurely after being sidelined due to abdominal soreness.

The 21-year-old Mayank developed abdominal soreness during LSG's match against Gujarat Titans on April 7. That was his third IPL game, and he impressed one and all with his express pace and two Player-of-the-Match awards.

He made a comeback in LSG's win against Mumbai Indians in Lucknow on Tuesday but walked off the field without completing his fourth over after an injury scare.

LSG coach Justin Langer said the young pace sensation is feeling "sore in the same spot" that kept him out of action for almost three weeks, while captain K.L. Rahul added that Mayank had complained of slight pain in his sides.

Lee, one of the game's most-feared fast bowlers, laid the blame on the LSG top management and medical staff. He said Mayank's initial injury would have required four to six weeks to heal, much more than the time period the young-



Not ideal: According to Lee, it takes at least four to six weeks to recover from a side strain like the one Mayank had. SANDEEP SAXENA

## Points table

	M	W	L	PTS	NRR
Rajasthan Royals	9	8	1	16	0.694
Kolkata Knight Riders	9	6	3	12	1.096
Lucknow Super Giants	10	6	4	12	0.094
Chennai Super Kings	10	5	5	10	0.627
Sunrisers Hyderabad	9	5	4	10	0.075
Delhi Capitals	11	5	6	10	-0.442
Punjab Kings	10	4	6	8	-0.062
Gujarat Titans	10	4	6	8	-1.113
Mumbai Indians	10	3	7	6	-0.272
Royal Challengers	10	3	7	6	-0.415

ster spent at the sidelines before being brought back.

"A side strain, or whatever they're calling it, normally takes at least four to six weeks to even come right. We don't know the

depths of how big a strain it was but for somebody who is pushing the limits of his body by bowling 150 kmph, that's not good management at all," said Lee.



**IN BRIEF**



**Red Bull confirms design chief Newey to leave F1 team**

Red Bull confirmed on Wednesday that celebrated chief technical officer Adrian Newey will leave the Formula One team in 2025 after 19 years. Newey, widely regarded as the greatest F1 designer and a chief architect of Red Bull's dominance, is set to end his stay in the "first quarter of 2025". It was widely reported last week that the 65-year-old British designer was set to leave the team following a controversy involving allegations about team principal Christian Horner. "It has been my great honour to have played a key role in Red Bull Racing's progress from upstart newcomer to multiple title-winning team," he said in a statement from the F1 outfit.



**Lehecka knocks out Nadal, denies him a milestone**

Jiri Lehecka broke home hearts on Tuesday as he put an end to Rafael Nadal's run at the Madrid Open, on his final appearance at the Masters 1000 tournament. The 30th-seeded Lehecka defeated Nadal 7-5, 6-4 to advance to a last-eight meeting with Daniil Medvedev, and deny the five-time champion the chance to become the first man in history to reach 100 Masters 1000 quarterfinals. This was Nadal's first defeat on clay to a player ranked outside the top 20 since 2016 and it marked the end of his storied career in Madrid, where he has the most wins (59) and titles (five) in tournament history.



On a roll: India has done exceedingly well on all fronts in the preceding two matches. X@BCCIWOMEN

**Upbeat India looks to seal the series**

The visitors have relied on a collective effort and will seek more of the same in order to take a 3-0 lead in the five-match series

**INDIA IN BANGLADESH**

Press Trust of India  
SYLHET

**A** dominant India will have sights set on an unassailable 3-0 lead in the five-match series when it takes on host Bangladesh in the third women's T20 International here on Thursday.

Having done exceedingly well to not just to turn up but trump its opponent on all fronts in the preceding two matches, India will enter the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium with the aim to follow the same script.

The bowling unit has been functioning cohesively, having restricted Bangladesh to modest totals with spinners Deepti Sharma, Radha Yadav, and Shreyanka Patil being economical.

In the pace department, Renuka Singh Thakur has starred with the ball in the opener while Pooja Vastrakar has also been handy.

