

THE TIMES OF INDIA

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INDIA'S LARGEST ENGLISH NEWSPAPER



A fiery 41-ball century by Will Jacks and Virat Kohli's unbeaten 70 runs help RCB defeat Gujarat Titans by 9 wickets with 4 overs to spare in 45th encounter of IPL.

Over 200 protesters were arrested Saturday at Northeastern University, Arizona State University, Indiana University & Washington University in St. Louis as colleges across the US struggled to quell growing pro-Palestinian demos

Pakistan's foreign minister Ishaq Dar has been appointed the country's deputy PM. Dar, 73, a CA and a veteran politician, belongs to PM Shehbaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz party

Indian men's recurve team of Dhiraj Bommadevara, Tarundeep Rai & Pravin Jadhav shocks Oly champions S Korea in a historic win to land an archery World Cup gold medal after 14 yrs



Sex harassment case on Gowda's son, grandson

A woman (47) Sunday lodged a police complaint against ex-PM HD Deve Gowda's son HD Revanna and grandson Prajwal Revanna, accusing them of sexually harassing her and her daughter when they worked in the household earlier. The case was handed to the SIT set up to probe the obscene videos allegedly implicating Prajwal who, according to reports, has left India. **P9**

Drugs worth ₹600cr seized from Pak boat

A Pakistani boat with 86kg of heroin worth Rs 600 crore was seized off the Gujarat coast and its crew of 14 from the neighbouring country arrested. Indian Coast Guard along with Gujarat ATS and NCB made the seizure after intercepting the boat early on April 26. **P7**

Cop dies in Pragati tunnel accident

A Delhi Police SI died Saturday night when his scooter lost balance after colliding with a median barricade in Pragati Maidan tunnel. He was heading towards IP Extension from India Gate. Police are probing the cause of the accident as an auto was seen in the CCTV footage. **P4**

Actor Sahil Khan held in Mahadev app case

Actor Sahil Khan was arrested on Sunday in connection with his alleged role in the Rs 15,000-cr Mahadev betting app case. Khan (50) was produced in a Mumbai court and was sent to police custody till May 1. An SIT had nabbed him from a Chhattisgarh hotel on Saturday. **P8**

PM Modi Speaks To TOI On Issues That Could Shape The Polls, And Nation

'Not polarising to show Cong brought religion-based quota'

'Will Do All We Can To Make UCC A Reality'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Taking head-on to the criticism that he has tried to promote polarisation through his campaign speeches, PM Narendra Modi asserted, "To show that Congress violated the Constitution by enacting laws to provide reservations on the basis of religion is not polarisation."

In an exclusive interview with TOI after the second round of polls, Modi stood by his statement that his predecessor Manmohan Singh had said Muslims had first claim on the nation's resources.

TOI EXCLUSIVE
FULL INTERVIEW: **P 10 & 11**

Modi declared that he was determined to fulfil BJP's commitment to implement a Uniform Civil Code. "It is clear that separate laws for communities are detrimental to the health of society. We cannot be a nation where one community is progressing with the support of the Constitution while another community is stuck in a time warp due to appeasement. We will do everything in our capacity to make UCC a reality in India," he said, while also renewing his vow to move forward on his 'one nation-one election' plan.

Modi expressed confidence of getting a third straight term, and said he was stri-

Only a small fraction of agencies' cases is related to political figures. Of corruption cases probed by ED, only 3% have been related to politicians. Over the last 11 years, of cases being investigated by CBI, only 1-1.5% involved politicians.

I am optimistic that this (Kejriwal continuing as CM from jail) will not become a precedent. I feel other politicians won't be so lacking in morals and will not go to this extent

Our Constitution protects property of all minorities... when Congress talks of redistribution, it cannot touch the properties of minorities... but will eye properties of all other communities. This will sow complete and irreversible communal disharmony

Wealth tax & inheritance tax are dangerous problems disguised as solutions. Would you work day and night if govt takes away your money in the name of redistribution?



In K'taka, PM slams Cong's appeasement politics, P9

RSS backed quota since the beginning: Bhagwat, P9

Inheritance tax not in Cong manifesto: PC, P9

ving for a 400-plus tally to foil the "evil designs of opposition parties to take away reservations and rights of SCs/STs and OBCs and give them to their vote bank".

The PM came down hard on the push for redistribution of wealth through measures such as inheritance tax. "I do not think they are solutions by any stretch of imagination. These are actually dangerous problems disguised as solutions. Would you work day and night if govt takes away your money at the end in the name of redistribution?" he asked, adding these ideas would "kill" the start-up revolution and were merely a way to please "the opposi-

tion's vote bank". He further said these ideas carried the risk of creating "complete and irreversible communal disharmony".

"Our Constitution protects the property of all minorities. This means that when Congress talks of redistribution, it cannot touch the properties of minorities, it cannot consider waqf properties for distribution, but it will eye the properties of other communities," he added.

Modi dubbed Rahul Gandhi's proposal to conduct a survey to estimate people's assets "Maoist thinking and ideology" and a "recipe for disaster" which would lead to "raiding every home".

Asked about the opposition's charge that he would change the Constitution in case he got a super mandate, Modi said, "It is ironic that the people who have changed the Constitution the maximum number of times are saying we will change the Constitution. But before asking such a question, you should analyse my track record."

On foreign policy, he was unfazed about India being seen as disregarding the "rules of the international order" to pursue its national interests. "Should not the goal of our foreign policy be to advance our national interests? Our approach to foreign policy is 'nation first'," he said.

Lovely quits as Delhi Cong chief, criticises AAP pact, poll picks

Clarifies That He's Not Joining Any Other Party

Abhinav.Rajput @timesgroup.com

New Delhi: With less than a month to go for voting in the capital, Delhi Congress chief Arvinder Singh Lovely quit his post Sunday, citing the party's alliance with AAP in the city, the high command's choices of Lok Sabha candidates Kanhaiya Kumar and Udit Raj, and not getting freedom to elect party functionaries according to his preferences.

Claiming that he wasn't joining any other political party, Lovely said his resignation reflected the pain of Congress workers as the "ideals they had been fighting for

GONE AGAIN

All steps taken by Delhi Cong netas vetoed by Deepak Babaria, AICC's city in-charge, says Lovely
Pulls up Cong's NE Delhi candidate Kanhaiya Kumar for praising Arvind Kejriwal
In 2017, Lovely quit Cong for 1st time & joined BJP, but later returned to Cong in '18

FULL COVERAGE **P2**

during the last seven-eight years" were being compromised due to the tie-up. "We are fighting polls together, but never did Congress workers say we were giving a clean chit to them (AAP) or giving them credit for building schools and hospitals, which is far from the reality," Lovely said.

'Overruled unit', P2

Modify campaign song, EC tells AAP; party claims 'ban'

New Delhi: EC has asked AAP to modify and change the contents of its campaign song, saying it violates several of its guidelines.

AAP minister Atishi, however, claimed on Sunday that EC had "banned" the song, alleging it had become "BJP's political weapon".

In a letter dated April 27, EC returned AAP's application for certification of the two-minute video advertisement, stating the phrase "Jail ke jawaab me hum vote denge", accompanied by visuals of an aggressive mob holding a photo of chief minister Arvind Kejriwal behind bars, "casts aspersions

DANCE OF DEMOCRACY

Shah says polls between camp that ordered firing on 'Ram bhakts' and one which got Mandir built. Also asserts BJP won't revoke quotas
Rahul slams BJD, BJP at Odisha rally, says they have one 'shared goal', to benefit select few corporates
Repolling ordered at six stations in Outer Manipur on April 30 amid reports of EVM damage, malfunctioning

SEE PAGE 9

Campaign clip, P3

Days after putting off trip to India, Musk visits China, meets Premier Li

On a surprise visit to Beijing amid speculation that he may unveil Tesla's autonomous driving technology in the EV market in China, Elon Musk Sunday met Chinese Premier Li Qiang and discussed future expansion plans. His China trip comes a week after his visit to India was postponed due to "Tesla obligations". He was scheduled to meet PM Modi and announce plans to enter the Indian market.

Li told Musk China's huge market will always be open to foreign-funded enterprises. Musk said Tesla's Shanghai Gigafactory is the company's best-performing one & showed his willingness to deepen ties with China for more win-win results. **AGENCIES**



Makes a pitch, P13

Village guard shot dead in Manipur

A day after two CRPF men were killed in Manipur, a tribal village guard was shot dead by unidentified gunmen in a post-midnight attack in Kangpokpi Sunday. The 44-year-old deceased, Lammang Kippen, was a father of five. Three others were hurt. **P7**

Village defence guard killed in J&K

A village defence guard attached to security forces combing a forested area for suspected Pakistani terrorists was fatally shot during a gunfight at Basantgarh in J&K's Udhampur on Sunday. The deceased was Mohd Sharief (48). **P7**

FY 24 v/s FY 23

Profit After Tax (YOY) 43%

Retail Book (YOY) 31%

Retail Mix (YOY) 94%

Retail Asset Quality (NS3) 0.62%

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Profit After Tax (PAT)

₹ 1,623 Cr. (FY23) | ₹ 2,320 Cr. (FY24)

Retail Mix

75% (FY23) | 94% (FY24)

Retail Asset Quality (NS3)

0.71% (FY23) | 0.62% (FY24)

Retail Book

₹ 61,053 Cr. (FY23) | ₹ 80,037 Cr. (FY24)

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Gang of ATM fraudsters involved in 25 cases busted | 5

38.2° MAXIMUM
23.5° MINIMUM
FORECAST: Partly cloudy sky. Maximum and minimum temperatures will be around 40°C and 24°C
SUNSET 6.55PM (MON) | SUNRISE 5.41AM (TUE)
MOONSET 9.28AM (MON) | MOONRISE 12.17AM (TUE)

AQI IN DELHI ON SUNDAY (MODERATE CATEGORY)

Three years after notification of parking policy, little progress on ground | 6



Prosecutions for driving while using a cellphone rise by 149% | 5

With Less Than A Month To Go For Voting In Delhi, Lovely's Resignation As State Cong Chief Casts Shadow On Alliance With AAP

Quitting Of Post Reflects Cong Workers' Pain, Not Joining Any Other Party: Lovely

'High command overruled state unit repeatedly'

Abhinav.Rajput
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New Delhi: Hours after announcing his decision to resign as Congress's Delhi unit chief, Arvinder Singh Lovely on Sunday said he had only quit his post and wasn't joining any other political party. His clarification came after former Congress MLA Asif Mohammad Khan claimed that BJP would field Lovely from East Delhi constituency, replacing Harsh Malhotra. "I have only resigned as Delhi Congress chief, and I am not joining any political party," Lovely said at a press conference at his residence. Lovely stated that his resignation reflected the pain of Congress workers who were

saddened by the fact that the "ideals they had been fighting for during the last seven to eight years" were being compromised. "We are fighting the elections together, but never did Congress workers say that we are giving a clean chit to them or giving them credit for building schools and hospitals, which is far from the reality," Lovely said, referring to the party's tie-up with AAP in Delhi for the Lok Sabha polls. "Those who are saying that I have resigned out of anger over ticket distribution, it is not like that. You all know that I introduced the candidates by holding a press conference three days ago," Lovely said. Earlier in the day, AAP functionary Saurabh Bharadwaj asked in a post in Hindi on X, without naming anyone, if BJP was changing its candidate for East Delhi. Questioned about Bharadwaj's post and whether it hinted at him joining BJP, Lovely said: "Thanks for Bharadwaj's



Arvinder Singh Lovely (centre) dismissed claims that he had quit because of being denied a ticket for the Lok Sabha elections

restioned about Bharadwaj's post and whether it hinted at him joining BJP, Lovely said: "Thanks for Bharadwaj's

wishes. I think he takes decisions on behalf of all other parties. I have just clarified to you that I resigned from the post of Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee president." Meanwhile, several Congress functionaries, including former MP Sandeep Dikshit, former minister Raj Kumar Chauhan, Naseeb Singh, Nee-raj Basoya, Suresh Sharma and Laxman Rawat, went to meet Lovely at his residence. Sources in Congress said the visits and Lovely commenting on the same was also a show of strength by him. "Clearly, there are two Congress factions in the Delhi unit right now, one preferred by the high command and the other of Lovely," a source said. Dikshit said that being sta-

te unit president and a Congress worker, Lovely "has personal pain... His pain is that we are struggling to bring back our old reputation in Delhi". He added: "It's a crown of thorns. Despite this, he worked hard in the last 6-8 months and built the party... Everyone felt that Congress is slowly awakening..." However, party functionary Abhishek Dutt said, "I read his (Lovely's) letter, and it is really disheartening to see that such a senior member, who was provided everything by Congress, is resigning 20 days before the elections. This shows that he declined the system of the party. In his letter, he wrote that he was against the alliance, but then why was he asking for tickets?"

Continued from P1

In his resignation letter sent to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Lovely said the state unit was against the alliance, but the high command still went ahead with it. He also expressed displeasure over the choice of Kanhaiya Kumar as Congress candidate from North East Delhi and Udit Raj from North West Delhi. This is not the first time that Lovely has sprung a surprise. In 2017, he quit the party and joined BJP, but later returned to Congress in 2018. Lovely said all unanimous decisions taken by senior Delhi Congress functionaries had been unilaterally vetoed by AICC general secretary Delhi in-charge (Deepak Babaria), and the state unit was not even intimated about the decisions, including the Lok Sabha candidate selections. Lovely, who was appointed state president last year, said even though the Delhi Congress unit was against the alliance with AAP, he publicly backed it and ensured that the entire unit "fell in line with the high command's final order". "The Delhi Congress unit was against an alliance with a party that was formed on the sole basis of levelling false, fabricated, and mala fide corruption charges against Congress... half of the cabinet ministers (of AAP) are currently in jail on corruption charges. Despite that, the party (Congress) made a decision to ally with AAP in Delhi. We respected the party's final decision... I even went to the extent of visiting CM (Arvind) Kejriwal's residence on the night of his arrest along with Subhash Chopra and Sandeep Dikshit, despite the same being against my position on the matter," he said.

at public meetings, entered into numerous heated exchanges with Sandeep Dikshit, (ex-MP), Raj Kumar Chauhan (ex-Delhi minister), Bhisam Sharma (ex-MLA) and Suresh Kumar (ex-MLA)," he wrote in his letter. Udit Raj said, "I can say with full confidence that due to the disciplinary step taken by Deepak Babaria, Delhi Congress will soon reach its old glory. By accepting the resignation of the state president, it's been shown that no one is bigger than the party." AAP functionaries were in a wait-and-watch mode and largely refrained from commenting on the developments. Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj, however, said, "Congress is our alliance partner, and

Why latest episode is a blow to an alliance necessitated by arithmetic, not chemistry

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New Delhi: Arvinder Singh Lovely's resignation from the post of Congress's Delhi unit chief has come as a jolt for INDIA bloc with the capital set to cast its vote for Lok Sabha elections in less than a month. The alliance in Delhi is already behind the starting line with Congress having delayed the announcement of its candidates. A lack of proper framework for a joint campaign, coupled with AAP's top functionaries being in jail, has added to its woes. In his letter tendering his resignation, Lovely stated that he was against forming an alliance with AAP. However, a source from INDIA bloc said that the alliance had been necessitated not by chemistry but arithmetic, indicating that based on the past trends, contesting the election alone was akin to giving a walkover to BJP. Senior Congress functionaries, citing the numbers from both 2014 and 2019 elections, argued that AAP and Congress fighting separately only made the task easier for BJP. In 2014 polls, BJP secured 46.4% of the vote, while AAP received 32.9%, and Congress 15.1%. The 2019 polls saw BJP leaving little room for AAP and Congress, securing 56% of the vote, with Congress at 23% and AAP 18%. BJP won all the seven seats in both the elections. Lovely himself contested the last Lok Sabha polls from East Delhi, in which he secured 24.2% votes, losing to BJP's Gautam Gambhir who secured a 55.4% share. A Congress functionary said: "Lovely is suggesting that we should have contested alone. We acknowledge our bitter past, but what's the point of making the polls a foregone conclusion? If we come together, then we certainly have a chance, assuming there is close to perfect vote transfer."

Senior Congress functionaries, citing the numbers from both 2014 and 2019 elections, argued that AAP and Congress fighting separately only made the task easier for BJP. In 2014 polls, BJP secured 46.4% of the vote, while AAP received 32.9%, and Congress 15.1%. The 2019 polls saw BJP leaving little room for AAP and Congress, securing 56% of the vote, with Congress at 23% and AAP 18%. BJP won all the seven seats in both the elections. Lovely himself contested the last Lok Sabha polls from East Delhi, in which he secured 24.2% votes, losing to BJP's Gautam Gambhir who secured a 55.4% share. A Congress functionary said: "Lovely is suggesting that we should have contested alone. We acknowledge our bitter past, but what's the point of making the polls a foregone conclusion? If we come together, then we certainly have a chance, assuming there is close to perfect vote transfer."

“We had discussions over his resignation (Arvinder Singh Lovely). He is pained due to the events that have unfolded in the last few months. The issues that he has raised will be addressed.”
—Sandeep Dikshit, Congress

“It is unfortunate that his resignation came at a time when the general elections in the country are underway and the Congress party under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi is working to bring a change in the regime. The party showed faith in him and gave him such a big position, but what he did was sad. His resignation won't affect the party and I am confident that we will win all three Lok Sabha seats from Delhi in the elections.”
—Deepak Babaria, AICC Delhi incharge

“I read his letter and it is really disheartening to see that such a senior leader, who was provided everything by Congress, is resigning 20 days before the elections. This shows that he declined the system of the party. In his letter, he wrote that he was against the alliance (INDIA), but then why was he asking for tickets?”
—Abhishek Dutt, Delhi Congress functionary

“The coalition between AAP and Congress was an unnatural alliance. They joined hands to hide each other's corruption but their (Congress) party workers did not support this. His resignation was driven by the voice of his soul. The reason is well-known. It started with announcement of candidates. They cannot stand with the one who speaks about dividing the country, and stands with enemies. Many are protesting. But since opinions are not heard in Congress, the resignation came due to the internal voice of Arvinder Singh Lovely.”
—Virendra Sachdeva, Delhi BJP chief

“Congress is our senior alliance partner. However, it's their internal matter.”
—Saurabh Bharadwaj, AAP

Anyone working for country is welcome to our party, says BJP

Times News Network

New Delhi: Hours after Arvinder Singh Lovely resigned from the post of Delhi Congress president, Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva claimed that by giving tickets to individuals like Kanhaiya Kumar and Udit Raj, who, according to him, worked to divide the country, Congress had scored an own goal. Asked whether Lovely would join BJP, Sachdeva said: "Anyone who wants to see India as a developed country and work with a leadership that has led the country to new heights is welcome to the party." Predicting more resignations in opposition INDIA bloc in the coming days, Sachdeva said: "Signs of Lovely quitting were apparent on the day when Rajkumar Chauhan resigned. Whether it's Rajkumar Anand, Raj Kumar Chauhan, or Lovely, the common theme in their resignation letters was Arvind Kejriwal. Giving a ticket to Kumar was another reason." Referring to the "tukde tukde" row, Sachdeva claimed that anyone who had "a sense of patriotism" couldn't stand with people like Kumar, who talked about "breaking the country into pieces". He alleged that AAP was involved in corruption and misappropriation of public money and, despite its senior functionaries going to jail, the party was "shamelessly" fighting elections. "The nepotism that Kejriwal once condemned is being continued by him. Lovely's resignation is just the beginning," Sachdeva said. "BJP has always maintained that INDIA bloc is a grouping of parties and not a union of hearts. It's becoming evident that the alliance will be completely dissolved before May 25," he added.