Dayalan Hemalatha, making her return to international cricket after an absence of nearly 17 months, displayed her explosive batting during the power-play in the last game, crafting an unbeaten 24-ball 41.

The likes of Shafali Verma, Yastika Bhatia, Harmanpreet Kaur, and Richa Ghosh have got runs under their belt.

However, star opener Smriti Mandhana will hope to find form.

India has relied on a collective team effort throughout this series and it will seek more of the same in

the remaining games.

The host, on the other hand, will seek improvement in all three fronts.

Its batters have not been able to get big totals, while the bowlers haven't enjoyed good outings either, and the fielding has been found wanting.

**The squads:**  
**India:** Smriti Mandhana, Dayalan Hemalatha, Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Deepti Sharma, S. Sajana, Shafali Verma, Shreyanka Patil, Amanjot Kaur, Pooja Vastrakar, Asha Sobhana, Yastika Bhatia (wk), Richa Ghosh, Radha Yadav, Renuka Singh Thakur, Titas Sadhu, Saika Ishaque.

**Bangladesh:** Murshida Khatun, Rubya Haider, Sobhana Mostary, Shorna Akter, Shorifa Khatun, Nigar Sultana (c&wk), Dilara Akter, Nahida Akter, Sultana Khatun, Ritu Moni, Rabeya Khan, Fahima Khatun, Marufa Akter, Fariha Trisna, Habiba Islam. Match starts at 3.30 p.m. IST.

**Smith, Fraser-McGurk miss the bus; Mitchell Marsh to lead Australia**

**T20 WORLD CUP**

Reuters  
MELBOURNE

Australia selectors dropped veteran campaigner Steve Smith for the T20 World Cup and ignored calls to include Jake Fraser-McGurk in the squad despite the young batsman's sensational form in the IPL.

Smith, a member of Australia's title-winning squad at the 2021 tournament in the UAE, played T20Is against New Zealand

in February but was unable to push his claims further after missing out on an IPL contract.

**Rashid to lead**

Eight players featuring in the IPL have been named in the 15-member Afghanistan T20 World Cup squad to be led by star all-rounder Rashid Khan.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has delayed the announcement of the T20 World Cup squad until late May due to fitness and performance issues with some players.

**The squads:**

**Australia:** David Warner, Travis Head, Mitchell Marsh (capt.), Glenn Maxwell, Tim David, Marcus Stoinis, Matthew Wade, Mitchell Starc, Pat Cummins, Adam Zampa, Josh Hazlewood, Josh Inglis, Ashton Agar, Cameron Green, and Nathan Ellis.  
**Afghanistan:** Rashid Khan (capt.), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Ibrahim Zadran, Azmatullah Omarzai, Najibullah Zadran, Mohammad Ishaq, Mohammad Nabi, Gulbadin Naib, Karim Janat, Nangyal Kharoti, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Noor Ahmad, Naveen-ul-Haq, Fazalhaq, Feroze Khan, Feroze Khan, Feroze Khan.  
**Travelling reserves:** Sediqullah Atal, Hazratullah Zazai, Mohammad Saleem Safi.

**Bopanna-Ebden pair exits early in Madrid**

**TENNIS**

Sports Bureau

Top seeds Rohan Bopanna and Matthew Ebden were beaten 7-6(4), 7-5 by Sebastian Korda and Jordan Thompson in the first round of the €9,249,713 ATP Masters tennis tournament in Madrid, Spain

**The results:**  
**€9,249,713 ATP Masters, Madrid: Doubles (first round):** Sebastian Korda (USA) & Jordan Thompson (Aus) bt Rohan Bopanna & Matthew Ebden (Aus) 7-6(4), 7-5.

**\$82,000 Challenger, Guangzhou, China: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals):** Ray Ho (Tpe) & Ramkumar Ramanathan bt Mattia Bellucci (Ita) & Moez Echargui (Tun) 6-3, 6-2.