This is not the first time that Lovely has sprung a surprise. In 2017, he quit the party and joined BJP, but later returned to Congress in 2018

this is the internal matter of the party; hence, I believe it's better that they (Congress) speak about it." Lovely also criticised Congress's North East Delhi candidate Kanhaiya Kumar for heaping praise on CM Kejriwal, who has been arrested in an alleged money laundering case related to Delhi excise policy. "The candidate from North East Delhi has also been giving media bytes falsely praising Delhi CM, in direct contravention of the party line and the local party workers' beliefs. In direct contradiction to the true factual position and the misery of Delhi citizens, he endorsed the false propaganda of AAP regarding the supposed work done by them in education, health, road, and electricity sectors," he said. "Such ill-thought and factually incorrect statements have not gone down well with the Delhi Congress unit since the local party workers had an inherent understanding that the alliance was not done in appreciation of AAP's false propaganda of the development of Delhi... but (as) a compromise to improve the chances of victory for Congress in the Lok Sabha polls." Lovely added: "It appears that the North East Delhi candidate is unaware of the fact that, admittedly, the condition of schools, hospitals and public infrastructure in Delhi, under AAP govt, has severely worsened compared with the development work done under the late Sheila Dikshit Ji's Congress regime," Lovely said.



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Babaria hits back, says non-deserving people were getting promoted

Times News Network

New Delhi: After Arvinder Singh Lovely resigned as Delhi Congress chief and trained his guns at AICC in-charge Deepak Babaria for "unilaterally vetoing" decisions taken by the senior Delhi leaders, the latter defended himself and said he had stopped Lovely on many occasions because non-deserving people were getting promoted which was "demoralising other party workers". Congress plans to announce a replacement for Lovely, an interim 'working or acting' president, on Monday. Babaria told TOI, "Campaigning will continue as before and our alliance with AAP is intact." Speaking to the media, Babaria said ahead of allying with AAP in Delhi, DPCC leaders and workers were taken into confidence and Lovely was part of the discussions. "He should have raised his objections back then. Anyone who distances himself from any party or post tends to find a reason to do so," he added. In his resignation letter to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Lovely said the Delhi Congress unit was against the alliance with AAP and that all unanimous decisions taken by senior Delhi leaders were "unilaterally vetoed" by Babaria. Babaria said it was "unfortunate" that Lovely's resignation came at a time when LS elections were underway, but asserted that it won't affect Congress. Babaria said, "His resignation has been accepted by the Congress high command with immediate effect." Sources said Babaria held a meeting with Delhi leaders where the gathering expressed surprise over Lovely's allegations, with most of them saying he was the loudest voice for a tie-up with AAP. Among those Babaria met were Subhash Chopra, Anil Choudhary and others.

Police lodge FIR against fake video of Amit Shah
New Delhi: Delhi Police has filed an FIR in connection with a fake video of Union home minister Amit Shah that went viral on social media in the last few days. The special cell's cyber unit received a complaint after which it initiated an investigation, sources said. Cops are trying to ascertain the identity of the account that first uploaded the video in which Shah allegedly gave a statement on ending reservations. TNN

Youth wing of AAP holds walk in CM's support

New Delhi: The Aam Aadmi Party's youth wing on Sunday organised a walkathon—Walk for Kejriwal—to show support for the chief minister.

Ministers Saurabh Bharadwaj, Atishi and Somnath Bharti, who also participated in the walk, installed a big washing machine as a symbol of BJP "absolving" its ministers of "corruption" charges. Bharadwaj told people gathered at the event, "Once these netas are put in BJP's washing machine, they come out clean and are given big positions, such as Lok Sabha seats and chief ministers."

Atishi claimed BJP's nervousness was visible. "They (BJP) had hoped that if Arvind Kejriwal was put in jail, AAP would not be able to campaign. But the crowd that gathered at Sunita Kejriwal's roadshow to bless her and Kejriwal was huge," she said.

Meanwhile, Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said it was regrettable that even after serious reprimands by Delhi High Court, Bharadwaj continued to indulge in political melodrama instead of fulfilling his duties towards citizens as a minister.

He added that both the walkathon and the roadshow organised by AAP were flop shows with no participation from local people.

Atishi: EC Is Acting As Another BJP Weapon

Says Nothing Wrong With Party's Campaign Song

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Hitting out at Election Commission of India for asking the party to modify its campaign song, AAP minister Atishi on Sunday claimed that it didn't violate any rules. She accused EC of being "another political weapon of BJP" and stated that this was probably the first time in India's history that a party's election campaign song had been banned.

Atishi accused EC of "inaction" when BJP "violates the model code of conduct on a daily basis". She further claimed that EC objected to the song mentioning fraudulent arrests but didn't take action to prevent attacks on the opposition or change the heads of investigative agencies during elections. "You (EC) would not change the head of CBI, you would not change ED's director or IT's director during elections, you would not do anything to stop the attack on the opposition. But if someone mentions in their campaign that fraudulent arrests are being made, then EC takes objection to it," Atishi said.



TAKING TO THE STREETS: Senior AAP functionaries during a protest

Atishi highlighted that AAP's campaign song didn't mention BJP by name, yet EC believed that talking about dictatorship was a criticism of the party at helm at Centre. She suggested that this implied EC itself believed that BJP was running a "dictatorial rule" in the country.

The AAP functionary maintained that the campaign song didn't violate the model code of conduct and included "factual

videos and incidents", such as the arrest of chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, the police's alleged misbehaviour with Manish Sisodia in Rouse Avenue Court, and the detention of AAP volunteers during protests.

Atishi questioned the intentions of EC, asking if the poll agency wanted to suppress the truth or hide the misconduct of the police and the alleged political misuse of investigative agencies by BJP.

Campaign clip casts aspersions on police: EC

Continued from P1

EC also objected to certain clips used in the video depicting the police in a negative light. One clip shows former deputy CM Manish Sisodia being escorted by cops, with the phrase in the background, "gundagardi ke khilaf vote denge and tanashahi karne wali party ko hum chot denge" (we will vote against hooliganism and we will injure the party indulging in dictatorship).

Rejecting certification, EC stated, "The words and the clip tend to present the picture of police in bad taste. It casts aspersions on their working... and (is) defamatory and slanderous."

The poll body also said the campaign song included clips showing "aggressive mob clashing with the police". The video, it added, contained "slanderous remarks and criticism" of the governing party based on unverified facts, which went against EC rules.

The commission cited Rules 6 and 7 of the programme code while refusing permission. Rule 6 states: "No programme should be carried in the cable service which is likely to encourage or incite violence or contains anything against maintenance of law and order or which promotes anti-national attitudes."

"Therefore, the advertisement is hereby returned with the request to modify the contents of the creative as per the Advertising Codes prescribed under the Cable Television Network Rules, 1994," EC said.

EC's letter stated that the campaign song may be "resubmitted after modification for certification".

AAP has been using the phrase "Jail ka jawaab vote se" frequently as a slogan during its campaign rallies. The phrase was coined by its Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh during a speech the day he was released on bail in the liquor policy case.

Sunita's plea at second roadshow: 'Save the country with your vote'

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New Delhi: Tilak Nagar market, which sees a rush of weekend shoppers, was full of people holding brooms at 5pm on Sunday.

At one end of the market was a small stage. A hip-hop beat blared. "Jail ke khilaf hum vote denge, gundagardi karne wali sarkar ke jawaab me hum jhadu ko vote denge (We will vote against imprisonment, the vote for the jhadu will be the reply to those in govt)." Dancers did choreographed moves. Then Sunita Kejriwal, the wife of jailed chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, arrived for her second roadshow.

"Mein Bharat Mata ki beti, apne vinati karti hoon ke desh ko bacha lo. Ye desh tanashahi ki or ja raha hai, is desh ko tanashah se bacha lo. Apne vote se. (I am the daughter of Bharat Mata. I implore you to save this country. This country is going towards authoritarian rule. Save this country with your vote)," Sunita began.

"Kejriwal ji ko itod nahin sakta, joh jhuka nahi sakta, woh Bharat Mata ke sachhe lal hain. (No one can break Kejriwal, he is the true son of the co-



Sunita moved on in her caravan as hundreds jostled around her

SUNITA SAYS
Now it is even difficult to have a cordial debate about politics among friends because of the hate politics of a particular govt

have changed the system... this is nothing but goondaism." In a pink kurta, with hands folded, Sunita moved on in her car, as hundreds jostled around her. Petals were showered on her.

Vimlesh and Nitish (34), twin brothers who live a few blocks from the market, said they came to the rally after they heard Sunita would be here.

"In 2014, when Modi came to power, we were anticipating a better future for the country. But, on the contrary they divided the country on religious po-

litics. Meanwhile, Kejriwal doesn't do communal politics and instead talks about laymen's issues of education, health and infrastructure," Vimlesh said.

"Now it is even difficult to have a cordial debate about politics among friends and family because of the hate politics of a particular govt. That has to change," Nitish pointed out.

Ashok Kumar (73), also a local, said: "We are tired of BJP's lies and communal politics. They are just pitting people against each other."

His friend Gurdeep Singh (63) said: "I am voting for AAP as they have sown the seed of honesty." People are scared to talk against BJP, he said.

Rajiv Kumar Sharma (50), however, wants BJP to return. "AAP is corrupt and only makes tall claims. BJP has delivered time and again," he said.

Former MP Mahabal Mishra of AAP is contesting from here.

Delhi BJP secretary Shri Harish Khurana said Sunita's rallies are sponsored shows. "People of West Delhi did not participate... Apparently most people were brought from Punjab."

CM's arrest a plot to stifle voice of opposition: AAP

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: A day before Supreme Court's anticipated examination of the petition filed by Arvind Kejriwal, minister Saurabh Bharadwaj asserted that CM's arrest was a "premeditated plot designed to stifle the most powerful opposition voice in the nation".

Bharadwaj stated that on April 29, SC would consider CM Kejriwal's petition challenging his arrest. "In this regard, CM presented his side before SC through an affidavit. He (Kejriwal) has said that it's not a mere coincidence that when the biggest election of the country is taking place... that the national convener of one of the main opposition parties of this country was arrested in a fal-

Bharadwaj claimed that neither ED nor CBI had managed to produce a single piece of evidence against Kejriwal

se and frivolous case," he said.

"Witnesses had admitted in their previous 6-8 testimonies that they never met Kejriwal and that Kejriwal has nothing to do with this excise policy. All those testimonies were hidden from the court, and only those testimonies which were taken from those people by torturing them under pressure were presented before the court by ED and CBI," Bharadwaj added.

He said "the Constitution has not given this right to ED and CBI. It is the job of ED and CBI to present all the facts,

whether in favour or against, before the court, whatever facts they have received". He mentioned that CBI had been investigating this case and issuing numerous notices. "Nevertheless, over the past two years, neither ED nor CBI had managed to produce a single piece of evidence against Kejriwal."

"What compelled them to arrest the national convener of the country's foremost and strongest opposition party just before the Lok Sabha elections, when even a small amount of evidence was not found in two years? This is a direct attack on the country's democratic system. The principle of equality, which is a significant part of India's Constitution, is gravely violated by the arrest of Arvind Kejriwal," he said.

'Kejriwal's wife denied nod to meet CM in jail'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: AAP sources on Sunday claimed that Tihar Jail administration had rejected the request for a meeting between Sunita and Arvind Kejriwal. A jail official rejected the claim, saying: "According to rules, two meetings are allowed in a week. Minister Atishi has been given time for Monday. Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann is scheduled to meet him on Tuesday. So, she (Sunita Kejriwal) can visit next week," the official said.

AAP sources claimed that both permissions were granted simultaneously, but Sunita Kejriwal's meeting was cancelled without any reason being provided.

This will be Mann's second visit in Tihar to meet Kejriwal, who was arrested on March 21 by ED in connection with the alleged excise policy scam.

Mann had earlier alleged that the AAP chief was not being afforded amenities provided even to hardcore criminals.

The central probe agency has alleged that Kejriwal was the "kingpin" of the "scam" and was directly involved in demanding kickbacks from liquor barons. AAP has rejected these charges, maintaining that there would be no change in leadership and Kejriwal remained CM even while in jail.

Earlier, AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh had alleged that Tihar Jail administration had cancelled Atishi's meeting with the CM at the last moment.

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Do not miss Education Times, a 8-page pullout with today's issue

MCD Work Reduced To Crawl In Absence of Standing Panel

Toll To Landfills, Key Decisions Need Nod From Committee

Vibha.Sharma@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Of the over 7.8 lakh students in Municipal Corporation of Delhi schools, 2 lakh are yet to receive their stationery, uniforms and notebooks as they do not have an operational bank account.

MCD commissioner Gyanesh Bharti clarified in Delhi High Court recently that he didn't have the power to sanction more than Rs 5 crore for any project, and unless the standing committee was formed, nothing could be done.

If the issue persists for long, then the children may face the same problem in this financial year as well.

Taking note of the crisis, HC on Friday observed that if the committee was unavailable, then the financial power "has to be delegated forthwith" by Delhi govt to an appropriate authority — within the next two days.

The absence of a standing committee even one-and-a-half years after MCD elections was due to the ongoing tussle in MCD between AAP and BJP, said experts. "And besides missing benefits for school students, there are many other areas where no development is happening only because a standing committee has not been formed. The spirit of DMC Act is getting lost, and it is being interpreted as per convenience," said a former director, press and information, of the unified corporation.

From the finalisation of agencies for biomining of 30



Though no court has imposed a restriction on holding the standing committee elections, AAP has challenged the matter of the appointment of aldermen by LG in SC, and judgment is reserved in the matter

lakh tonnes of legacy waste at two landfills—Ghazipur and Bhaswa—to allocating work for door-to-door collection of waste in the central zone, maintenance of streetlights in some zones and allocating a fresh toll contract to a new concessionaire (project cost over Rs 800 crore), many more projects are waiting for the committee's nod. While the authority can get administrative approval from the House for identifying agencies, the finalisation of the rate and agency needs the standing committee's nod.

Though no court has imposed a restriction on holding the standing committee elections, AAP has challenged the matter of the appointment of aldermen by LG in the Supreme Court, and judgment is reserved in the mat-

ter. In Jan, mayor Shelly Oberoi also approached SC for transferring the power of the standing committee to the House temporarily. A private proposal in this regard was passed in the House earlier.

In its statement on Saturday, AAP stated that despite this proposal being passed in January, to date, the MCD commissioner had not placed even a single proposal for projects worth more than Rs 5 crore before MCD House.

"If LG wants the stalled work to be completed, then instructions should be issued to the MCD commissioner that he place all the proposals amounting to more than Rs 5 crore before MCD House, and we will get them passed. After that, the MCD commissioner can issue the tenders," stated AAP.

The absence of a standing committee even one-and-a-half years after MCD elections was due to the ongoing tussle in MCD between AAP and BJP, said experts

"Under MCD Act 1957, the budget cannot be passed without the approval of the standing committee, but a solution was found, and the budget was presented in the House," stated the party.

Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said that the problem with AAP was that they wanted to run MCD in the most anarchic manner. "First, they have not allowed the constitution of the standing committee, and now they want the discretionary powers vested under DMC Act 1957 in the hands of the commissioner to come into the hands of the mayor in the guise of the House," he said.

Six out of 18 members of the standing committee are elected in direct elections by the House and 12 are elected by members of the ward committees, one each from the 12 zones. These ward committees, in turn, include aldermen who have voting powers and, hence, impact the outcome of the formation of the standing committee.

After Delhi High Court's intervention, while three members of BJP and three of AAP were elected in June 2023, the election of 12 members is still pending as zonal committees have not been formed.

Cop dies in Pragati tunnel accident

Ashresh.Marupaka @timesgroup.com

New Delhi: A Delhi Police sub-inspector died after ramming into a median barricade in the Pragati Maidan tunnel on Saturday night.

Police are investigating the cause by checking the CCTV footage. An auto was seen near the SI's scooter when the accident occurred.

The SI, identified as N.K. Pavitharan, was posted in East Delhi district's crime team. He was driving from India Gate towards IP Extension through the tunnel when his scooter lost balance and he fell on the road.

According to sources, the accident happened around 10.30pm when Pavitharan was taking a left turn in the tunnel after the Y-junction that separates the roads leading to Vikas Marg and Akshardham road.

He was driving in the right most lane adjacent to the walls of the tunnel. He then encountered a sudden collision with a median bar-



The cop's scooter rammed a median barricade in the tunnel

ricade, and was flung off his scooter on to the road.

Police officers and an ambulance rushed to the spot and found him in a critical condition. Tunnel marshals rushed to the spot too and tried to rescue him. Sharafat, a marshal, said: "I was present here when the accident occurred. He was still breathing when we put him in the

ambulance." Pavitharan's helmet was found near him on the blood-soaked road.

"He was rushed to a hospital where doctors declared him dead on arrival," a senior police officer said. Police added that no foul play is suspected and a case under sections 279 (rash driving or riding on a public way) and 304 A (causing death by negligence) of

the IPC has been registered. Delhi govt's PWD said: "There was no problem of water leakage inside the tunnel and the accident did not occur because of that. The tunnel is digitally monitored at all times and we informed police as soon as the accident occurred," a PWD official said.

The PWD recently claimed that it had started repairs in the tunnel, mainly for water leakage.

According to officials, the tunnel is safer and the leakage problem has been largely resolved. Earlier, PWD had slapped a legal notice on the construction company alleging "faulty design".

Only a year back, on May 24, a 19-year-old biker had met with an accident in the Pragati Maidan tunnel after he accidentally ran into crash barriers and toppled over to the other side. Due to the poor signal delays in the tunnel, the teen lost his life due to a delay in receiving medical assistance, given the lack of mobile connectivity in the 1.3-km tunnel.

BJP remembers Karpoori on birth centenary

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Rajesh Mehta

New Delhi: Delhi BJP observed the birth centenary of Bihar's former CM Karpoori Thakur by paying floral tributes to his statue and portraits and holding meetings to remember his work at the Ambedkar International Centre on Sunday.

The celebration was graced by prominent BJP leaders such as deputy CM of Bihar Samrat Choudhary, MP Manoj Tiwari and Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva.

"Fifty years ago, Karpoori Thakur was the first person who cared for the poor or worked for the poor," Choudhary said. "Modi fulfilled the dream of Karpoori Thakur, who aspired to see a son of the marginalised become the Prime Minister," he said. "Bihar is on the brink of being completely free of mafia, whereas a



BJP MP Manoj Tiwari, Bihar deputy chief minister Samrat Choudhary and Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva during a programme to mark the birth centenary of former Bihar CM Karpoori Thakur

mafia sits within the government in Delhi and needs to be replaced," he said. Delhi BJP chief Sachdeva said: "De-

spite holding top positions in various departments from 1952 to 1988, he (Karpoori Thakur) remained in the same house where he was born."

Thakur's goal was to ensure that government schemes reached every household, and Modi govt has accomplished what he had envisioned, he said.

Sachdeva said the main objective behind organising this event in Delhi was that it is the capital of the country and from here a message should be sent across the country. "We should do the work of taking the message of Karpoori Thakur to every home, only then will his contribution and tireless hard work have an impact in our society," he said.

Moderating the event, BJP functionary Anil Jha said that by honouring such great leaders with Bharat Ratna, Prime Minister Modi had won everyone's heart.

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REMEMBRANCES

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Temp to touch 40°C again, rain unlikely

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Delhiites are likely to face discomfort as the mercury is predicted to rise to 40 degrees Celsius on Monday. The city has so far seen only one day when the maximum temperature touched 40-degree mark.

India Meteorological Department (IMD) officials said that rain is unlikely for the next few days. Meanwhile, Delhi's air quality is likely to deteriorate to 'poor' category due to transportation of dust from semi-arid region to the city.

According to IMD, the maximum temperature was 38.2 degrees Celsius, one degree below normal, on Sunday at Safdarjung which is the city's base station. However, Najafgarh saw the mercury reaching almost 40-degree as the maximum temperature settled at 39.9 degrees Celsius.

"As the impact of a western disturbance is over, clear skies are likely for the next few days. As rain is not expected for the next five days, the temperature may rise. The day temperature is predicted to reach 40 degrees Celsius on Monday," said an IMD official.

The minimum temperature was 23.5 degrees Celsius and relative humidity oscillated between 19% and 59%.

IMD's data shows that April has logged just 7.5 mm rainfall so far as against the month's normal of 16.3 mm. The city had seen deficit rainfall in March also. March recorded only 4.3 mm rainfall, making it a rain deficit of 75%.

Delhi's AQI was 175 in 'moderate' category on Sunday as against 163 a day earlier.

REMEMBRANCES

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These Fraudsters Play 'Card' Trick At ATMs To Clean Out Your Savings

Gang Removed Card Readers From Machines, Previously Involved In 25 Cases

Siddhvi Singh
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Next time your card gets stuck in an automated teller machine (ATM) while withdrawing cash, beware! This could be a fraudster's work.

Fraudsters have devised a new trick where they remove the card reader of an ATM so that the card gets stuck inside the machine when being used by a customer. Thereafter, the scammers offer help to the customer by entering their PIN. When it fails, they ask the victim to lodge a complaint. After the customer leaves, they retrieve the card and withdraw money.

Police said the gang of ATM fraudsters, which was busted on Sunday, were involved in at least 25 similar cases in the past.

In the most recent incident, the assailants fired shots at a kiosk in Hauz Khas when a passerby caught them red-handed. The accused have been identified as Vishal Negi (30), Amit Mehra (37), and Vijay Kumar (26).

According to Ankit Chauhan, DCP (South), police received a PCR call on April 19 regarding an attempted break-in at an ATM and gunfire in Gautam Nagar.

"A police team rushed to the scene. Witnesses repor-

CHEAT CODES

HOW THE GANG OPERATED

ATM Tampering | Discreetly removed card reader device from ATMs, spray painted CCTVs

Transaction interruption | Victims' cards would get stuck in these tampered ATMs

Impersonation | Gang members would approach victims, persuading them to enter their PINs to resolve the issue

Persistent issue | Even after entering the PIN, the card remained stuck, prompting victims to leave and report the problem to the bank

Fraudulent transactions | In the meanwhile, the fraudsters retrieved the cards, conducted unauthorised transactions and fled

Threat of violence | Armed with weapons, the gang intimidated potential witnesses or authorities to escape

KEY PLAYERS

➤ According to police, Vishal Negi and Amit Mehra learned these tricks online

➤ Residents of UP, they confessed to committing more than 25 such frauds

➤ Police seized five credit/debit cards

HOW TO STAY SAFE

1 Choose well-lit ATMs and locations

2 Check for signs of tampering

3 Always cover and enter PIN

4 Handle transactions independently

5 Monitor your statements regularly

6 Report suspicious activity

7 Stay informed about scams

ted two men trying to tamper with the ATM. When confronted by the caller and others, one of the suspects brandished a firearm, shot in the air and fled," he said.

A case was registered under relevant sections of the IPC and Arms Act, and an investigation was initiated.

The DCP further explained, "CCTV footage from ne-

arby cameras was analysed, revealing the suspects escaping in an auto. We followed this trail, eventually identifying a vehicle. However, its registered address turned

out to be fake. Traffic challans, insurance details, and violations associated with the vehicle were analysed, leading us to an active mobile number," said the senior police officer.

Police added that they were able to pinpoint the location of one of the accused. "Following a raid, the three were nabbed successfully. Their involvement in several similar incidents in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh was revealed," he said.

"Negi and Mehra would typically position themselves inside the targeted ATMs, spray painting cameras and tampering with card readers," explained Chauhan.

"A third member would monitor the happenings outside. When a victim's card was stuck, the two would pose as customers and swiftly intervene. They would perform transactions before the victim gets alerted or blocks their card. If caught, they would brandish firearms and threaten their victims before fleeing."

Police said the three accused were remanded to judicial custody. Negi and Mehra were found implicated in seven cases within the city. Further investigations remain underway to verify their involvement in other similar incidents.



Falsely accusing spouse of infidelity mental cruelty: HC

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Falsely accusing a spouse of an extramarital affair and questioning the paternity of children amounts to severe mental cruelty, Delhi High Court has said.

Justice Suresh Kait and Justice Neena Bansal Krishna, in a recent decision, upheld a family court's verdict in a case of matrimonial dispute where the husband had sought divorce on the ground of mental cruelty.

The bench concluded that it is the man who had inflicted mental cruelty and could not cite that as a ground to seek relief, and added that making baseless allegations against a spouse, especially involving character and fidelity, and rejecting the children's legitimacy inflicts profound mental anguish and damages the matrimonial bond irreparably.

Such actions represent the gravest form of insult and cruelty and it is the wife who suffered cruelty, said the court.

During the proceedings, it was revealed that although the man repeatedly accused his wife of being unfaithful and having relationships with multiple men, but during cross-examination he admitted to having no evidence to substantiate his claim.

Noting that the husband "has consistently and persistently, adamantly raised doubts about the character of the respondent and made unsubstantiated and reprehensible allegations against her character and asserted that she was having illicit relationship not only with one but with many other persons", the court criticised him for the relentless and degrading nature of his accusations, which also targeted the innocent children by questioning their paternity.

"These false and completely unsubstantiated accusations of the appellant did not stop him in even blatantly denying the parentage of his own son and daughter when he deposed in his own cross-examination that 'I have no faith that the children belong to me'," the bench noted.

DPCC, NGT may team up to tackle noise pollution

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) has requested the National Green Tribunal (NGT) to form a joint committee to conduct fresh inspections at Hauz Khas village to ascertain the total number of restaurants, pubs, and eateries functioning there and to check their compliance with noise pollution norms.

Fines will be imposed if decibel levels are found to be beyond permissible limits in the area.

In a report submitted to NGT on April 16, DPCC told the tribunal that it had sealed three restaurants in the area for operating without a valid 'consent to operate'.

In another report submitted on April 22, DPCC said it found 31 eateries in the area but MCD's records say it has issued health licences to 30 restaurants, while an earlier inspection by a joint committee only found 23 restaurants there.

"The number of eateries in the Hauz Khas area needs to be reconfirmed. Therefore, a joint team consisting of officials from revenue dept, MCD, DPCC, Delhi Police and Delhi Fire Services under the coordination or chairmanship of SDM (Hauz Khas) may be constituted by the NGT to check the factual status by revisiting the area," said DPCC.

It added that the exercise would include measuring noise levels at all eateries and pubs identified in the area.

In Dec last year, a joint team of the DPCC and the sub-divisional magistrate (Hauz Khas) found 10 restaurants in the area that did not meet noise norms. These were fined Rs 10,000 each under the Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000.

DPCC told NGT that it had sealed three restaurants in the area for operating without a valid 'consent to operate'

Speeding Jaguar hits cab at Dhaula Kuan, 3 injured

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: A cab driver and his two passengers suffered grievous injuries after a 23-year-old student allegedly lost control of a speeding luxury car and hit their vehicle.

Early in the morning, a speeding Jaguar allegedly collided with the cab, two other vehicles, and then a divider before coming to a halt near south-west Delhi's Dhaula Kuan.

Police have arrested the student, a resident of Saraswati Vihar, who had been driving the vehicle. He was accompanied by a 25-year-old woman at the time of the accident.

According to Rohit Meena, DCP (south-west), police received a PCR call around 4.55 am regarding an acci-



WRECKED

The front bumper and bonnet were obliterated by the impact of the accident, the windshield was shattered, and the chassis was also deformed

and two passengers, were injured in the accident," he said.

The cab driver was identified as Harjeet Singh, a resident of Shakarpur. During the investigation, it came to light that the Jaguar driver, along with a female co-passenger, was driving towards Naraina. "On the Ring Road, the driver was speeding and lost control of the vehicle, due to which he crossed the grill, entered

the wrong thoroughfare, and collided with the cab," said a police officer.

Cops added that the duo in the Jaguar suffered minor injuries in the accident but fled the scene immediately after the incident.

In the visuals that have surfaced on social media, one can see a white Jaguar in a mangled condition. The front bumper and bonnet were obliterated by the impact of the accident, the windshield was shattered, and the chassis was also deformed. Pieces of the vehicle could be spotted lying all over the road.

Cops said the accused had been booked under sections 279 (rash driving) and 337 (negligence) of the Indian Penal Code. Police are awaiting the medico-legal certificate.

NGT seeks status of rainwater harvesting

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the agencies concerned to share details of rainwater harvesting systems in the city and the officials appointed to maintain them.

Criticising the agencies for not implementing the tribunal's 2019 order related to rainwater harvesting systems (RWHS), the NGT also asked them to share the number of such structures erected near stormwater drains.

An execution application filed with the tribunal last year stated that departments had installed RWHS and connected them with stormwater drains, consisting of wastewater and sewage water, resulting in groundwater contamination.

On April 24, the NGT ob-

Criticising the agencies for not implementing the tribunal's 2019 order related to rainwater harvesting systems, the NGT also asked them to share the number of such structures erected near stormwater drains

erved that fresh reports had been filed on behalf of the Central Ground Water Authority, Municipal Corporation of Delhi, Delhi Pollution Control Committee, and Delhi Development Authority, but the reports "do not reflect disclosure of any material and relevant information".

The tribunal directed all the agencies concerned to file their response on the number of RWHS erected,

along with the location details and contact details of the officer responsible for their maintenance.

It also asked the agencies to share details on the number of structures erected near stormwater drains, the status and number of piezometers (used to measure water level) installed near RWHS for monitoring groundwater level, and the number of deficient RWHS. The agencies have been asked to inform the tribunal whether the RWHS that have been erected are meeting the suggestions of the committee constituted earlier by the NGT.

"Fresh reports must be filed within a period of three weeks by all the concerned respondents, failing which the tribunal may not have any option but to direct the

personal appearance of the heads of these authorities," said the bench headed by Justice Prakash Shrivastava.

In 2019, an NGT-constituted expert committee comprising members from the CPCB, DPCC, and the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) suggested that the installation of RWHS within stormwater drains having contaminants should not be allowed and rainwater harvesting from polluted or contaminated water must be stopped. The agencies owning RWHS should properly maintain them to prevent recharging by contaminated water. It was also suggested that proper separators be installed to separate pollutants before recharging the RWHS with polluted water such as surface run-off.

It's the phone, stupid! No. of challans for using mobile while driving soars 149%

Ashresh Marupaka
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Prosecutions for driving while using a cellphone showed a rise by 149% in Delhi between Jan 1 and April 15 when this year's figures were compared with the same period in 2023 by Delhi traffic police.

In 2023, the number of prosecutions were 6,369. This year, it has increased to 15,846.

Usage of mobile phones while driving was made an offence under the Motor Vehicle Act (1988) in 2019 to deter drivers from getting distracted at the wheel.

The amendment said the 'use of hand-held communication devices while driving' was a punishable offence under Section 184 of the MV Act as it is an instance of driving dangerously. A fine of Rs 5,000 and disqualification of the licence for 3 months is imposed if anyone uses mobiles while driving.

A circle-wise distribution of the data has shown that the maximum number of prosecutions recorded this year was in Punjabi Bagh. There were 845 challans. The second highest number was from Ti-

DIALLING TROUBLE



AREAS WITH MOST CELLPHONE DRIVING VIOLATIONS



lak Nagar (810 challans) and then Kalkaji (797 challans).

Other areas with a high number of recorded violations on this count are Nangloi (772 prosecutions), Karol Bagh (675 prosecutions), Defence Colony (670 prosecutions) and Sangam Vihar (662 prosecutions). Dwarka recorded 556 violations, Safdarjung Enclave 522 and Najafgarh 507.

A traffic police officer said: "The use of mobile pho-

nes while operating a vehicle poses a severe threat to road safety, contributing significantly to distracted driving and increasing the risk of accidents manifold."

According to traffic police data in the crash report, drivers using mobile phones are approximately four times more likely to be involved in a crash than drivers not using a mobile phone.

Using a phone while driving slows reaction time, no-

tably when there is a need for braking or heeding signals. Using a phone while driving also makes it difficult for a motorist to stay in the correct lane, and to keep the correct distance from surrounding vehicles.

Another senior traffic officer said, "A major chunk of these violations are caught by personnel on the ground, and on the spot. Challans are issued to violators under the MV Act."



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PUBLIC NOTICE

GENERAL ELECTION TO HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE (LOK SABHA) - 2024, NCT OF DELHI

The general public and candidates are hereby informed that the Election Commission of India has designated the following Officers as Returning Officers for the seven Parliamentary Constituencies in the National Capital Territory of Delhi. The details of these Returning Officers along with the place for receiving the nomination papers are as under:

Number & Name of the of Parliamentary Constituency	Name of Returning Officer	Designation	Office address (where nomination papers will be received/accepted and scrutiny to be conducted)	Land line & Fax No.	Mobile No.	E-mail
1 Chandni Chowk	Sh Yash Chaudhary, IAS	District Election Officer/District Magistrate (North)	Office of District Magistrate (North) D.M Office Complex, G.T Road, Alipur, Delhi-110036	011-27203048	7837540106	dcnorth@nic.in
02 North East Delhi	Ms. Veditha Reddy, IAS	District Election Officer/ District Magistrate (North East)	Office of District Magistrate (North East) D.M Office Complex (North East) K Block, Nand Nagri Delhi-110093	011-22122732	9999301391	dcne@nic.in
03 East Delhi	Sh. Amol Srivastava, IAS	District Election Officer/ District Magistrate (East)	Office of District Magistrate (East) A-Block L.M. Bundh Shastri Nagar Delhi-1 10031	011-21210848 011-21210862	9319206018	dceast@nic.in
04 New Delhi	Ms. Isha Khosla, IAS	District Election Officer/ District Magistrate (New Delhi)	Office of District Magistrate (New Delhi) 12/1 Jam Nagar House Shahjahan Road New Delhi-110011	011-23381080 011-23384621	9899193642	dcnd@nic.in
05 North West Delhi (SC)	Ms. Ankita Anand, IAS	District Election Officer/ District Magistrate (North West)	Office of District Magistrate (North West) Kanjhawala, Delhi-110081	011-20896208	9718957535	dcnw@nic.in
06 West Delhi	Dr. Kinny Singh, IAS	District Election Officer/ District Magistrate (West)	Office of District Magistrate (West) Room No. 303, 3 rd Floor, Plot No. 3 Shivaj Place, Raja Garden, New Delhi-110027	011-25107118	9821028392	dcwest@nic.in
07 South Delhi	Sh. Mekala Chaitanya Prasad, IAS	District Election Officer/ District Magistrate (South)	Office of District Magistrate (South) M.B Road, Saket, New Delhi-110068	011-29535025	7005636466	dcsouth@nic.in

Date and time for receiving nominations papers: 29/04/2024 to 06/05/2024 (except public holidays as per section 25 of the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881), between 11:00 AM to 03:00 PM.



DIP/Shabdarth/Classified/0020/24-25

Sd/-
(Rajesh Kumar)
Spl. Chief Electoral Officer, Delhi

Delhi cops arrest teen who duped people via fake ads in Jamtara

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: An 18-year-old man who ran fake advertisements online and phished money from unsuspecting victims has been arrested by Delhi Police in Jharkhand's Jamtara.

The accused used remote desktop apps to take control of his victims' computers. Police found that the accused had siphoned over Rs 1 crore so far.

Riyaj Ansari started putting up fake advertisements on search engine websites in such a way that if a user searched for the official customer care helpline of a particular service provider, web links would redirect to his website.

In this way, an unsuspecting airline ticket holder, a professor of Jawaharlal Nehru University, searched the name of the carrier to avail himself of a cancellation refund.

The user dialled a number given on the website, and the accused represented himself as a customer care representative of the airline. The victim was then asked to download a remote desktop control application to lodge a

complaint, but a phishing link was provided to him. The link resembled a bank account details form, similar to those used by banks.

Once the victim entered his bank details, the fraudster logged into his netbanking and siphoned off more than Rs 7 lakh.

A complaint was registered with the police. Investigation into the money trail revealed that the money was sent to four accounts in different locations across the country, such as Kolkata, Mumbai, Ludhiana and Varanasi.

Police traced the mobile number advertised, and it was traced to Jharkhand's Jamtara. A police raid in the wee hours of the morning resulted in the apprehension of Ansari, and the discovery of his brother and accomplice in the cyber fraud, Mukhtar.

Deputy commissioner of police (southwest) Rohit Meena said, "The area of the operation was very challenging as Jamtara is one of the most infamous hotspots for cybercrime. The team made an intensive search. After long surveillance and a dedicated search, the accused was apprehended."

MCD's Parking Plan Parked For 3 Years

17 Colonies In Focus, But Little Progress On Ground

Vibha.Sharma@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Three years after the notification of the capital's parking policy, MCD has not made significant progress on the implementation of the Parking Area Management Plans (PAMP).

In 2020, MCD prepared plans for at least 17 colonies and submitted these to Delhi govt's transport department. Except for four, approvals were not granted for the rest, MCD officials said.

Now, MCD has decided to conduct a fresh survey in the remaining areas as the situation on the ground has changed. Delhi govt has not commented on this matter.

The existing circumstances raise questions over the implementation of the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)'s direction until Aug 30. The committee has asked urban local bodies to develop ward-wise PAMP and increase or rationalise parking charges to discourage private vehicles during this period.

Of the four approved plans, two were implemented in Lajpat Nagar III and Lajpat Nagar Market. Due to changes suggested by local people at the remaining two places — Gulmohar Park and Neeti Bagh — the plans remain stuck.

The nod is still awaited for Anand Lok, Aurobindo Marg (IT to AIIMS), Geetanjali Enclave, Green Park Extension, Kailash Colony, Kailash Hills, Punjabi Bagh banquet halls, Malviya Nagar, Panchsheel Enclave, Safdarjung Development Area, and Siddharth Extension Pocket-B from 2021.

While the civic body claims a lack of support from local people, insufficient parking space and other factors affected the implementation of the plans, people argue that the authorities have no will.

STUCK IN SLOW LANE

Delhi Maintenance and Management of Parking Places Rules were notified in Sept 2019

WHAT IT RECOMMENDS

Civic bodies to make 'parking area management plans'	Regularise haphazard parking in residential and commercial spaces	Dynamic pricing mechanism for parking in peak and non-peak hours
--	---	--

MCD prepared a plan for 17 locations...

These included Gulmohar Park, Neeti Bagh, Anand Lok, Aurobindo Marg (IT to AIIMS), Geetanjali Enclave, Green Park Extension, Kailash Colony, Kailash Hills, Punjabi Bagh banquet halls, Malviya Nagar...

...But plan implemented only at two locations Lajpat Nagar Market and Lajpat Nagar III (did not sustain for long)

WHY | While CAQM stresses upon ward-wise implementation of plan, experts believe locals involvement is must

What is parking area management plan

- Aims at improving availability of on-street and off-street parking
- Utilise road space for the convenience of users, with priority to pedestrians, cyclists, emergency vehicles and vending zones



At Lajpat Nagar III, the parking signs installed for PAMP were being ignored. "The residents demanded changes, and there was resistance. As a result, the plan could not be rolled out properly, and funds spent went down the drain," a resident said. People were also not in favour of parking vehicles away from their houses.

In Lajpat Nagar II Central market, the market association was operating the parking when PAMP was implemented. "We ran the parking as per plan for three years, but recently the site has been tendered out to a private agency, and now, the new contractor will need to ensure the norms are fulfilled," said Ashwani Marwah, general secretary of the Traders Association, Lajpat Nagar.