**\$25,000 ITF men, Santa Margherita di Pula, Italy: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals):** Niccolo Ciavarella & Giuseppe La

Vela (Ita) bt Sathi Reddy Chirala & Max Houkes (Ned) 6-3, 7-5.

**\$15,000 ITF men, Monastir, Tunisia: Singles (first round):** Karan Singh bt Kim Jae Hwan (Kor) 6-1, 6-0.

**\$40,000 ITF women, Lopota, Georgia: Doubles (quarterfinals):** Elysia Bolton (Aus) & Catherine Harrison (USA) bt Snehal Mane & Ankita Raina 6-4, 6-2.

**\$25,000 ITF women, Hammamet, Tunisia: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals):** Diva Bhatia & Sophia Ksandinov (Ger) w.o. Anastasiya Kuparev (Ger) & Emma Slaviova (Cze); Samantha Nloga & Basant Kaur (USA) bt Manuela de Lorenzo (Ita) & Sameeksha Shroff 6-3, 6-1.

**\$15,000 ITF women, Monastir, Tunisia: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals):** Dayeon Back (Kor) & Zeel Desai bt Teresa Dias & Milla Sequeira (Por) 6-0, 6-3; Vaishnavi Adkar & Camilla Bossi (Bra) bt Maria Oliva (Mex) & Zhou YeHua (Chn) 6-4, 6-4; Aadi Gupta & Sara Lanca (Por) bt Wang Shuoran & Zhang Jin (Chn) 6-3, 3-6, [12-10].

**Yashwardhan, Priyanshu, Aryan and Sahil advance**

Sports Bureau

Aryan, Yashwardhan Singh, Priyanshu and Sahil all advanced into the semi-finals of the youth category at the ASBC Asian Under-22 & Youth Boxing Championships 2024 in Astana on Wednesday.

Earlier on Tuesday night, Jugnoo (86kg), Tammana (50kg) and Preeti (54kg) won their opening bouts to enter the girls' Under-22 semi-finals and ensure medals.

**The results:**  
**Men's Youth: 51kg:** Aryan bt Juravev Shakarboy (Uzb) 5-0; **63.5kg:** Yashwardhan bt Mirahmadi Babaheidari (Iri) 4-1; **71kg:** Priyanshu bt Wu Yu En (Tpe) RSC. **80kg:** Sahil bt Yklymov Abdryhma (Tkm) RSC.

**Vinicius' brace earns Real a draw at Bayern**

**CHAMPIONS LEAGUE**

Reuters  
MUNICH

Real Madrid's Vinicius Jr. scored twice, including a late penalty, to snatch a 2-2 draw at Bayern Munich in an entertaining Champions League semifinal, first leg on Tuesday, leaving the tie wide open.

The Brazilian, who put Real in front after 24 minutes, has now scored in the semifinals for a third successive season.

Bayern had struck twice in four minutes early in the second half to turn the game around before Vinicius' spot kick.

Facing each other for a record eighth time at this stage of the competition, it was Bayern which got off to a strong start, racking up half a dozen attempts on goal by the 15th minute with Leroy Sane and Harry Kane coming close.

Real needed only one chance to score though, stunning the home crowd against the run of play when Kroos sliced open



Saviour: Vinicius Jr. celebrates after netting Real's equaliser. AP

the Bayern defence with a through ball and Vinicius chased it down to beat goalkeeper Manuel Neuer.

Kroos almost added another himself in the 51st but his curled shot was palmed wide by Neuer.

Instead, it was Bayern which scored two minutes later with a solo effort and shot from Sane for a deserved equaliser.

The comeback was complete in the 57th when Ja-

mal Musiala was brought down by Lucas Vazquez and Kane sent Andriy Lunin the wrong way to put the home side ahead.

Real, chasing a 15th European Cup, levelled in the 83rd with Vinicius' penalty to set up a mouth-watering return leg next week.