MCD officials that as a priority, they plan to take up the project at Nizamuddin Basti, where stack parking is operational. "Hundreds come to the dargah in cars and buses. The plans will decongest the area," said an official.

Experts believe that PAMP will be successful only when the civic body ensures citizens' participation.

Anumita Roychowdhury, executive director for research and advocacy at the Centre for Science and Environment, said that three pilot projects at Lajpat Nagar, Kamla Nagar and Krishna Nagar rolled out successfully. "Two co-

uld not survive because of a lack of willingness. The idea is not to legalise parking on internal roads but arterial and sub-arterial roads should be covered. If there is excessive resistance, then regulation and enforcement is an option to automatically decongest the city, which is a long-term objective. In Shahjahanabad, the plan is implemented, and in Karol Bagh, the plan was in force as long as the administration was supervising the project. If the civic body spends funds collected through the rationalisation of parking fees on upgrading parking infrastructure, then people will come forward to support," she said.

"SORRY, CAN WE TALK LATER? I'M VERY BUSY WITH ALL THE MERGERS AND ANAGRAMS."

The **ET** Crossword Cult

Are you one of us?

Man stabs wife to death in northwest Delhi, arrested

New Delhi: A 27-year-old woman was stabbed to death allegedly by her husband in northwest Delhi's Bharat Nagar on Saturday owing to a marital dispute. Suspect Javed, a resident of Jahangirpuri, tried to flee but was nabbed by the public and handed over to cops, a police officer said. During inquiry, it was revealed that Javed and Afsana got married about six years ago and Afsana and their two kids were residing at her father's home since Jan due to some disputes. Police said the man attacked the woman with a kitchen knife when she was returning from the market.

School Buzz

Around 131 students from Jain Bharati Mrigavati Vidyalaya, GT Karnal Road gave an enchanting presentation at the Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan on the occasion of Bhagwan Mahavir Nirvan. The event was organised by the Cultural Ministry of Indian Government to commemorate the 2550th Bhagwan Mahavir Nirvan Mahotsav. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Arjun Ram Meghwal, Union Minister of Law and Justice (IC) and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs & Culture, Meenakshi Lele, Minister of State for External Affairs graced



the occasion. The PM also appreciated the tableaux prepared by the students of Jain Bharati based on the jeevan charit of Lord Mahavir. Thereafter, Prime Minister watched a "Nriya Natika" presented by the students based on Bhagwan Mahaveer Swami titled "Vartaman Mein Vardhman".

CRPF Public School, Rohini took a proactive step towards ensuring the safety and security of all students and staff by conducting a comprehensive Fire Safety Mock Drill. Collaborating with officers from the Delhi Fire Safety Academy, Sector XIV Rohini, the school aimed to educate and prepare everyone for potential emergencies. School principal Nidhi Chaudhary felicitated the team of fire officers and presented a sapling to SO Bhupender



Sharma. The drill served to familiarise students and staff with fire safety measures and emergency procedures. Teachers diligently briefed students on emergency exit plans, evacuation routes, and safety protocols. With three headcounts scheduled throughout the drill, including before leaving the building, reaching the assembly ground, and returning to classrooms, the importance of accountability and coordination was emphasized. Special attention was given to students with special needs, ensuring their safe evacuation with the assistance of designated buddy students.

Maharaja Agarsain Public School, Ashok Vihar, embarked on a two-day international cultural exchange, fostering strong bonds with educators from Mexico. The exchange unfolded with a welcome for Ms Marysol and Ms Gabriela, followed by a tour of the school premises. A captivating storytelling session emerged as a cultural bridge, weaving tales from India and Mexico. The exchange of handwritten



ten letters and thoughtful gifts further solidified the budding friendships. From relishing the flavours of traditional Indian cuisine to embarking on explorations of iconic landmarks such as the majestic Red Fort, bustling Chandni Chowk, serene Bangla Sahib Gurudwara, and the revered Hanuman Mandir; each moment enriched the cultural exchange. In the spirit of mutual learning, educators seized opportunities to exchange teaching methodologies, gaining valuable insights into pedagogical approaches from different corners of the globe

Mount Abu Public School, Rohini commemorated the Earth Day with unwavering enthusiasm. Emile MWEPELI, Charge d'affaires of the High Commission of Rwanda in New Delhi, graced the occasion as the chief guest. Middle school students were treated to a special session featuring Rakesh Khatri, renowned environmentalist, who shed light on this year's theme, 'Planet V/s Plastic'. The school organised an interschool competition, 'Eco Craft



and 'Eco Theatre', drawing active participation from schools across Delhi. School principal Jyoti Arora urged students to become proactive 'earthists', instilling a sense of responsibility towards the planet. The day saw a myriad of engaging activities including creating signages, oratory contests, artwork, and recycling initiatives. Street plays served as impactful reminders of the need for environmental stewardship.

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
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personal CHANGE OF NAME I, Shaina W/O Arif Hasan R/O D-39, Gall Number - 2, Nala Road, Laxmi Garden, Loni Dehat, Loni, Ghaziabad - 201102 have changed my name to Mrs. Shaina Hasan post marriage vide affidavit dated 25/4/2024 Sworn before notary Kamal Chand, Ghaziabad.

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MODI CAUSING BITTERNESS IN SOCIETY, HAS NO MORAL RIGHT TO CONTINUE AS PM: LALU

THE MORE VOTES YOU GIVE TO CONGRESS, THE STRONGER BJP GETS IN BENGAL, SAYS MAMATA



Coast Guard seizes Pak boat with drugs worth ₹600cr

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ahmedabad: A Pakistani boat with around 86kg of heroin worth Rs 600 crore was seized off the Gujarat coast and its crew of 14 from the neighbouring country arrested.

Indian Coast Guard (ICG) along with Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) and Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) made the seizure after intercepting the boat early on April 26, the agencies said Sunday. ATS officers said the contraband was to be received by a Tamil Nadu-based drug cartel and its destination was Sri Lanka.

This was the second big operation against the drug mafia within two days. The other involved seizures of methedrone worth Rs 230 crore from two labs in Gujarat's Gandhinagar and Amreli, and a third in Rajasthan's Sirohi. The raids led to the arrest of 13 people.

Nasir Hussain, 62, the captain of the drugs-laden Pakistani boat "Al Raza",



Coast Guard personnel with crew members of the Pakistani boat from which 86kg of heroin was seized off the Gujarat coast

took a bullet in his hand fired by officers when he tried to resist the operation, a Gujarat cop said. Later, Hussain had surgery in hospital to have the bullet removed.

Hussain and his 13 associates are from Pakistan's Balochistan province, the officers said. The heroin consignment was sent by a Pakistan-based drug mafioso, named Haji Aslam alias Babu Baloch. Gujarat DGP Vi-

kas Sahay said the drugs were kept "in 78 packets".

The operation followed an input to Gujarat ATS that the boat from Karachi would pass the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) off the Porbandar coast. A joint team of the three agencies was then formed for the operation nearly 180 nautical miles (330km) from IMBL. The investigation was handed over to NCB.

China continues LAC infra build-up 4 yrs into face-off, shows latest sat imagery

Focus On Last-Mile Connectivity Through Roads, Bridges, Tunnels & Helipads

Rajat.Pandit@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Four years into the face-to-face military confrontation in eastern Ladakh, which also triggered tensions all along the Line of Actual Control, there has been no let-up in the way China continues to build border infrastructure and dual-use 'Xiaokang' villages, strengthen military positions and deploy additional aircraft at its air-bases facing India.

Latest satellite imagery, intelligence reports and other inputs show this ongoing Chinese activity in all the three sectors of the 3,488-km LAC, stretching from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh, defence and security establishment sources told TOI.

"People's Liberation Army (PLA) is relentlessly consolidating its military positions and support infrastructure in various depth and staging areas along the LAC, including near the buffer zones created after troop disengagements in eastern Ladakh," a source said.

China, for instance, recently completed construction of a road from the north of Samzungling to the Galwan Valley,



Increased PLA activity is seen in the eastern sector near Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh and Naku La in north Sikkim, a defence source said. India also continues to match PLA with 'mirror military deployments'

providing the PLA with a 15-km shorter alternate axis to rapidly build-up troops in the area.

A no-patrol buffer zone was created around Patrolling Point-14 in Galwan Valley three weeks after the violent clash in which 20 Indian soldiers and an unspecified number of Chinese troops were killed there on June 15, 2020.

Similarly, sources said, PLA has been progressively strengthening military and transport infrastructure to the rear of the other buffer zones on both banks of Pangong Tso, including the Kailash range, and Gogra-Hot Springs, all of which have largely come up in

areas that India considers its own territory.

PLA has also been focussing on last-mile connectivity through roads, bridges, tunnels and helipads to its forward positions, while also constructing new bunkers, camps, underground shelters, artillery positions, radar sites and ammunition dumps in other stretches of the LAC. "This increased PLA activity is especially being seen in the eastern sector, across Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh and Naku La in north Sikkim," another source said.

India, of course, continues to match the PLA with "mirror military deployments",

while it has also majorly cranked up infrastructure and capability development along the frontier, as earlier reported by TOI.

China has also offset some of its air combat disadvantage due to high-altitude terrain constraints by deploying additional fighters, bombers, reconnaissance aircraft and drones after upgrading its airfields like Hotan, Kashgar, Gargunsa, Shigatse, Bangda, Nyingchi and Hoping, among others, with new and extended runways, hardened shelters, fuel and ammunition storage facilities.

Latest inputs, for instance, show two new JH-7A fighter-bombers and three Y-20 heavy-lift aircraft, among others, deployed at Hotan in Xinjiang to add to the almost 50 J-11 and J-7 fighters, five Y-8 and Y-7 transport aircraft and KJ-500 AEW&C (airborne early warning and control) aircraft already present there.

Sources say new Chinese dual-use 'Xiaokang' border villages are also regularly being built and older ones being "populated" along the disputed stretches of the LAC, especially in the eastern sector, to

reinforce PLA positions as well as lay claim to territory.

China has been building as many as 628 such border defence villages to fortify the borders of the Tibetan Autonomous Region with India and Bhutan over the last few years, as earlier reported by TOI.

"All this clearly indicates PLA will continue to permanently station troops in forward locations along the LAC, even if eventually there is some sort of disengagement at the two major persisting face-off sites at Depsang and Demchok in eastern Ladakh," a source said.

It was on May 5-6 in 2020 that dozens of Indian and Chinese soldiers were injured in the first major clash that erupted on the north bank of Pangong Tso after the PLA's well-planned multiple incursions into eastern Ladakh caught India off guard initially.

Four years later, there are currently 50,000 to 60,000 PLA troops with heavy weaponry forward deployed in the western (Ladakh) and central sectors (Uttarakhand, Himachal) as well as 90,000 soldiers in the eastern one (Sikkim, Arunachal).

Navy rescues oil tanker hit by Houthi missiles in Red Sea

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Indian Navy has come to the rescue of yet another commercial vessel, the Panama-flagged crude oil tanker Andromeda Star, after it sustained minor damage in a missile attack by the Iran-backed Houthi rebels in the Red Sea.

Destroyer INS Kochi, responding to the "maritime security incident", rushed to the aid of Andromeda Star, which had a 30-member crew, including 22 Indian nationals, an officer said on Sunday.

"First, an aerial reconnaissance by a helicopter was undertaken to assess the situation. Then, an explosive ordnance disposal team boarded the merchant vessel for residual risk assessment. The crew members were found to be safe," he added. The oil tanker is now continuing its transit to Vadinar in India.

"The Navy's swift action reiterates the commitment and resolve of the force in safeguarding the seafarers plying through the region," the officer said.

Manipur tribal village guard shot dead by unknown men; 3 hurt

Guwahati: A day after two CRPF personnel were killed in Manipur's Bishnupur district, a tribal village guard was shot dead by unidentified gunmen in a post-midnight attack in Kangpokpi district on Sunday. Three others were reportedly injured, reports Kangkan Kalita.

Lammang Kipgen, 44 and a father of five, was a resident of L Molsang village in Sadar Hills. The Committee on Tribal Unity called a 12-hour shutdown in the area against the killing. "The enemy unleashed incessant attacks, raining bullets on Kipgen and his village volunteer friends. He had all the familial prosperity a man could hope for, with every reason to abstain from risking his life. But, he volunteered to defend one of the most volatile frontlines," Churachandpur-based Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF) said. In Imphal West's Koutruk village, a gunfight broke out between village volunteers of two warring communities on Sunday morning. This village has been among the worst-hit since the outbreak of violence in the state in May last year. There were no reports of any casualty. Villagers were evacuated to safer places.

Repolling in 6 outer Manipur LS booths on April 30

Guwahati: EC has ordered fresh elections in six polling booths of Outer Manipur Lok Sabha constituency on Tuesday (April 30), reports Kangkan Kalita.

Officials said EVMs and VVPATs were damaged in four of the six polling stations before voting could be completed during the second phase of polls on April 26. In the other two booths, voting was disrupted due to "threat, intimidation, and mob violence". The office of Manipur CEO on Saturday stated EC has directed that polling in the six polling stations on April 26 be declared void. Four of the polling stations fall under Ukhrul (ST) assembly constituency and one each in Chingai (ST) and Karong (ST) assembly segments.

4 tourists killed as taxi falls into river in Kashmir

Srinagar: At least four tourists lost their lives, and two others were injured when their taxi skidded off a snowy road and plunged into the Nallah Sindh river near Sonmarg in north Kashmir's Ganderbal district Sunday following snowfall and rain in the region. Two tourists are reported missing, reports Saleem Pandit.

The two injured have been taken to Srinagar's SKIMS hospital for treatment.

Village defence guard killed by terrorists in J&K

Sanjay Khajuria | TNN

Jammu: A Village Defence Guard (VDG) member attached to security forces combing a forested area for suspected Pakistani terrorists was fatally shot during a gunfight at Basantgarh in J&K's Udhampur district on Sunday. The deceased was Mohd Sharief (48) from Basantgarh's Lower Ponnar, police said.

Sources said four suspected Pakistani infiltrators knocked at the door of a resident of Kothi Basantgarh and asked him about the route from Chanali to Payali. Suspecting something was amiss, he alerted police.



Security personnel pay tribute to village defence guard Mohammad Sharief, who was killed in a gunfight in Udhampur district

"Based on the tip-off about terrorists holed up in Chochru Gala heights, security forces, along with VDG members, raided the area around 7.45am. The encoun-

ter in the Tharua forests at Seri Gala lasted half an hour, during which a member of the raid team received gunshot wounds and later succumbed to injuries," a police spokesperson said.

A joint team of police, army and CRPF was dispatched to the area to strengthen the cordon after the terrorists fled deep into the forest.

"The area has been sealed. A search is underway to flush out the terrorists," police said. Basantgarh has been a traditional route for terrorists to infiltrate the Valley from Kathua district via Sejothar in Doda district.

ADGP Anand Jain said the terrorists belonged to two groups.

CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS
OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE
 No. COS/CRJ/PUB/e-Tender/19/0162 Date: 24/04/2024. The following e-Tenders can be accessed under the link www.ireps.gov.in
 Offers for such e-Tender can be submitted only electronically by accessing the link www.ireps.gov.in → login → E-Tender Stores/Supply Vendors may also contact the following officials to obtain clarification regarding particular tender or IREPS related information if any, Dy.CMM/HQ/CLW/Chittaranjan, 0341-2525594 or SMM/CON/HQ, 0341-2535631. Office Address: Office of the PCMM/CLW/Chittaranjan, SL No.: [1], Tender No.: 75233730B. Brief Description of Item: Axle Box Bearing for WAP-5 Loco as per Drg. No: 1A016-01494 Rev-2. [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery.] Quantity: 40.00 Numbers. Earnest Money Deposit (Rupees): ₹ 51920.00. Tender Closing Date & Time (IST): 23/05/2024 at 11:00 AM.
 PRS/397 PCMM/CLW/Chittaranjan Like us on: www.facebook.com/clwrailways

Purvanchal Vidyut Vitaran Nigam Limited Vidyut Nagar, P.O. - BLW Varanasi-221 004
Short Term E-Tender Notice (Corrigendum) E-tender already have been invited for the following material on dated 09.03.2024, the following corrigendum is to be done as under. The tender will be accepted up to at 15.00 hrs. Please visit website www.etender.up.nic.in for details/download and for any other corrections/amendments/modifications/extensions till the date of submission of bids. Sl.No., Tender Specification No., Name of Material, Revised Material Name, 1. EAV-196/23-24, 10 MVA Transformer, 11 Mtr. PCC Pole. 2. EAV-197/23-24, 63 KVA Transformer, Different Size Control Cable. SUPER-INTENDING ENGINEER (MM-I) "Save Electricity in the interest of Nation" RO 1846 dated 27.04.24

CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS
OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE
 No. COS/CRJ/PUB/e-Tender/19/0162 Date: 23/04/2024. The following e-Tenders can be accessed under the link www.ireps.gov.in. Offers for such e-Tender can be submitted only electronically by accessing the link www.ireps.gov.in → login → E-Tender Stores/Supply. Vendors may also contact the following officials to obtain clarification regarding particular tender or IREPS related information if any, Dy.CMM/HQ/CLW/Chittaranjan, 0341-2525594 or SMM/CON/HQ, 0341-2535631. Office Address: Office of the PCMM/CLW/Chittaranjan, SL No.: [1], Tender No.: 75245033. Brief Description of Item: 3D adjustable 360 degree rotational driver seat similar to Vande Bharat as per Specn no. CLW/MS/3/021 Alt.9 and attached Drg. for WAP-5 HOG compliant locos with aerodynamic cab appearance, for Amrit Bharat trains in push-pull operation. [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery.] Quantity: 440.00 Numbers. Earnest Money Deposit (Rupees): ₹ 2000000.00. Tender Closing Date & Time (IST): 16/05/2024 at 11:00 AM.
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Actor Sahil Khan held in C'garh in ₹15k cr Mahadev betting app case

Mateen.Hafeez @timesgroup.com

Mumbai: Actor Sahil Khan was arrested on Sunday in connection with his alleged role in the Rs 15,000 crore Mahadev betting app case. Khan (50) was produced in court and was sent to police custody till May 1. An SIT of crime branch nabbed him from a hotel in Jagdalpur, Chhattisgarh. He was brought to Mumbai. Khan, who had been working as a fitness expert until recently, had fled the city on April 24 and had been dodging the police by constantly changing his location. After his an-



ticipatory bail application was rejected by Bombay HC on April 24, police had been trying to nab him. To track down his whereabouts, police were tracking his location which showed he was constantly on the move at different points of time — Gadchiroli in Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Telangana, and Chhattisgarh. A senior crime branch officer said Khan was a partner in a betting app firm. "He had been promoting the app through social media and had also forged some documents. He was asked to explain about the money trail. He did not cooperate in the

probe," said the officer. Khan, who was on the top list of suspects involving the betting app and its promoters Saurabh Chandrakar and Ravi Uppal, had two weeks ago appeared before the city crime branch office to record his statement. Police are probing the alleged financial transactions between some real estate companies and promoters of the betting app. Probe found several betting apps were created under Mahadev betting app. An FIR was registered at Matunga police station in Nov and accused were booked for cheating, forgery and criminal conspiracy under IPC and IT Act.

Girl files complaint against her family for killing BF

In a suspected case of 'honour killing', a 21-year-old boy was killed by her girlfriend's family in Bihar's Begusarai Sunday, police said. The girl, 18, filed a complaint against her family, reports Kshitiz. She said that her family members slit the boy's throat when they found the two together at his house in Chaurahi village.