**The result:** Bayern Munich 2 (Sane 53, Kane 57-pen) drew with Real Madrid 2 (Vinicius Jr. 24, 83-pen).

**Indonesia proves too good for India**

**THOMAS CUP**

Press Trust of India  
CHENGDU

Defending champion India lost to powerhouse Indonesia 1-4 and failed to top its group in the Thomas Cup badminton tournament here on Wednesday.

Both India and Indonesia have already qualified for the quarterfinals after winning their first two matches but the latter will progress to the knockouts as Group C topper.

The rematch of the 2022 Thomas Cup final provided Indonesia with a chance to exact revenge and it just did that on the back of a clinical display.

**The results: Indonesia bt India 4-1** (Anthony Ginting lost to H.S. Prannoy 21-13, 12-21, 12-21; Shohibul Fikri & Bagas Maulana bt Satwiksairaj Rankireddy & Chirag Shetty 24-22, 22-24, 21-19; Jonatan Christie bt Lakshya Sen 21-18, 16-21, 21-17; Leo Rolly Carnando & Daniel Marthin bt Dhruv Kapila & Sai Pratheek 22-20, 21-11; Chico Aura Dwi Wardoyo by K. Srikanth 19-21, 24-22, 21-14).

**Rashmi and Ghufuran clinch Asian carrom crowns**

Sports Bureau

Rashmi Kumari outplayed Shainy Sebastian 25-0, 25-4 to clinch the women's title in the 6th Asian carrom championship which concluded in Maldives on Wednesday.

It was the fourth Asian crown for the three-time World Champion Rashmi, who had recently won her 12th National title in Gwalior.

In the men's final, Mohd. Ghufuran beat reigning National champion K.

Srinivas 25-17, 25-24.

India swept all the gold medals in singles, doubles, team championships apart from the Swiss league.

**The results:**

**Men: Final:** Mohd. Ghufuran bt K. Srinivas 25-17, 25-24; **semifinals:** Srinivas bt Jugal Kishor Dutta 25-8, 25-22; Ghufuran bt Sandeep Dive 25-18, 25-10.

**Women: Final:** Rashmi Kumari bt Shainy Sebastian 25-0, 25-4; **semifinals:** Rashmi bt Aakanksha Kadam 25-10, 25-11; Shainy bt Nagajothi Kathavarayan 25-19, 20-25, 25-14.



Rashmi Kumari and Mohd. Ghufuran.

**Thirty years on, fans pay tribute to Senna and Ratzenberger at Imola**

Reuters  
IMOLA

Motor racing fans and politicians gathered at Italy's Imola circuit on Wednesday to pay tribute to triple World champion Ayrton Senna who was killed in a high-speed crash 30 years ago during the San Marino Grand Prix. Fans carrying the Brazilian flag walked along the track before a minute's silence was held at 2:17 p.m. (1217 GMT) at the Tamburello corner to mark the time of the crash which cost the charismatic Brazilian his life aged just 34.

"Senna was a very important person for all Brazilians, a very humble person, very dedicated with great values who taught us great lessons" said Renata Ewbank, a Senna fan from Brazil. "And we still miss him deeply today," she added.

The fans also remembered Austrian Roland Rat-



Legend, forever...A fan places a replica of Senna's helmet at the monument dedicated to Brazilian great in Imola on Wednesday. GETTY IMAGES

zenberger, who had been killed the day before Senna died after an accident in qualifying. The deadly weekend in 1994 triggered a major safety review, changing the sport for ever. Bruno Senna, nephew of the champion and a former F1 driver, was among the crowd, along with Ratzenberger's parents.

Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani, as well as his Brazilian and Austrian

counterparts Mauro Vieira and Alexander Schallenberg also attended the ceremony at the circuit.

Floral tributes were laid at Tamburello after the minute's silence, with fans and security personnel breaking into applause. Scarves, flowers and candles were also placed on a statue of Senna at Imola.

Senna, driving for Williams, had started on pole, with Michael Schumacher alongside in a Benetton.

The safety car was swiftly deployed after Portugal's Pedro Lamy ploughed into J.J. Lehto's stalled Benetton on the grid. Shortly after the re-start, Senna's car speared into a concrete wall at Tamburello.

The Brazilian was flown to hospital while the race was re-started and won by Schumacher. At 6:40 p.m. local time, nearly two and a half hours later, it was announced that Senna had died.

**Drop-in pitches being transported for installation at New York venue**

Press Trust of India  
NEW YORK

The drop-in pitches prepared for the upcoming T20 World Cup are being transported from Florida to New York in semi-trailer trucks for installation at Nassau County International Cricket Stadium, the ICC said on Tuesday.

the venue will also host the marquee India-Pakistan group stage fixture on June 9.

Ten drop-in pitches have been prepared in Florida since late December, employing proprietary techniques honed over a decade at Adelaide Oval, the ICC said in a press release.

The development of the

pitches has been undertaken by Adelaide Oval Turf Solutions, led by renowned Adelaide Oval head curator Damian Hough.

The drop-in square - the type used around the world including at Adelaide Oval and Eden Park - has been curated in Florida and transported by road to New York via a convoy of

more than 20 semi-trailer trucks.

ICC Head of Events Chris Tetley said: "The installation of these pitches is one of the final pieces in a project that is unprecedented in international cricket. We have taken a considered and well-planned approach to this project, using the very best in the business."



# The importance of Kohli in the evolving T20 batting landscape

The former India skipper is a classical top-order bat who has often gone searching for intent when the demands of the shortest form of the game has merited a modern upgrade on a role where India does not lack options anymore



K.R. DEEPAK

## Ayan Acharya

For the last three years, Virat Kohli's approach to T20 cricket has been in question, but now he finds himself in yet another World Cup squad. In fact, more than 50% of the players selected for the big-ticket event in the USA and the West Indies, including captain Rohit Sharma and Kohli, featured in India's 2022 T20 World Cup campaign.

India's approach to T20s has historically mirrored its strategy in ODIs, prioritising wickets over boundaries. But there have been enough signs that that attitude is shifting, but at a glacial pace. Kohli, like Rohit, returned to the T20I squad after more than a year's absence ahead of the Afghanistan series at home in January this year.

India's 15 for the World Cup suggests that the team-management expects slow turners. So, there is a case to be made here for the decision to include Kohli, who, despite being doubted by many in this format, is a good fit for this current India group because the bowling make-up, which includes two in-form specialist spinners and a couple of left-arm spin-bowling all-rounders, is expected to be good at boundary-preventing. This allows India the luxury of carrying a T20 batter in the mould of Kohli.

That said, the top four – captain Rohit, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Kohli, and Suryakumar Yadav – were more or less decided even before the official squad announcement was made. The selectors and Kohli are taking a punt on Kohli's ability to perform under pressure.

Kohli has shown a strong temperament when it comes to big games. He respects his opponents but is not intimidated by them. This quality is especially important in high-pressure tournaments where nerves can get the best of players.

A great example of Kohli's composure came in the 2022 T20 World Cup chase against Pakistan at a packed MCG in Australia. Kohli's strike-rate was a jaw-dropping 278.57 at the death that night as he waltzed to 39 off 14 balls. At one point, though, Kohli was batting on 12 off 21 balls. Kohli's average in nine successful run chases at the T20 World

Cup is a scarcely believable 518. He has seven fifties and has been dismissed only once.

India had earlier lacked the hitting depth of other T20I sides, making it difficult for the main batters to be ultra-aggressive upfront. Not only that, in the early 2000s, India's top five also contributed significantly with the ball. However, the current primary batters do not have the same level of contribution with the ball, which puts pressure on the team management to include a frontline spinner at number seven. Consequently, the team's tail becomes longer, and the top order has to be more careful and restrained in their approach.

But with the emergence of Rinku Singh, the flamboyance of Suryakumar, the evolution of Sanju Samson, and the reincarnation of Shivam Dube, that headache seems to have taken a back seat for now. It should alleviate some stress for Kohli. Yes, there is a strong argument that except the redoubtable Jasprit Bumrah, India's pace bowling looks a tad wobbly, which makes it doubly important for Rohit's men to win the boundary-percentage count. Kohli will be mindful of that too.