Uttarakhand forest fire spreads, NDRF called in

Sonali Mishra & Shivani Azad

Nainital/Dehradun: Uttarakhand govt on Sunday enlisted help of NDRF to quell the forest infernos inching towards Nainital town as the state recorded eight new forest fire incidents, scorching approximately 11.75 hectare forest land by afternoon. Most fires occurred in Kumaon region, impacting 5.5 hectare, followed by Garhwal with 1.75 hectare, and Protected Forest Areas (PFA) where 4.5 hectare was affected. While an IAF MI-17 helicopter had on Saturday managed to contain the blaze near the IAF base

camp in Lariyakta, about 6km from Nainital town, the fires continued to rage in other locations on Sunday. A few offenders were also caught. "Forest officials have apprehended eight individuals attempting to ignite fire in the reserved forest area of Khrisu in Pauri Garhwal and Bageshwar. They face charges under Indian Forest Act and are being presented in court," Nishant Verma, state nodal officer for forest fires, said. Meanwhile, NDRF dispatched over 40 personnel to combat the forest fires in Haldwani. Army's assistance is also being taken in firefighting efforts.

Landslide in HP's Shimla dist crushes SUV, 2 killed

Shimla: Two people lost their lives when their vehicle was hit by a landslide in Jubbal area of Shimla district in Himachal Pradesh. Debris along with boulders rolled down a hill at Sanel on Sunday afternoon and an SUV was trapped under it, police said.

6 killed as truck hits bus in UP's Unnao

Six people died and over 20 others sustained serious injuries after a truck hit a private bus head-on on Unnao-Hardoi road near Jamaluddinpur village in Unnao district of UP on Sunday. The death toll could go up as many of the injured are critical, police said. Police said the truck driver fled from the spot. TNN

The debris was removed with the help of earth-moving machines. Bodies of two men were extricated from the smashed SUV and sent for postmortem to Jubbal hospital, police said. State education minister Rohit Thakur expressed grief and said all possible assistance is being provided to families of the deceased. TNN

No jewellery, cellphone use in ICU: Advisory to health workers

New Delhi: Healthcare workers should remove all types of jewellery below the elbow while on duty, Centre said in a fresh directive, reports Durgesh Nandan Jha. In the directive issued to heads of all central govt run hospitals, the director general of health services (DGHS) has also stressed the need to develop and enforce a policy to restrict use of mobile phones in patient areas and critical zones such as ICUs, HDUs, post-operative wards and operation rooms.

According to DGHS Atul Goel, there is substantial evidence that wearing hand jewellery below the elbow increases total skin micro-organism counts. "Use of mobile phones, while on duty especially in critical areas like ICUs, HDUs, post-operative wards and operation theatres, pose infection risks," he said in his letter sent out on April 9. He has suggested that respective hospitals can revise their SOPs (standard operating procedures) on hand hygiene and specifically mention where wristwatches are permitted. Similar guidelines are applicable in other leading hospitals globally as well, said a senior doctor.

UPA govt faltered on free ration, ours giving succour to 80cr: BJP

'If Cong Wins In Polls, It Will Kick Stomach Of The Poor'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: BJP on Sunday claimed that Congress-led UPA had expressed inability to distribute free ration despite a Supreme Court order and contrasted the approach of the Manmohan Singh govt with free ration being given to over 80 crore people by the Modi govt under PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana since the pandemic. "On 6th Sept 2010, Manmohan Singh said, 'govt will do all it can to provide affordable food to those below the poverty line but cannot implement Supreme Court's order to give free foodgrain to the poor.' He further said 'Supreme Court should not go into the realm of policy formulation,'" BJP IT department head Amit Malviya said as he shared a media report of 2010. BJP functionary said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi provided free ra-



The Manmohan Singh govt had expressed inability to distribute free ration despite a Supreme Court order, BJP's Amit Malviya said

tion to over 80 crore people. "If Congress comes, it will kick the stomach of the poor," he added. In Aug 2010, Supreme Court had said agriculture minister Sharad Pawar should figure out how to give away the excess foodgrain to poor families. Pawar responded by saying what the court had offered was a suggestion, not an order. However, the court had corrected him, saying it was an order. As per the media report, Manmohan Singh had said, "An estimated 37% live below the poverty line. How can free food be given to so many?"

Govt had informed the court that it had set aside an additional 25 lakh tonnes for distribution through ration shops. The issue came to the limelight after huge quantities of foodgrain were said to be rotting as there was shortage of warehouses. Just ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the Modi govt had decided that Centre would provide free foodgrain to about 81.3 crore beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana at an estimated cost of Rs 11.8 lakh crore for a period of five years with effect from Jan 1, 2024.

Under Cong, development has stopped in HP: Thakur

New Delhi: Claiming that development work had stopped in Himachal Pradesh ever since Congress assumed office, Union minister Anurag Thakur listed "transformative initiatives" undertaken by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) earlier. He cited completion of the Una-Daulatpur Chowk railway line, introduction of Vande Bharat train service and the establishment of educational institutions such as AIIMS, PGI, IIT, NIT and Hydro Engineering College.



In a series of election programmes in Hamirpur and Dharampur on Sunday, Thakur also asked Rahul Gandhi to clarify Congress's policies, particularly on national security and internal conflicts. TNN

21 states/UTs offer incentives to boost scrapping of old vehicles

Dipak.Dash@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: With Centre making it mandatory for states to promote scrapping of old and unfit vehicles, 21 states and UTs, including Bihar, MP, UP, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab and Kerala, have announced concessions in motor vehicle or road tax of up to 25% on buying a new private vehicle in lieu of scrapping old ones and up to 15% for commercial vehicles. So far, around 70,000 old vehicles have been voluntarily scrapped, though a large share of them are owned by govt agencies.



So far, around 70,000 old vehicles have been voluntarily scrapped, though a large share of them are owned by govt agencies

cial or transport vehicles after scrapping old ones. In case of private vehicles, 12 states are giving 25% rebate on road tax. Haryana is offering 10% concession or lower of 50% of the scrap value, while Uttarakhand is providing 25% concession or Rs 50,000, whichever is lower. Karnataka is offering fixed rebate in road tax as per price of the new private vehicle — for instance, Rs 50,000 for vehicles costing over Rs 20 lakh. Puducherry is offering 25% concession or Rs 11,000, whichever is lower.

Road transport ministry officials said since govt pushed voluntary vehicle scrapping, 37 registered scrapping centres or RVSFs have been operationalised and now 52 such centres are functioning across 16 states and UTs. Similarly, 52 automated testing stations (ATS) for checking fitness of vehicles are functional across 11 states and UTs. "There is special focus on increasing number of RVSFs and ATS so that people can access them easily," said a ministry official.

Man held in Guj for helping Pak spy on Indian def personnel

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ahmedabad: Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) on Sunday said they arrested a man from Jamnagar over his role in helping Pakistani agencies spy on Indian defence personnel. The man, identified as Shaqlain Thaim, 22, from Jamnagar's Bedi village, gave a sim card to one Labshankar Maheshwari from Tarapur, in Anand, ATS said.

Posing as an employee of an Army school, Maheshwari used the card to send tracking malware to defence personnel's phones through WhatsApp messages, ATS said. The case came to light when Maheshwari, 53, was arrested by Gujarat ATS in Oct 2023 from Tarapur, where he ran a grocery store. A refugee from Pakistan, Maheshwari was granted Indian citizenship in 2005. ATS booked the accused under sections 123 and 121-A of IPC and under various sections of IT Act.

IIT-M charts new course, uses blockchain for student body polls

Manash.Gohain @timesgroup.com

New Delhi: In this election season, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras witnessed an innovative stride in democracy by conducting its student body poll using blockchain technology. The initiative, led by students of 'Webops and Blockchain Club' at the Centre for Innovation (CFI), IIT-Madras, has now evolved into a startup, with both governmental and private organisations employing its software for managing land and health records.

medical records and tracking health conditions across geographical borders. Utilisation of blockchain technology in recent IIT-Madras student legislative council election has garnered recognition in India Book of Records. The team of researchers behind this endeavour pointed out that voting technology is just one promising to reshape conduct of elections."

On the security issue in blockchain technology, more so as the polls are conducted online, the team believes the "system is impossible to hack." Election, conducted online, underscores the team's confidence in the technology's security. Anirudh Varma, a fourth-year BTech student involved in the project, highlighted the near-impenetrable security of blockchain, requiring malicious actors to gain control of over 50% of the network's nodes simultaneously, a feat deemed practically unattainable. On security concerns of online blockchain-based polls, Rajagopal emphasised the it's capacity to foster trust and ensure integrity of poll process.

3 youngsters nabbed with LSD worth ₹2cr in Dehradun

Dehradun: Police have arrested three individuals involved in the illicit trade of the psychotropic substance lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), valued at around Rs 2 crore in the international market. Rajat Bhatia, Shivam Arora, and Krish Giroti, in their 20s, were captured in Dehradun's Premnagar locality following a tip-off to the authorities. Dehradun SSP Ajai Singh said the trio, hailing from Saharanpur and Dehradun, operated within a larger drug trafficking network, previously under police scrutiny. Singh highlighted that their modus operandi involved sourcing LSD from a supplier in Bengaluru via the dark web. The accused were presented before the local court and remanded to judicial custody. TNN

BDO kills self in Jharkhand, probe on

Garhwa: Block development officer of Bishunpura in Jharkhand's Garhwa district died by suicide at his official residence on Saturday. Manna Kerketta (52), from Simdega, was absent from duty on Saturday. His staff went to his residence for signatures on papers. Upon receiving no response, they informed the circle officer, who, along with Bishunpura SHO, rushed there. They found Kerketta dead. "Probe is on to ascertain reason for suicide," Garhwa DC Shekhar Jamar said. TNN

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

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NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY

Corrigendum Notice No.: 1420242025
Date: 26.04.2024

1st Corrigendum

1st Corrigendum in tender notice No. 1420242025 dated 24.04.2024. Undemoted addition/changes have been made in above noted tender notice on administrative ground.

Tender Notice No.: 1420242025
Tender No.: 30

Approx Cost (Rs.)	Bid Security (Rs.)
In lieu of	
₹ 174543563.20	₹ 1022700.00
May be read as	
₹ 29,92,48,654.30	₹ 16,46,300.00

AND

Tender Notice No.: 1420242025
Date of Opening Tender

Tender No.	In lieu of	May be read as
29, 30, 31 & 32	17.05.2024	20.05.2024

Other terms and condition of tender notice will remain the same. **742/24 (A)**

North central railways @CPNCR

DIRECTOR GENERAL OF INCOME TAX (INVESTIGATION), NORTH WEST REGION,
भारत सरकार / Govt. of India
आयकर भवन / Income Tax Department
1st Floor Income Tax Wing, Central Revenue Building Sector 17, Chandigarh.

TENDER NOTICE
DOMESTIC COMPETITIVE BIDDING
(Through call of open tenders)
F.No: DGIIT(Inv.)/CHD/Forensic Services/2024-25 Date: 26-04-2024

PERIOD OF CONTRACT	Three Years from date of signing Agreement, which may be extended by one more year as per the administrative convenience of the Director General of Income Tax (Investigation), NWR, Chandigarh to satisfactory performance of the empaneled service providers.
The tender documents can be obtained from	May be downloaded from e-procurement website i.e., www.incometaxindia.gov.in or www.incometaxchandigarh.org
Last Date & Time for receipt of Bid	Date: 24-05-2024 Time: 02:00 PM
Time and Date of opening of Bids	Technical Bid : 11:00 AM on 04.06.2024 Financial Bid : 11:00 AM on 11.06.2024 Declaration of Bid & Meeting with qualified Vendors : 11:00 AM on 18.06.2024
Tenders addressed to	The Director General of Income Tax (Investigation), NWR, Chandigarh
Place of Opening of Bids	Office of the Director General of Income Tax (Investigation), NWR, Chandigarh

पावर ट्रांसमिशन कारपोरेशन ऑफ उत्तराखण्ड लि
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E-TENDER CORRIGENDUM NOTICE
Tender spec. no. 01/SE(C)/PTCUL/E-Tender/D.Dun/2023-24

Instructions of Bidders Clause no.-2.2 "Joint Venture Firms," Sub-Clause 2.2 (g) shall be amended as hereunder:-

2.2 (g) The lead partner of the Joint Venture firms should meet 100% of the Technical Qualifying Requirement (TQR) of the respective Tender & for Financial Qualification Criteria the lead partner of JV firms should meet minimum 50% of financial qualification requirement (FQR) and collectively meet total financial qualification requirement of the respective tender.

All partners of JV firms should have the experience for activities of construction/manufacturing of items or equipments/supply of items or equipments or products, meant for transmission utilities only.

NIT Part B "Pre Qualifying Criteria", Sub-Section 'B' Financial Qualifying Requirement shall be amended as hereunder:-

B. Financial Qualifying Requirement
Point 1.0, 2.0 & 3.0 shall be same as mentioned in the NTT

Note:- In case of Joint Venture, the lead partner of JV firms should meet minimum 50% of financial qualification requirement (FQR) and collectively meet total financial qualification requirement of the respective tenders.

निविदा की अन्य सभी शर्तें यथावत रहेंगी। निविदा सम्बन्धित अन्य विस्तृत विवरण ई-निविदा वेबसाइट www.uktenders.gov.in/PTCUL एवं ई-निविदा शुद्धि सूचना पिटकुल वेबसाइट www.ptcul.org से डाउनलोड किये जा सकते हैं। ई-निविदा से सम्बन्धित जानकारी हेतु अथवा किसी भी सहायता के लिए PH.No. 91-8899890000, +0120-4200462, 0120-4001002, 0120-4001005, 0120-6277787 से सम्पर्क स्थापित करें।

Superintending Engineer
RO No 697/HQ/PTCUL Dated 27.04.24

"Save Electricity in the interest of nation"

DISTRICT POLICE HEADQUARTERS DODA
Email: dpo@doda.jkpolice.gov.in Ph. No. 01996-233396, Fax No. 01996-233501

Look Out Notice.

As intimated by I/C PP Kastigarh that the unidentified Male dead body in decomposed condition was found on the bank of river Chenab near Chill Gagla in suspicious condition and the dead body has been shifted to GMC Doda kept in mortuary room for identification/Postmortam.

DESCRIPTION	
Age	35 to 45 Years
Gender	Male
Height	5-6"
Wearing dress.	Black Gray Upper, Gray Trouser, Black Shoes with Running Logo on it & bearing a metallic Kara over right hand wrist.
Condition	Decomposed.

Therefore, it is requested that to make wide publicity among the general public who have got entered any missing report regarding missing of any person in your respective Police Units/Jurisdictions to identify the said dead body at Mortuary room GMC Doda. In case any person identifies the said dead body, immediate information be provide on the below mentioned contact numbers.

PCR Doda 01996-233530
I/C PP Kastigarh - 7899537298
No. CRBL/2024/2201-20 Dated:- 25-04-2024.
DIP. No.DIPU/255/04/27/04/2024

Sr. Superintendent of Police, Doda.

पावर ट्रांसमिशन कारपोरेशन ऑफ उत्तराखण्ड लि
(उत्तराखण्ड सरकार का उपक्रम) अधीक्षण अभियन्ता (जानपद) परिप्रेक्ष्य 0 कार्यालय विद्युत भवन, नजदीक-आईएसवीटी कॉम्प्लेक्स, सहारनपुर रोड, माजरा, देहरादून-248002 कारपोरेट आईसीसी U40101UR2004SGC028675 दूरभाष सं. 7088117360

E-Tender Corrigendum Notice
Tender spec. no. 62 & 63/SE(C)&M/E-Tender/PTCUL/D.Dun/2023-24

Instructions to Bidders Clause no.-2.2 "Joint Venture Firms", Sub-Clause 2.2 (g) shall be amended as hereunder:-

2.2 (g) The lead partner of the Joint Venture firms should meet 100% of the Technical Qualifying Requirement (TQR) of the respective tender & for Financial Qualification Criteria the lead partner of JV firms should meet minimum 50% of financial qualification requirement (FQR) and collectively meet total financial qualification requirement of the respective tender. All partners of JV firm should have the experience for activities of construction/manufacturing of items or equipments/supply of items or equipments or products, meant for transmission utilities only.

NIT Part B "Pre Qualifying Criteria", Sub-Section 'B' Financial Qualifying Requirement shall be amended as hereunder:-

B. Financial Qualifying Requirement
Point 1.0, 2.0 & 3.0 shall be same as mentioned in the NIT

Note:- In case of Joint Venture, the lead partner of JV firms should meet minimum 50% of financial qualification requirement (FQR) and collectively meet total financial qualification requirement of the respective tender.

निविदा की अन्य सभी शर्तें यथावत रहेंगी। निविदा सम्बन्धित अन्य विस्तृत विवरण ई-निविदा वेबसाइट www.uktenders.gov.in/PTCUL एवं ई-निविदा शुद्धि सूचना पिटकुल वेबसाइट www.ptcul.org से डाउनलोड किये जा सकते हैं। निविदा से सम्बन्धित अन्य विस्तृत विवरण ई-निविदा वेबसाइट www.uktenders.gov.in/PTCUL एवं ई-निविदा शुद्धि सूचना पिटकुल वेबसाइट www.ptcul.org से डाउनलोड किये जा सकते हैं। ई-निविदा से सम्बन्धित जानकारी हेतु अथवा किसी भी सहायता के लिए PH.No-91-8899890000, +0120-4200462, 0120-4001002, 0120-4001005, 0120-6277787 से सम्पर्क स्थापित करें।

फोन: 157/जीएसवीटी(जानपद)परिप्रेक्ष्य/देहरादून/देहरादून/टी-1 अधीक्षण अभियन्ता (जानपद) परिप्रेक्ष्य एवं नजदीक-आईएसवीटी कॉम्प्लेक्स, सहारनपुर रोड, माजरा, देहरादून-248002 दिनांक: 27/04/2024

"राष्ट्र के बिजली के बचारे"

TMC worker beaten to death in factional fight

Kolkata: A TMC worker was beaten to death with bricks during a clash between two factions of the party in the wee hours of Sunday in Paschimpara area in Arjunpur in Bengal's Baguiati, report Tamagna Banerjee & Mayukh Sengupta. Police hinted the fatal assault on Sanjib Das, alias Potla, 49, was the fallout of an old enmity. Police said that 13 people have been arrested.

Bengal BJP man arrested for blast at his residence

Basirhat: Police on Sunday arrested a BJP functionary after a night-long interrogation in connection with a blast at his house at Hasnabad in Bengal's North 24 Parganas on Saturday. A Basirhat court remanded Dilip Das in police custody for two days, reports Sanjib Chakraborty. Police suspect Das stashed a container bomb in his thatched-roof kitchen. Das' brother, Nimai, accused TMC of framing Dilip.

'India does not become an electoral autocracy if Yuvraj cannot get power'

In an exclusive interview with Diwakar, Akhilesh Singh and Sidhartha, PM Narendra Modi took time off from his hyperkinetic electoral campaign to speak on a range of hot-button topics. Talking after the second round of polls, a confident PM said NDA was well on course to cross the 400+ target, with BJP reaching the 370 mark — the goal his party set keeping in mind the emotions linked to the abrogation of Article 370

TOI: What is your assessment after two rounds of polling? Are you still hopeful of crossing the 400 mark?

PM: I have done more than 70 rallies and roadshows so far, after the announcement of polls. Everywhere I have gone, I have seen an unprecedented display of love, affection and support. It is this support of the people that gives us confidence that we are on track to cross the 400 mark. The people have seen what we can deliver and we believe that the people want a better tomorrow, and they know that a vote for BJP means a vote towards development.

The opposition is down and out after two phases of polling. In the first phase, it was out and after the second phase, it is out. For us, one of the main reasons we want to win 400 seats is to protect the rights of SCs, STs and OBCs in our country. We want a thumping majority so that the evil designs of the opposition to take away their reservation and rights, and give them to their vote bank are foiled.

ON NEED FOR 400 SEATS

One of the main reasons we want to win 400 seats is to protect the rights of SCs, STs and OBCs in our country. We want a thumping majority so that the evil designs of the opposition to take away their reservation and rights, and give it to their vote bank are foiled

But the opposition says you are aiming for a super majority because you want to change the Constitution?

It is ironic that people who have changed the Constitution the maximum number of times are saying that we will change the Constitution. But before asking such a question, you should analyse my track record. You should study my work and actions right from the time I became CM and see if you find any such thing done by me. It is unfair to me if someone makes an allegation and you take that allegation on face value and start asking me questions on it.

When you set 370 seats as the target for BJP and 400 for NDA, did you do so because you were concerned that complacency may set in among party cadres and even voters? You seem to have enlisted voters, setting a target for them as much as for yourself. But the optimistic 'Abki Baar 400 Paar' pitch and target of 370 seats for BJP also carries the risk of generating cadre complacency. Did you ever think that it might harm the party?

The party's slogans reflect the sentiments of the people. It is the collective voice of the citizens who recognise our efforts and want to see even further change. But the genesis of this 'Abki Baar, 400 Paar' slogan is very interesting and emotional. Article 370 has been a very emotional issue for us, our karyakartas and the people of India. People have waited for generations for this to happen. Abrogation of Article 370 has been a driving force for our karyakartas for decades. When people saw that our govt did this, it made them very emotional and the feeling among people was that we should give 370 seats to the party which abrogated Article 370. And hence, the slogan, 'Abki Baar, 400 Paar' for the NDA emanated from among the people. It was an organic and a never-seen-before phenomenon where people are themselves setting a target for our victory.

ON MODI KI GUARANTEE

For me, guarantee is far more than a word. It is a very sacred expression. It is linked to my hard work and my credibility. It is an outcome of my entire life in public service

As a karyakarta myself, I can attest that no complacency sets in within BJP. All top leaders of our party are constantly in the field, among the people. Our karyakartas are putting in huge efforts. In fact, in several places, you would find only BJP karyakartas at the booths. We are also seeing a large number of people who are passionate about the country taking time out to volunteer for BJP in cities as well as villages. This kind of support from society is helping us immensely. A new phenomenon that is being seen is the beneficiaries not only voting for us in large numbers, but also motivating others in their circle to do the same.

Rahul Gandhi has said that it is too hubristic and BJP is headed for the 'India Shining' moment of 2004 when it had crashed to a shock defeat. Your comments? Unlike in 2004, when BJP pushed away allies, the party has this time enlisted new ones.

The Congress party's Yuvraj should be the last person to be talking about hubris. But it is true that now the Congress party is dependent only on shocks and surprises. Their only hope is that there will be some miracle to make them win the elections. Even their most veteran



ON SOUTH INDIA

The results from the South will see multiple myths broken this time. Our mind-share has already increased and you will see that our vote share and seat share will also increase in a huge way

and important leaders have given up and conceded the elections. Each election is based on contemporary issues and, so, comparing them is not correct. In 2024, not only have we got new allies but we have unprecedented support of the people, which gives us the confidence of a spectacular win.

How do you assess your prospects in south India? You have made a big push in Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

The prospects are very good. It is not I who made a big push, it is, in fact, the other way round. The people of south India have made a big push to create space for BJP. Wherever you go in the South, the acceptance and affection shown by the people has been unprecedented. People in south India have seen govts of only Congress or regional parties. They have seen how these parties have perpetuated only corruption, nepotism, misgovernance, divisiveness, vote-bank politics and a very regressive approach to governance. People have also seen their hate for Indian culture and heritage. As a result of these reasons, people are fed up of Congress and regional parties.

On the other hand, people have seen our governance at the Centre and have also seen the impact of our welfare schemes reaching them. They see a ray of hope in BJP and are seeing BJP as a credible alternative. BJP was the single largest party in south India in 2019 and this time it will be the single largest party by a huge margin. The results from the South will see multiple myths broken this time. Our mind-share has already increased and you will see that our vote share and seat share will also increase in a huge way.

Last time, BJP swept Karnataka but it suffered a big setback in the assembly polls. The talk is that your tally from the state will shrink. What is your assessment?

We have been hearing this talk in every election. People who are talking about our tally shrinking have shrunk to 50-odd seats themselves. People of Karnataka and BJP have a special relationship. The support for BJP saw a



Photos: Sanjeev Rastogi & ANI

massive increase in 2019 and this time, our 10-year record of delivering strong economic growth, strong national security and strong welfare programmes will ensure NDA will win all 28 seats in Karnataka. NDA has been further strengthened by the addition of JD(S). Congress leaders are busy fighting to become CM while the state is suffering. The Congress govt has deceived the people of the state through faulty and half-baked implementation of their promises. People of Karnataka are fed up with the increasing lawlessness in the state and with the halt in progress of important infrastructure projects. They are fed up with the increasingly long power cuts and lack of water. People of Karnataka are repenting their vote to Congress in the state election. They will once again place their trust in the proven Modi guarantee.

Congress's guarantees played a big role in its victory in the assembly polls in Karnataka and Telangana. Do you think 'Modi ki guarantee' can trump them?

For me, guarantee is far more than a word. It is a very sacred expression for me. It is linked to my hard work and my credibility. It is an outcome of my entire life in public service. When I speak about guarantee, it pushes me to work even harder for the people. When I attach such importance to my guarantees, naturally people also realise it. People see that whatever guarantee Modi gives, he fulfils it, no matter what the circumstances. From providing tap water connections to rations, from building houses for the poor to expressways, Modi is delivering on the guarantees made to people. There are no ifs and buts to Modi's guarantees.

For the Congress party, their promises are just a way to fool people to gain their votes. They have neither credibility nor the intention to fulfil their promises. They had given many guarantees since

ON WEALTH REDISTRIBUTION

We should not consider this sinister plan of Congress an idle threat — the threat is very real and stands to hurt our nation irreversibly. This is a clear example of Maoist thinking and ideology. It is saddening to see Congress and its Yuvraj carrying forward such Maoist vision which is a recipe for disaster. Our constitution protects the property of all minorities. This means that when Congress talks of redistribution, it cannot touch the properties of minorities, it cannot consider waqf properties for redistribution but it will eye the properties of all other communities. This will sow complete and irreversible communal disharmony

Independence. Look at what happened to the biggest guarantee given by their tallest leader: the one of removal of poverty in 1971. Successive Congress PMs had spoken about removing poverty but nothing happened for decades. The poor were living without basic necessities like a house, toilet, water connection. Corruption continued unabated. Countries which became independent around the same time as India marched way ahead of us in terms of their economies. India was considered as one of the 'Fragile Five' nations before we came to power. So, for the people, there is no comparison between Modi's guarantees and Congress's broken promises.

Congress has accused BJP of attempting communal polarisation in Karnataka and elsewhere while BJP has charged it with appeasement. How is this playing out?

Media should look at actions and not allegations. Look at what all has happened in Karnataka. Bomb blasts, brutal murder of a daughter, attack on people doing bhajan-kirtan... During bomb blasts, the state govt tried its best to mislead people. In the murder of the daughter, the media is showing how the father is going around asking for justice. He is from the Congress party, but still he is not getting justice. If this is not appeasement, what is it? It is not polarisation to show that Congress has violated the Constitution and enacted laws providing reservation on the basis of religion. Our Constitution clearly prohibits reservations based on religion but the Congress govt in Karnataka reversed the law passed by BJP to provide reservation to OBCs and gave it to Muslims, classifying all Muslims as OBC. Even the National Commission for Backward Classes, a constitutional body, criticised this as against principles of 'social justice'.

The Congress govt in Telangana has recently said that it will replicate this move. This proves that Congress wants

ON RAM MANDIR

Ram Mandir is an emotive issue for the people of our country. It is a civilisational struggle of 500 years which has been resolved and prayers of generations of Indians have been answered

to reduce the reservation provided to SCs, STs and OBCs across the country and give it to minorities. What else can one expect from a party whose prime minister said that minorities have the first right on resources of this country?

Is one nation, one poll going to be on the top of your 'to do' list in the third term? What about UCC? Will the Centre be an enabler or leave it to states?

For the longest time, govts have been driven by electoral considerations rather than national considerations. Every year, there would be some or other election taking place and the priority would always be to win the next election, even if it meant trading off the long-term interests of the people of India. It is a matter of concern for us. One nation, one poll is going to ensure that as a nation, our time, effort and resources get invested more productively towards nation-building. A high-level committee, under the chairmanship of former President Ram Nath Kovind, has already submitted a report to President (Droupadi Murmu) prepared after extensive consultations with stakeholders and experts and research on implementing one nation, one poll. In our third term, one will see concrete steps being taken on the matter.

Uniform Civil Code, too, is one of the core agendas of our party. Already, BJP govts in states are mulling over its implementation. Uttarakhand has become the first state to implement UCC. It is clear that separate laws for communi-

ties are detrimental to the health of society. We cannot be a nation where one community is progressing with the support of constitutional norms while the another community is stuck in a time warp due to appeasement. We will do everything in our capacity to make Uniform Civil Code a reality in India.

Your opponents in Karnataka and elsewhere have raised the issue of a North-South divide, claiming the Centre discriminates against southern states. Do you see merit in it or is it driven by their need to fund their guarantees?

Raising the false bogey of discrimination is their way of diverting and distracting from their corruption and misgovernance. People of Karnataka proudly sing *Jaya Bharata Jananiya Tanujate, Jaya he Karnataka Maate* (Victory to you Mother Karnataka, the daughter of Mother India). Does Congress really think its move to further divide India will be accepted by the immensely patriotic people of Karnataka? Every patriotic Indian will reject this artificial and false divide that Congress is trying to create. Congress, in partnership with the Left, has left Kerala nearly bankrupt and is now seeking to do the same in Karnataka and Telangana. It has just been one year since Congress came to power in Karnataka and they have already done serious damage to its thriving economy. Debt incurred by the state govt has massively increased and their empty promises have not resulted in providing welfare to people. In fact, their misgovernance has spooked investors and led to flight of capital from Karnataka. There has been a 46% reduction in FDI and 80% reduction in funds for startups compared to last year in the state.

What is your worry about the current pitch for redistribution of assets? You have said the govt should not be expropriating wealth and assets of people and that a plan to do that is a reflection of the Maoist vision which has caused havoc in so many countries. Do you see this as a real threat?

We should not consider this sinister plan of the Congress party like an idle threat, the threat is very real and stands to hurt our nation irreversibly. This is a clear example of Maoist thinking and ideology. It is saddening to see the Congress party and its Yuvraj carrying forward such Maoist vision which is a recipe for disaster. You would have seen the Yuvraj saying that we will do an X-ray. This X-ray is nothing but raiding

ON EQUITABLE GROWTH

If we really want to ensure people's growth, we just need to remove their barriers and empower them. This unleashes their entrepreneurial potential as we have seen in our country; even in tier-2, tier-3 cities which are giving rise to a lot of startups and sports stars. These reasons are why wealth redistribution, wealth tax, etc, are never successful because they never remove poverty, they just distribute it so that everyone is equally poor

ON UCC

Uniform Civil Code is one of the core agendas of our party. Already, BJP govts in the states are mulling over its implementation. Uttarakhand has become the first state to implement UCC. It is clear that separate laws for communities are detrimental to the health of society. We cannot be a nation, where one community is progressing with the support of the constitutional norms, while the other community is stuck in a time warp due to appeasement. We will do everything in our capacity to make Uniform Civil Code a reality in India

every home. They will raid farmers to see how much land they possess. They will raid the common man to see how much wealth he/she has earned through hard work. They will raid the ornaments of our women. Our Constitution protects the property of all minorities. This means that when Congress talks of redistribution, it cannot touch the properties of minorities, it cannot consider waqf properties for redistribution but it will eye the properties of other communities. This will sow complete and irreversible communal disharmony.

This is something we have to be very careful about, we cannot let anyone harm the country and its people, whatever reasons they may have. Our nation, the welfare of each and every one of our citizens is our first and foremost priority. Our govts don't design policies to benefit a majority, we do not make policies that will benefit minorities; we make policies that benefit our nation and its 140 crore citizens without discrimination.

ON OTHER EMOTIVE POLL ISSUES

Improvement of living standards is an emotive issue which is resonating strongly in this election. A large number of people of this country are seeing for the first time that they can have a better future and achieve their dreams, which is an emotive issue for them

As the size of the Indian economy grows, there are discussions about equity and inequality. You don't seem to see wealth tax and inheritance tax as solutions.

I do not think they are solutions by any stretch of imagination. These are actually dangerous problems disguised as solutions. Would you work day and night if the govt will take away your money in the name of redistribution? Today, we are empowering 3 crore women to become Lakhpati Didis. Such policies will ensure that women don't become Lakhpaties and their aspirations don't progress. If someone has taken a Mudra loan and is progressing, his growth will be stunted. Our street vendors who are now growing due to our policies will also not be able to grow. Today, we are the third-largest startup ecosystem in the world. Such policies will kill the startup revolution by our youth. This policy is a way to please their vote bank.

If we really want to ensure people's growth, we just need to remove barriers and empower them. This unleashes their entrepreneurial potential as we have seen in our country; even in tier 2 and 3 cities, which are giving rise to a lot of startups and sports stars. These reasons are why wealth redistribution, wealth tax etc have never been successful; they never removed poverty, they just distributed it so that everyone is equally poor. The poor remain stricken with poverty, wealth creation stops and poverty becomes uniform. These policies sow discord and block every road to equity, they create hatred and destabilise the economic as well as social fabric of a nation.

ON AUTOCRACY

Because the opposition is not able to get power, they start defaming India on the world stage. They spread canards about our people, our democracy and our institutions. India does not become an electoral autocracy if the Yuvraj cannot automatically get power

Barring Ram Mandir, there has been no emotive issue in play this time around. You seem to be optimistic that people will consider improvements in their lives and prospects and give you a 'positive' vote. Cases relating to Kashi and Mathura temples are in court. Rather than wait for a lengthy legal process, can these issues be sorted out by discussions between religious leaders of both communities?

Yes, Ram Mandir is an emotive issue for the people of our country. It is a civilisational struggle of 500 years which has been resolved and the prayers of generations of Indians have been answered. But you are wrong in saying there is no other emotive issue. A 'mahila' getting a tap water connection, LPG connection, toilet and becoming a Lakhpati Didi and having the power to dream of a better future is an emotive moment for her and her entire family. For a youth who wants to start his own business and provide for his family and has aspirations to further expand his operations, getting a collateral-free Mudra loan is also a big emotive moment. A 'kisan' getting his 'samman', a father being able to provide the best treatment to his child due to Ayushman Bharat Yojana, a street vendor opening a second cart due to PM-SVANidhi and transacting



entirely on UPI: all these mark emotive moments for the entire country. Improvement of living standards is an emotive issue which is resonating strongly in this election. For a large number of people of this country, they are seeing for the first time that they can have a better future and achieve their dreams, which is an emotive issue for them. As far as Kashi and Mathura are con-

cerned, I will not comment much as the cases are sub judice. But we are committed to developing our cultural heritage. Our manifesto speaks about the aim to boost cultural tourism across the country and develop temple spaces and cultural spaces of all religions in India as world-class destinations for pilgrimage and tourism. The massive development taking place in our temple towns will not only help the pilgrims but also the local economy.

ON ALLEGATIONS AROUND EVMs

SC has given a good closure to the issue, highlighting the importance of EVMs. Oppn always wants to drag the nation towards the era of booth capturing, which is possible only through paper ballots

In 2019, welfare schemes ranging from Ujjwala to PM Awas Yojana had reached people for the first time on a big scale. Voters endorsed the schemes and voted for BJP. This time, the schemes are not so new or unique. Will delivery of schemes still be a factor that will influence voter choice the same way?

If you look at our manifesto this time closely, you will observe that we have not only expanded our schemes but have also reinvented them as per the current aspirations of the poor. Take Mudra Yojana for example. We brought around an entrepreneurship revolution through this scheme and now we will double the loan amount to match the aspirations and requirements of our entrepreneurs. Take electricity for example. We ensured electricity reaches more than 3 crore households and 18,000 villages for the first time. Now we have come up with the PM Suryaghar Muft Bijli Yojana to ensure that people get free electricity. Take startups for example. We brought proactive policies and ensured that startups get all support. Now we want to make India a startup hub.

So, you can see that there is continuity because we don't want to change our direction when we are successful. But we are reimagining the scale and scope of schemes. The poor who are exiting poverty should not lapse into poverty again. The progress achieved should continue. This approach will ensure that people's aspirations are also fulfilled and also help achieve a Viksit Bharat. Our manifesto has only things which are achievable. We don't believe in making false and unrealistic promises that cannot be delivered.

Sections of the opposition like INDIA consistently raised questions over the credibility of EVMs. They had alleged tampering in 2014 and, again, in 2019...

I think our Supreme Court has given a good closure to this issue. The Supreme Court judgment speaks in detail about the importance of EVMs and the transparency they bring. The opposition always wants to drag the nation towards the era of booth capturing, which is only possible through paper ballots. I don't think the members of INDI Alliance have ever been bothered about logic and reason when it comes to EVMs. For them, EVMs have always been the convenient scapegoat after defeat. Let us see if it will be any different this time.

Opposition often alleges that there is threat to democracy and also that the country is moving towards being an 'electoral

MODI'S INTERVIEWS DURING POLLS TO TOI

In His Most Comprehensive Interview Yet, BJP's PM Candidate Opens Up To TOI Sub-100 tally for Cong will trigger threat to Gandhis' leadership: Modi

World View: Modi's interview to TOI. Amethi laps up Modi's show. May 6 2014. Includes a small portrait of Modi and a quote: 'The BJP will not be a government unless it is a government of the people...'

In An Exclusive Interview To TOI, PM Modi Says He's Confident Of A Massive Mandate 'I Still Consider Myself A Challenger'

April 17 2019. 'Those Accusing Us Of Hyper-Nationalism Mock Deshbhakti'. Includes a portrait of Modi and a quote: 'I am confident that I will get a massive mandate...'

autocracy'. The charge has found takers in many foreign capitals. Do you see it as a challenge?

This is an example of the scorched earth policy that our opposition is following. Because the opposition is not able to get power, they start defaming India on the world stage. They spread canards about our people, our democracy and our institutions. India does not become an electoral autocracy if the Yuvraj cannot automatically get power. Just because he has to fight elections and the people of India are not impressed by him doesn't make India less democratic. I don't think there are many takers for such charges in foreign capitals. They often are more in sync with reality than the 'certifcate shops' in their countries. When I engage with world leaders, I see genuine admiration for our democratic process and our institutions. When they deep dive into the scale and speed of our electoral process, they are awed by our efficiency.

The govt has been accused of misusing investigating agencies, particularly ED and CBI, to harass political opponents. It has also been alleged that 'tainted' politicians turn clean as soon as they join BJP.

It is my request to the media to first do research on these allegations. Instead of introspecting why its functionaries are leaving in hordes, Congress is making such excuses. There are many

ON ONE NATION, ONE POLL

One nation, one poll is going to ensure that as a nation our time, effort and resources get invested more productively towards nation-building



ON LAST 10 YEARS

In the last 10 years, we have built a solid foundation for the nation's growth to take flight. That is why I say that what you have seen till now is only a trailer. There is a lot that I want to do

problem, and we're dealing with it seriously. We have come a long way in our battle against corruption in the last 10 years and are now at an inflection point. Investigations by our central agencies also extend to high-profile bureaucrats, resulting in the identification and attachment of proceeds worth over Rs 16,000 crore. These numbers show the agencies' commitment to being fair and effective in tackling economic offences.