Kohli had recently shrugged off criticism of his strike rate against spin after scoring a match-winning 70 not out off 44 balls against the Gujarat Titans in Ahmedabad. "All the people who talk about strike rates and me not playing spin well are the ones who love talking about this stuff. But for me, it's just about winning the game for the team," Kohli said after the match. "And there's a reason why you do it for 15 years – because you've done this day in and day out; you've won games for your teams."

However, the criticism of Kohli's T20 game isn't completely unwarranted. He has high averages, and his strike rates tend to rise as the innings goes deeper. Kohli has an overall strike rate of a shade under 140 in T20Is at an average of over 53 over the last five years. For the Royal Challengers Bengaluru, he averages less than 40 (35.07) and strikes way slower at under 130 during the same timeline.

Looking at what Kohli has been doing in the PowerPlay and the overs after it clears up the picture further. For India, since 2019, Kohli has batted slowly at the

start, going at 111.28, and then raised it to 128 between 7 and 16. But he gets stuck into the bowlers if he makes it to the last four, going over 213. In the IPL for the same timeline, Kohli's PowerPlay, middle-over, and death-over strike rates are: 129.69, 116.61, and 206.50.

In fact, Kohli's overall strike rate at No. 3 – where he normally bats for India in T20Is – in the last two years has hovered in the early 130s while the average strike rates for one down for teams like South Africa, Australia and West Indies are north of 150. The No. 3s of England, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, New Zealand, Pakistan and Afghanistan have a lower combined strike rate.

Kohli is scoring at a strike rate of 147 in this year's IPL. Only once has he ever scored quicker, and that was in 2016 (152.03), when he amassed 973 runs – the most by any player in an IPL season. Kohli scored his eighth IPL hundred against the Rajasthan Royals this year, with his 113 not out against the Royals being his joint-highest score in the T20 league. But he also took 67 balls to get there, making it the joint-slowest hundred in the IPL, along with Manish Pandey's century against the now-defunct Deccan Chargers in 2009.

Kohli's innings in Jaipur was a perfect microcosm of his T20 batting. His strike rate was 190 in the last 22 balls he faced. But for the first 25 balls, he struck at under 130, while for the next 25, he went at 156. It is evident by now that Kohli, the T20 batter, is at his destructive best when he is operating between overs 17 and 20.

However, Kohli has also seemed to embrace a less risk-averse approach to batting inside the first six overs in this IPL, looking to hit over the top to find the fence. "They probably want me to come hard at them so they can get me out or have an early breakthrough. But I feel like if I'm set and if I bat beyond six overs, then our chance of getting good totals becomes that much better," Kohli had said after his hundred against the Royals.

Kohli is a classical top-order bat who has often gone searching for intent when the demands of the T20 game merit a modern upgrade on a role where India does not lack options anymore. Kohli loves pace on the ball, which partly explains why he is so good in the death



overs, a phase where opposition captains normally turn to their faster bowlers.

Kohli, of late, has been struggling to maintain his momentum outside the PowerPlay, especially against spin bowling, making him susceptible to retaining strike from more destructive players who are trained to excel in this phase. In effect, Kohli's ability to impact the game positively is hugely determined by whether he survives the PowerPlay as well as the middle overs, but that sometimes leaves the rest of his teammates more ground to cover.

That said, the volume of runs, even in T20 cricket, has not been a problem for Kohli. India would only hope that, come the T20 World Cup, he continues to score the same runs at a higher strike rate and more relevantly.

## THE GIST

▼ Kohli's overall strike rate at No. 3 – where he normally bats for India in T20Is – in the last two years has hovered in the early 130s

▼ The ace Royal Challengers opener is scoring at a rate of 147 in this year's IPL

▼ The star batter's ability to impact the game positively is hugely determined by whether he survives the PowerPlay as well as the middle overs