In Delhi, we have a situation of a sitting CM being in jail. Although the law is silent on this, it is against convention. Do you see this becoming a precedent?

I think it is the media's responsibility to show the people the full perspective on this issue, how people of Delhi are suffering, and what the courts have said about the case. I am optimistic that this will not become a precedent. I feel other politicians won't be so lacking in morals and will not go to this extent.

NDA-appointed governors have been at loggerheads with some opposition-governed state govts which have accused Raj Bhavans of interfering in their work. How would you respond to these allegations?

Congress party, which converted Raj Bhavans into Congress Bhavans, has no right to speak about the sanctity of the governor's post. Before I took on the role of prime minister, I was chief minister of a state for more than a decade. In those years, I worked under Congress governors. I respected them and they respected me, despite our differences, and this was the case for many years. Perhaps for the first time since India's Independence, we're seeing this level of unprecedented attacks on our governors in various states. We must understand that the governor acts as a bridge between the Union and state govt, bringing in much-needed balance in administration to an otherwise diverse and vast nation. It is very unfortunate that in certain states, we are hearing about workers of political parties stopping the governor's convoy, and in some states, even throwing petrol bombs at the Raj Bhavan. This kind of behaviour is alarming and unacceptable. When such incidents happen, they raise serious concerns about the overall law and order situation in the state. It indicates a breakdown of authority and respect for the rule of law.

As far as Raj Bhavan's interference in state affairs goes, we need to take a look at history. Which party and people in power misused Article 356 the most to paralyse state machineries that they disagreed with? Which prime minister used Article 356 fifty times to topple elected govts led by opposition parties? And this begs the question: How many elected state govts have been toppled unethically since 2014? None. Instead, there has been a rise in cooperative federalism, with efforts to foster better relations between the Centre and states. The governor represents the constitutional authority of the state, and their position should be respected by all parties, regardless of political differences.

You have attempted to expand the concept of employment beyond govt jobs to self-employment. Do you see your attempt succeeding in view of the entrenched bias for govt jobs?

Our efforts have been to expand the spectrum of opportunities for the youth, be it public sector, private sector or entrepreneurship. Our 10 years will be remembered for creating the maximum number of opportunities across all three segments. Rather than argue that one kind of job is better or another, we have focused on improving the overall pool of opportunities available for the youth. The results are visible. The annual Periodic Labour Force Survey data shows us that between 2017 and 2023, the labour force participation rate has increased from 49.8% to 57.9%. The unemployment rate has gone down from 6% to 3.2%. Between 2017 and 2024, over 7 crore new EPFO subscribers have been added. Over 8 crore new businesses have been started with Mudra alone and each business has supported 1-2 people. This means more than 15 crore opportunities have been created. Now add to this Startup India, Stand-up India loans and SVANidhi loans, the entrepreneurial sector itself has completely transformed. We have opened several new avenues for the youth. Space sector, which was not even thought about some years ago, is flourishing today.

Our gig economy is thriving and employs lakhs of people, with over 20% engaged in highly skilled jobs. Our digital economy is also growing exponentially with over 6 crore jobs generated till 2019; a number that may double in the next few years. A recent report has said that in the past decade, the real estate sector has seen the creation of over 3 crore new jobs. I regularly attend Rozgar Melas which is the largest-ever drive to give govt jobs where we have given recruitment letters to lakhs of youth.

Your vision of 'Viksit Bharat' in 2047 is still 23 years away from becoming a reality. By the time it is realised, you will be close to 95 years. Still, to your supporters and many others, you are central to that vision.

India becoming Viksit Bharat is not Modi's vision. It is the vision and will of 140 crore Indians that when the nation celebrates the 100th year of Independence, it should be a developed nation. I find myself extremely fortunate that I have been an instrument to realise the dreams and aspirations of my countrymen. The speed and scale of our work reflects our eagerness to take the nation to new heights. Our model of saturation shows our commitment to open the doors of prosperity for every family. Our push towards technology and newer opportunities is ensuring

that our yuva shakti reaches its full potential. Our borders today are more secure than ever, our nari shakti is the one leading social change, our infrastructure is acquiring global standards and our economy is turning more and more aatmanirbhar. In the last 10 years, we have built a solid foundation for the nation's growth to take flight. That is why I say that what you have seen till now is only a trailer. There is a lot that I want to do. Let me assure you, Modi is blessed by 140 crore Indians. He will not stop till the dream of Viksit Bharat is achieved.

You have been credited with raising India's global stature with a more assertive and ambitious foreign policy. Tell us about your experience of having steered India in a conflict-ridden world in which the pursuit of our national interests seemed, at least to some of our partners in the West, to be at odds with the rules of the international order?

Shouldn't the goal of our foreign policy be to advance our national interest? Our approach to foreign policy is 'nation first'. And when we talk about our rise through a 'nation first' approach, it doesn't threaten the world. The world feels the rise of India is good for the world. The world only respects those who stand for themselves. No one respects

ON KASHI & MATHURA TEMPLE DEMAND

I will not comment much as the cases are sub judice. But we are committed to develop our cultural heritage. Our manifesto speaks about the aim to boost cultural tourism across the country and develop temple spaces & cultural spaces of all religions in India as world-class destinations for pilgrimage and tourism. The massive development taking place in our temple towns will not only help the pilgrims but also the local economy

those who cannot even stand for their national interest. So when we conducted our foreign policy as per our national interest, initially it would have come as a surprise to many. For example, when we went into trade deal discussions looking at our interests in mind, our partners and even the media were surprised to see us doing so. Our partners have realised that it is normal for nations to stand for their national interest. Doing so, in fact, increased their respect for India. They came to terms with a new reality where India is very cognisant of what is good for its people and what is not. Today, the world respects India for being able to ensure that fuel and energy prices for its citizens stayed in control despite the global conflicts.

Whenever I meet world leaders, I see that their interest and attraction for India is increasing. They see the situation in their countries and compare it with how India is a nation brimming with optimism and opportunities. I see genuine respect for India and Indians. Yes, the world is today filled with conflicts and chaos, but there are islands of calm and growth like India. India's role is more important in the world than ever before.

ON ED/CBI RAIDS

Only a small fraction of the agencies' cases is related to political figures. Of the corruption cases probed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), only 3% have been related to politicians. The remaining 97% cases are linked to officials and criminals. Action is being taken against them, too. Over the last 11 years, out of 10,622 preliminary inquiries and regular cases being investigated by the CBI, only about 1-1.5% of the total cases involved politicians. This debunks the claim of a politically-motivated modus operandi

If your assessment is proven right, you will equal Pandit Nehru's record of scoring three straight wins. Your views on this rare feat also in view of the contrasting backgrounds you both came from.

To be honest, I do not know about these records. It is your work to analyse such trends. I just keep doing my work.

But since you have asked this question, I would urge you to do an analysis of this. You could look at the political landscape at that time, the opposition parties and their leaders. You could look at the level of awareness among people for their rights as well as their education levels. You can look at the media presence. An analysis should be done comparing how the country progressed in Nehru ji's 10 years versus our 10 years. We are at a very important juncture as the country is preparing a roadmap for the next 25 years and it would enlighten the public.



CONTRAPUNTO

Ecology is permanent economy
SUNDERLAL BAHUGUNA



Missing In Election

Environment risks are borne directly by people. Yet, it hasn't emerged as a serious poll issue

Uttarakhand has struggled to cope with frequent outbreaks of forest fires this year. Over the weekend, fires progressed up to Nainital, triggering the use of IAF helicopters to douse the flames. Forest fires are not just a threat to lives and property, they also undermine tourism in a state that depends on it. Not that it really mattered in the campaign strategies in the state's LS polls. No observer can be blamed for considering forest fires a non-issue.

Missing anger | Environmental risks in India have been multiplying. Along with it the related costs are rising. These costs are borne mostly by people as mitigation mechanisms such as insurance are not yet sophisticated enough. However, this challenge is seldom an election issue. Political parties are happy to skirt these issues as they don't seem to catalyse an electorate's anger.

Bad air days | The absence of anger is not because the problem is invisible. For example, India's poor air quality is a perceptible problem. Air pollution may be termed a "silent killer" but its health effects are debilitating. Something that is tangible.

Its economic fallout is huge. World Bank recently estimated the economic costs of India's poor air quality. It concluded that the lost output from premature deaths and morbidity in 2019 was 1.4% of GDP, or \$36.8 billion. Despite the quantification of the costs of pollution it hasn't emerged as a meaningful election issue.

Complexity leads to delay | One plausible reason for low priority given to environment-related consequences is the complexity of challenge. It requires bringing together many stakeholders to gauge the trade-offs involved. Subsequently, the benefits of a course of action take time to show up. The nature of the problem is incompatible with the incentives that drive political parties. It's therefore convenient to kick the can down the road.

Outliers needed | Traditional political parties are not going to make an extra effort to address environmental issues in a sustained manner. While it's relatively easy to announce targets such as an increase in installed capacity of renewable energy, dealing with domestic environmental issues is painstaking because of clashing stakeholder interests. This is where India could do with a ground-up green political movement. Their most important contribution globally is mainstreaming the environment agenda. A green party doesn't have to capture power. It needs to capture the imagination to catalyse change.



Single & Weaker

BJP's manifesto promises it. But joint theatre commands remain elusive

China recently undertook another major military reorganisation by dissolving PLA's Strategic Support Force (SSF) and replacing it with Information Support Force for better oversight on cyber, space and tech-driven operations. SSF was created in 2015 as a new branch of PLA alongside PLA's theaterisation exercise that saw seven previous military regions refashioned into five theatre commands.

India's incomplete theaterisation | India, however, has been taking baby steps in the theaterisation process. While BJP's 2024 Lok Sabha election manifesto promises the implementation of joint theatre commands, this comes more than two decades after Kargil Review Committee submitted its report expressing dissatisfaction with the military structure. Sure, we now have a Chief of Defence Staff to serve as a single point of military advice for govt. But bringing army, navy and air force personnel and assets together under joint commands remains a challenge.

Tricky negotiations | India currently has 17 single-service commands. In case of conflict with China, New Delhi has to mobilise at least seven service commands to Beijing's one joint western command. However, discussions around India's theaterisation have been plagued by questions about who controls assets that were previously assigned to individual services, and command over personnel.

Rivalries galore | Add to this off-record admissions of inter- and intra-services rivalries. Three- and four-star officers want to retain their existing rank privileges, which they may have to give up under the proposed three-joint-command framework - two land-based commands and one maritime command.

Slow transition | To promote jointness, Parliament passed the Inter-Service Organisation (Command, Control and Discipline) Bill that will apply to all military personnel who were hitherto governed by separate service rules. Cross-service staffing of army, navy and air force has begun. But the process to create a culture of jointness is too slow. China has raced ahead. If India is to avoid another 1962, it has to quickly flatten its military structure and create joint theatre commands now. Even lessons from the Ukraine war demand this.



Fit, fight, go straight

Best cheatsheet for your Kerala holiday

Shinie Antony

With the monsoon poised to lash Kerala, you may be dreaming of houseboats, backwaters, theyyam and kathakali. If headed for God's own country, here are some tips, so you will eat the *sadhya* - feast - but not the banana leaf it's served on.

Hydrate with warm jeera water, cool nannari sarbath and sodas like Palakkadan masala, Fularjari. Tea is syrupy unless you ask for 'a without', which means without sugar. There's tender coconut water, buttermilk filled with green chillies and curry leaves, and fresh toddy. "Touchings" can be spicy peanuts, prawns or pickle. Kappa-meem is a pairing of legendary lovers like appam-stew. A non-vegetarian is known as 'non', and served meat ularthiyathu (dry) or porichadu (fry), and fish pollichathu (steamed in leaves) or vevichathu (reduced with cambogia). Plantains make pazham-pori, unnakaya, pazham nirachathu, and are routinely diced for chips.

Rice is red, Malabar parotas go round and round, salads are called sallas. Papadams are smaller and bubblier than appalams and papads. Halwa is black, red or yellow, made with jaggery and coconut milk; occasionally a pretty girl is described as haluva.

Many English words are passed off as Malayalam. 'Fit' is drunk, 'tight' broke, 'soap' flattery and 'number' a con-job. 'Best' is a sarcastic replacement for 'the worst'. Pompous peeps are said to carry 'head-weight' while 'mouth-looker' (translated from *vaya-noki*) is usually a man dedicated to staring unblinkingly at women. Hus and hussy are short for husband; an annoying hus, if non, can be easily bumped off with a high-cholesterol diet. If the need to grease palms arises, psst, a bribe is code-named 'something'. Plotting a murder? A 'quotation' (supari) will get you a discount. The dead are called 'close', to clarify they are no longer open to chatting.

With Malayalam cinema now considered international-level, at least by Malayalis, proclaim it publicly in order to start a party. Don't gush - keep it real like our films do - or they'll say 'over *aayee*'. Our actors neither wear makeup nor match steps while dancing. Try martial art kalaripayattu (pavayattu a corruption of 'fight') only if booked into an ayurveda spa for recovery. Gold is our metal and mighty the state costume. Like anywhere else in India, at T junctions a local will confidently say, 'Go straight'. Aiyye is a disgusted Aiyyo. Umma is mwah, so say this only if you are looking for commitment.



MP's Sound Of Silence

BJP hopes this shows voters' faith in the party, Congress sees flickers of revival. It's difficult to tell either way. But electors going quiet can be troubling for democracy

Anastasia Piliavsky and Tommaso Sbriccoli



Around 8% fewer voters went to the booths on April 19, the first day of Lok Sabha polling in Madhya Pradesh, than in 2019. This is twice the national average 4% drop in voter turnouts in the election's first phase.

Tough fight | Publicly, neither party has shown unease with the participation plunge, each blaming the other's lethargic voters. In private, however, BJP cadres we spoke to in eastern MP are anxious. They know that even though BJP took the state assembly with no trouble last year, this year for them will not be a walk in the park. The anti-incumbency feeling is palpable across the state, and the six constituencies in Vindhya and Bundelkhand regions that went to polls on April 26 saw fierce battles.

Difficult to read | What makes BJP workers even more nervous than falling turnouts is how closely the voters are now holding the cards to their chests. The campaign took its usual course. A vast army of party workers, bigger than ever, filled the state with thousands of posters and flags. They have marched up and down the streets of towns and villages, organised a record number of processions and rallies, gone door-to-door round the clock. Crores of flowers have been strung into lakhs of garlands to adorn dozens of candidates' necks.

But one crucial electoral ritual has not gone to plan. In the run-up to the elections, the party conducted, as usual, a fine-grained pre-electoral survey. Ordinarily, by the time voters head for the booths, party workers know with great precision - caste by caste, street by street, house by house - who will vote for whom. Since the people conducting these surveys are typically local workers who know their villages and neighbourhoods inside out, they can normally go even further than this, distinguishing voters' honest answers from strategic bluffs.

Chup-chap voters | This is not so this time around. Despite their best efforts, party workers are failing to get voters to reveal their choice. "No one says anything about whom they will vote for!" lamented a BJP worker in the district of Dewas. Public spaces, having

been saturated with signage and rhetoric during campaigning, now ooze an eerie psephological silence. There is no way to judge how well a politician performed or how effective a party's campaign has been.

Beyond the nerve-wracking suspense into which the tight-lipped electors have plunged politicians, this new

silence and secrecy, morally discredits people, making them suspect of being a dishonest partner or an untrustworthy ally. So people tend to support politicians openly, attend open feasts, display party paraphernalia on the fronts of their homes and even swear political allegiances in theatrical public rituals.

Any politically active person in a village or a town neighbourhood shifting to a new party would put this on public display, lest they acquire a reputation of someone who is undependable and underhanded. At least in village and provincial MP, if the ballot is secret de jure, it is public de facto.

Minority play | Or so has been the case until now. A near-perfect two-party state, MP has been a reliable stronghold for BJP, which has ruled it with almost no interruptions (apart for a two-year period when Congress won with the support of other parties and independent MLAs) for two decades. Over the past 10 years, even the state's small Muslim minority (under 7%) joined the party ranks. Most of them have not been seduced by BJP's ideology or political agenda, but have voted pragmatically since 2014 to secure basic services, whether water or electricity or any number of licences that every Indian citizen needs at some point in life.

In rural Dewas, many Muslims publicly declared their political turn in small groups that would gather in shops or on village *chabutaras*, using standard formulae and ritualised oaths.

Something brewing? | This year sees no such performances - and little sense of what revelations the booths will hold. What can this silence mean? While any party at large, as BJP now is, hopes that the silence is of consent, it is also deeply nervous because the sound of silence may just as well indicate brewing trouble. If claims and protests are not heard on the streets, is something brewing behind the scenes *chupke se*? This anxiety deepens as one looks over the border with Rajasthan, where BJP is having all kinds of unforeseen troubles.

Meanwhile, Congress supporters now have slightly raised hopes. Does the *chup-chap* electorate - silent on the streets as much as in booths - bode pleasant surprises or even a miracle toppling of the pre-poll predictions? Whatever the parties may hope for and fear, most disturbing is the possibility that the silence signifies the death of opposition or even protest within civil society may be settling in.

The writers are anthropologists

MP (29 seats) has voted for 13 seats in the first two phases. It goes to polls on May 7 for the third of its four-phase election



silence is giving this round of elections a general aura of distrust, suspicion and moral disquiet. The ballot itself is of course cast in secret, but normally people are publicly outspoken about their choice. In politics, much as in life otherwise, doing things *chup se* or *chupke se*, in

'Witty polymath & institution builder'

Finance Commission chairman fondly recalls his long association with Jagdish Bhagwati, who retires this academic year. Panagariya calls Bhagwati the most influential trade theorist of his generation

Arvind Panagariya



After a spectacular 65-year-long career as the world's leading economist, Jagdish Bhagwati will retire this academic year. So, it is an opportune time to pay tribute to him.

Arguably, Bhagwati is the most influential international trade economist of his generation. Paul Samuelson, the first American to win Nobel Prize in Economics, has described his era as the "Age of Bhagwati in international trade". Paul Krugman, the 2008 Nobel winner for his work on New Trade Theory, has said that had he been on the Nobel Committee that year, he would have awarded the prize first to his teacher Jagdish Bhagwati for his "really insightful work" on Old Trade Theory.

A polymath, Bhagwati has made seminal contributions to diverse fields, including immigration, climate change, development, and political philosophy.

An architect of institutions

Internationally, Bhagwati helped design World Trade Organisation in his role as economic policy adviser to Arthur Dunkel, then Director General of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Nationally, his policy writings on India influenced and shaped the thinking of almost all economists and policy analysts who contributed to changing the economy's orientation away from

socialism and towards markets.

Beginning with Indira Gandhi, all prime ministers who have served in office a full term or longer have personally known him.

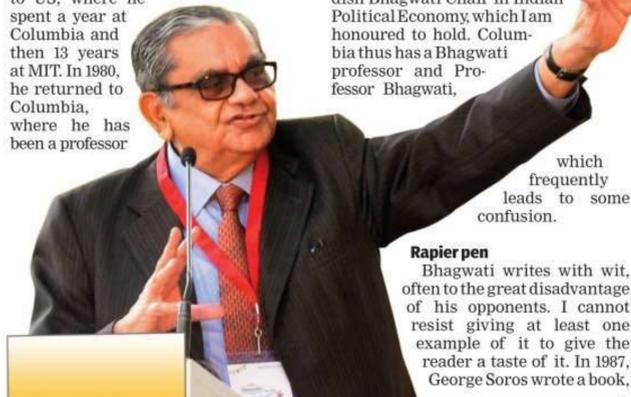
Wide spectrum scholarship

Bhagwati did his bachelor's in commerce from Sydenham College in Bombay in 1954 and immediately proceeded to do the Tripos at St John's College, Cambridge University. He then did stints as a visiting scholar at MIT and Nuffield College. In 1960s, he was back in India, spending two years at Indian Statistical Institute and four at Delhi School of Economics. In 1966, he moved to US, where he spent a year at Columbia and then 13 years at MIT. In 1980, he returned to Columbia, where he has been a professor

with appointments in economics, law, and international and public affairs.

Bhagwati has written articles in all leading scholarly journals on economics, published books too numerous to count, shaped media debates on the leading economic policy issues of the day, and founded and edited leading economics journals. Several universities have conferred honorary degrees on him.

GOI awarded Bhagwati Padma Vibhushan. Government of Japan has honoured him with Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star. He also has several prizes named after him. Among them is Jagdish Bhagwati Chair in Indian Political Economy, which I am honoured to hold. Columbia thus has a Bhagwati professor and Professor Bhagwati,



which frequently leads to some confusion.

Rapier pen

Bhagwati writes with wit, often to the great disadvantage of his opponents. I cannot resist giving at least one example of it to give the reader a taste of it. In 1987, George Soros wrote a book,

titled *Alchemy of Finance*, which Bhagwati reviewed in *New Republic*. He began the review thus, "Now that Soros has made his fortune, he is eager to tell all. But his aspirations as a writer soar above a simple narrative of his financial dealings.... He wishes to develop a theory that would equally embrace his mundane financial activities and grander themes such as the reform of the international economic system. Success on Wall Street has given Soros the sangfroid, and wealth the wherewithal, to pursue his dream." Here he turns the knife to administer a devastating blow: "Alas, it prompts the question: Money talks, but can it write?"

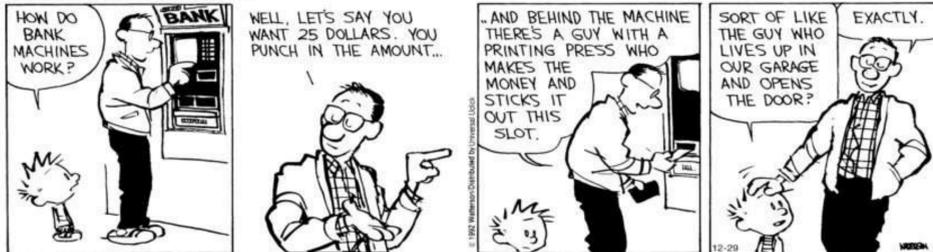
At 90, Bhagwati retains his quick wit and humour.

Never let go

A model teacher, Bhagwati has no equal as a mentor. Unlike most professors, who support their students at most till they land their first job, he adopts them for life and gives them his fulsome support. The flip side is that the students adore him and have produced as many as six festschrifts celebrating him.

At his retirement party this past April 15, after his students, friends and colleagues had paid him one glowing tribute after another, and his turn to speak came, his opening line, delivered with his trademark mischievous smile, was, "I know I should not believe all this, but I do!" He then became sombre, noting, "Life has been good to me and I could not have asked for more."

Calvin & Hobbes



Sacredspace



People are cowards; don't be worried about them. Go on your way, go on your way dancing... whatever feels good is good, whatever feels beautiful is beautiful... whatever makes you happy is bound to be true. Anand, bliss, is the only criterion of truth.

Osho

There Is No Scarcity Of Anand, Mind It

Hansaji Yogendra

In Indic philosophy, anand, bliss, is a specific attribute of Brahm, the ultimate reality, as well as the highest state of existence for the individual self.

In the Upanishads, anand is one of the three essential attributes of Brahm, along with sat, existence, and chit, consciousness. These three aspects of the nature of ultimate reality are often expressed as Sat-Chit-Anand. Bliss is, therefore, the experience of unbound, eternal, and unalloyed happiness of the chit, derived from the very experience of existence, that is sat. That is, bliss doesn't necessarily come from a dream life or the life you think you ought to be living. Rather it is an intense state of joy from life, as it is.

The spiritual science of perpetually being in bliss is all about empowering

ourselves to celebrate and value life as it is. This seems especially difficult for most of us today when we are constantly afflicted with a sense of unworthiness. We think that we do not deserve anand as we are. We expect that the next set of professional or personal or financial achievements will in some way make us more worthy and more qualified to experience bliss in life. These are the criteria of the ego, not of the spirit, not spirituality.

In the spiritual sciences, bliss is unqualified, unquantified and accessible to everyone by the simple fact of their human existence. That is, you don't need to be anything other than yourself to experience perpetual bliss. And bliss is unquantified, that is, there is no

scarcity of anand; you can be as joyous as you want without it affecting the availability of bliss to others. The basic idea is that our own Self is the very nature of bliss.

Yes, you were never meant to be so worried in life or about life. All you need to do is to learn how to be more blissful. Some basic concepts that can help you be more blissful every day are: First, acceptance - to experience bliss, start by accepting yourself and your life exactly as they are. Avoid dwelling on what needs to change or improve. Second, self-love - caring for yourself is not

selfish, you are as worthy of love, affection and care as anyone else. And only when you fill your own cup with love can you share it with others. Third, gratitude - in a culture

obsessed with scarcity and lack, gratitude is a radical act of defiance, an acknowledgment of the infinite blessings in our lives each day. If you think you have nothing to be grateful for, then think of your life without the things you have now. Fourth, purpose - to live in bliss, also implies the unfolding of our true soul-purpose. Bliss is the gentle breeze that caresses our spirit in moments of serenity. But it is also the fierce flame of dedication, determination and will-power that motivates us to keep pursuing our deepest goals despite adversity. Bliss, therefore, is not only a sense of euphoria, it is also a deep knowing of our life purpose and the joy that comes from fulfilling work.

While pleasures are temporary and often lead to attachment and suffering, anand is an enduring, intrinsic state of being that transcends the ups and downs of life.



Why BYD's EV Exports Sell For Twice The China Price

- US and European politicians have raised alarms that domestic auto industries could be destroyed by a wave of cheap Chinese electric vehicles
- But so far, China's top EV maker, BYD, has dramatically hiked export prices compared to what it charges at home rather than undercut foreign rivals
- The goal: to rake in hefty profit margins the automaker can't get in China amid fierce competition

Source: Reuters

TIMES BUSINESS

THE TIMES OF INDIA, NEW DELHI | MONDAY, APRIL 29, 2024

● Take the BYD Atto 3, a compact electric crossover...

In China,
the midrange version sells for
\$19,283



In Germany,
the little SUV is priced at
\$42,789
— a price that's still competitive with comparable electric vehicles in that market

● BYD's big export markups also underscore the massive cost advantages that China's EV industry has over foreign competitors



● By comparison, Tesla, which has a higher cost base than Chinese rivals, sells its Chinese-made Model 3 for only 37% more in Germany than in China

Beyond ₹76k-cr: Govt to scale up semiconductor package

New Plan May Surpass Earlier One | Preliminary Work Underway

Pankaj.Doyal@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Govt is looking at rolling out a fresh multi-billion-dollar incentive package for semiconductor companies after nearly exhausting the Rs 76,000-crore plan that was launched in Dec 2021 for supporting investing companies, top sources told TOI.

Preliminary work on the new package, which is "in all likelihood be much bigger than the previous one", has already begun, even though announcements in this regard will be made only once the new govt takes charge post the national elections, they said.

"The new package would be one of the key agendas for the new govt and will be taken up on a priority basis," one of the sources said, pointing out that new proposals that are coming in for semiconductor companies necessitate a fresh package.

FRESH INCENTIVES IN PIPELINE

₹76,000-crore | Incentive package for semiconductor companies launched in Dec 2021

➤ This has almost been exhausted after the spate of investments

KEY PROJECTS

- ₹22,500cr | Micron's testing and packaging unit in Gujarat
- ₹91,000cr | Tata Electronics's first semiconductor fab unit with Taiwanese Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp at Dholera in Gujarat
- ₹27,000cr | Semiconductor Assembly and Test unit by Tata in Morigaon, Assam
- ₹7,600cr | CG Power project with Japanese Renesas Electronics and Stars Microelectronics of Thailand

"The matter would be tabled before the new Cabinet as some of the proposals are at an advanced stage and would require immediate assurances from the state in terms of incentives," the source said.

Success of Dec 2021 package is prompting the govt to work out a new one, especially in view of the aggressive stance of countries such as the US

and China, which have announced much bigger packages for companies that are investing in semiconductors.

Under the current plan, govt extends fiscal support of up to 50% of a project's cost to eligible display and semiconductor fabricators. This has been almost exhausted after the spate of investments that came in.

Following govt's efforts led by communications & IT minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, India — which had previously failed to get any credible proposals for semiconductor manufacturing — finally managed to score big after American Micron emerged as the first major player to enter the space with a Rs 22,500-crore testing and packaging unit in Gujarat in June last year.

This was followed up with approval to three proposals worth nearly Rs 1.3 lakh crore in Feb this year. These comprise: Rs 91,000-crore project of Tata Electronics to set up India's first semiconductor fab unit with Taiwanese Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing; Rs 27,000-crore Semiconductor Assembly and Test (TSAT) unit by Tata; and Rs 7,600-crore project of CG Power with Japanese Renesas Electronics and Stars Microelectronics of Thailand.

Spices safe, no notice from HK, S'pore: MDH

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Amid row over the alleged presence of carcinogenic ethylene oxide, a form of pesticide, in its select spice packs, MDH (Mahashian Di Hatti) has called such claims untrue and lacking any substantiating evidence. The company said that it has not received any communication on the topic from regulatory authorities of Singapore or Hong Kong.

The over-100-year-old brand said that it does not use ethylene oxide at any stage of storing, processing or packaging its spices. "MDH's statement is further supported by the fact that nodal regulatory authorities such as the Spice Board of India and FSSAI have not received any communication or test reports from Hong Kong or Singapore authorities regarding this matter. This reinforces the fact that the allegations against MDH are baseless, unsubstantiated and not backed by any concrete evidence," the firm said.

Two of India's biggest spice brands — MDH and Everest — have come under the scanner over alleged unsafe food practices. "MDH Group reassures their consumers that MDH abides by health and safety standards, both domestically and internationally. MDH's tagline 'asli masale sach sach' reflects the company's genuine commitment to provide authentic, high-quality spices to their customers," the company said.

Everest and MDH lead India's branded spices market, the size of which has been pegged by analysts at well over Rs 20,000 crore.

Men's ethnic wedding wear demand surges

Strengthening Network And New Offerings Fuel Growth | Sales Of Sherwanis, Kurtas Up

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New Delhi: It's all about 'band, baja and sherwani' in the men's apparel market. Sales of men's traditional wedding wear, including sherwanis, have jumped 25% in the last three years. The rising demand is also spurring competition in the wedding-wear segment, resulting in organised players, including Aditya Birla Fashion, Vedant Fashions and Raymond, scaling up aggressively.

"Sherwanis have emerged as a standout category, accounting for over a quarter of all sales. Over the past year, Tasva has seen its business double. Notably, the 'angrakha' silhouette has garnered substantial popularity among our customers, contributing significantly to this growth trend," Ashish Mukul, brand head at Tasva, told TOI. This is primarily because of the rapid retail expansion throughout the country and the introduction of differentiated designs tailored to meet the consumers' preferences.

Over the last two years, both Aditya Birla Fashion that markets Tasva, and Ethnix of Raymond added about 183 stores combined, with about 94 stores by Vedant Fashions, more popular as Manyavar. Over the next two years, these two brands are likely to add about 300 stores, estimates by I-Sec suggest.

The listing success of Vedant Fashions has accelerated competition in the wedding-wear segment from the other branded players, the report said. Aditya Birla Fashion launched Tasva in partnership with the fashion designer Tarun Tahilani in FY22, and Raymond introduced Ethnix in FY19, but started scaling up aggressively from FY22 onwards.

Vedant Modi, chief revenue officer, Vedant Fashions, echoes a similar trend. "In the last three years, sales of

men's wedding wear, including sherwanis, have grown by approximately 20-25%, indicating a rising demand. This trend underscores the significant role weddings play in driving sales of ethnic wear. The increase in sales is consistent across all types of wedding apparel, showcasing strong market performance and consumer interest in our offerings.

The premium segment

about 6% of the overall men's wear and is expected to witness a CAGR of nearly 20% over the next four years.

An expanding middle class, increase in discretionary spending and consumer demographics are strong growth drivers for the apparel market. Further, the premium segment is experiencing significant growth, in particular, sherwanis.

Customers have become

90% SALES FROM PHYSICAL STORES



➤ Customers have become increasingly well-informed about Indian attire, placing greater emphasis on meaningful designs and prioritising comfort & luxury

➤ Brands have effectively tapped into this burgeoning

market, by making high-quality designs more accessible to a wider audience, experts say

➤ Physical stores remain the primary channel for sales, capturing approximately 90% of the market

of wedding wear is experiencing substantial growth, driven by the aspirational nature of weddings. Consumers are opting for higher-quality products for special occasions, driving robust growth in our luxury brand, 'Twamev'.

In FY2023, Indian men's apparel market was estimated at over Rs 2.2 lakh crore, growing at nearly 10% CAGR from FY2015-2020. The pandemic, however, resulted in a contraction of 3.6% from FY2020-2022. But it is seen to have made a strong recovery and is projected to grow at a CAGR of 18% for the next few years, according to consulting firm Technopak. Ethnic wear accounts for

increasingly discerning and well-informed about Indian attire, placing greater emphasis on meaningful designs and prioritising comfort alongside luxury. Consequently, brands have effectively tapped into this burgeoning market, by making high-quality designs more accessible to a wider audience, industry experts say.

Besides, the other most popular items are kurtas and kurta sets, among ethnic apparel. Strengthening the network and new and competitive offerings are factors leading to the growth. Physical stores remain the primary channel for sales, capturing approximately 90% of the market.

Private banks grapple with rising IT spends amid surge in e-transactions

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Mumbai: Private banks are experiencing a significant increase in IT expenses as most transactions are now conducted digitally. Unlike the one-time capital expenses incurred when they migrated to core banking, IT is now becoming a recurring cost accounting for up to 10% of operating expenses.

Banks have responded to queries about their level of IT capabilities in light of RBI's action on Kotak Mahindra Bank, freezing the lender's digital onboarding and credit card issues. They said that investments in IT capability are a continuous process and cannot be considered as done and dusted.

Previously, technology mainly replicated manual tasks. Now, investments cover various areas, such as handling billions of monthly transactions across channels, enabling integration with other businesses and services, leveraging analytics for

RECURRING COSTS

➤ The scale-up in tech use is an area of concern for RBI. It wants to ensure banks make the necessary investments in systems to handle volume, protect against fraud, and have a backup

➤ As a result, IT is becoming a recurring cost accounting for up to 10% of operating expenses

➤ For ICICI Bank, IT spends as a

percentage of overall spending have risen from 5.6% in 2019 to about 9.4% in the current fiscal

➤ IndusInd Bank spends 8-10% of its total expenditure on IT

➤ Yes Bank's IT expenditure has gone up 17% to ₹1,108 crore in FY24 — nearly 30% of the bank's spends on staff expenditure. This includes both the opex spend as well as depreciation

targeted sales, and employing AI for customer service without human involvement.

The scale-up in the use of technology is an area of concern for RBI, which wants to ensure banks have made the necessary investments in systems to handle the volume, protect against fraud, and have a backup.

"Our IT and cybersecurity spends as a percentage of overall spending between 2019 and the current fiscal have moved up from 5.6% to about 9.4%," said Sandeep Batra, ex-

ecutive director of ICICI Bank, in an earnings call after the bank's results. The bank said that technology spending would continue to grow at a faster pace than overall expenses, but the rate of growth of tech expenses — given the fast pace — would moderate.

Bankers said that the issues cited by RBI in Kotak's case — managing IT equipment, updating software, controlling user access, vendor risk management, and data security strategy — are part of RBI's checklist in supervision.

"These issues have to be constantly addressed. A bank cannot say that it has addressed the issues once and for all."

According to Sumant Kathpalia, MD & CEO of IndusInd Bank, the bank spends 8-10% of its total expenditure on IT. He added that the private lender has a board-level committee that is constantly evaluating its technology capabilities.

Yes Bank said its IT expenditure has gone up 17% to Rs 1,108 crore in FY24 — nearly 30% of the bank's spends on staff expenditure. The expenditure includes opex spends and depreciation. "About 10% of our operating costs are coming from technology, and we are conscious of that we keep investing in technology, information security, and infrastructure for our future scale," a bank official said.

Subrat Mohanty, executive director in charge of banking operations at Axis Bank, said that the bank has made investments to handle the surge in digital transactions.

Pvt banking doyen, Abhay Aima, dies

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Abhay Aima, the original doyen of private banking in India, has passed away at the age of 63. He was with HDFC Bank for 25 years and used to head its private banking and equities businesses. His sudden demise happened at his residence in Bandra at 4.20 pm on Saturday, according to a statement.

Before joining HDFC Bank in Jan 1995, he was with Citibank. But banking was not his first career love. A pass out from the National Defence Academy and elementary flying school-Bidar, he wanted to be a fighter pilot in the Indian Air Force. But eventually settled into a banking career.

HUL rejigs mgmt panel

Mumbai: Hindustan Unilever has announced that B P Biddappa will join the HUL management committee as executive director, HR and chief people, transformation and sustainability officer for South Asia. Anuradha Razdan, executive director, chief HR officer, South Asia, has been appointed to a global role as chief reward & organisational development officer for Unilever. TNN

FIU notifies fresh alerts for capital mkts

New Delhi: A fresh set of 'alert indicators' have been issued by India's financial intelligence unit (FIU) for capital markets, insurance companies, online payment gateway intermediaries and crypto currency service providers for effective checking of suspicious transactions in their channels. The move comes as part of the anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing regime.

These new guidelines have been issued under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act during FY23 and published in a recently released report that has been accessed by PTI. This is part of the anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism regime followed by the country. AGENCIES

Musk visits China in push for Tesla self-driving cars

► From P 1

Elon Musk also confirmed his meeting with Chinese Premier Li Qiang on Sunday with a post on social media platform X. "Honoured to meet with Premier Li Qiang. We have known each other now for many years, since early Shanghai days," Musk posted, with a picture with the premier.

Tesla reached an accord with Chinese authorities for a plant in Shanghai, its first outside the US, in 2018. The US electric vehicle maker rolled out Full Self-Driving, or FSD, the most autonomous version of its Autopilot software, four years ago but has yet to make it available in Chi-

na, its second-largest market globally, despite customers urging it to do so.

Musk said this month Tesla may make FSD available to customers in China "very soon", in response to a query on social media platform X. Rival Chinese automakers such as Xpeng have been seeking to gain an advantage over Tesla by rolling out similar software. He is looking to obtain approval to transfer data collected in the country abroad to train algorithms for its autonomous driving technologies, the person said. Tesla has since 2021 stored all data collected by its Chinese fleet in Shanghai as required by Chinese regulators and has not transferred any back to the

US. Chinese state broadcaster CCTV, in its report about Musk's meeting with Li, did not say whether the two had discussed FSD, or data.

Earlier in the day, a separate report carried by state radio said Li had visited the ongoing Beijing auto show and had commented about how China's smart new energy vehicle (NEV) sector had gained a leading position in the market and that the country had to work hard and maintain its advantages. Musk also met with Ren Hongbin, a govt official who heads the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, the organiser of the Beijing auto show, state media reported. AGENCIES

Optimistic about long-term growth: HCLTech CEO

Shilpa Phadnis & Veena Mani | TNN

Bengaluru: HCLTech CEO C Vijayakumar said that although macroeconomic indicators have remained unchanged, he is optimistic about the IT industry's growth prospects in the mid to long term.

Unlike some of its peers, HCL's banking and financial services business emerged as its top-performing vertical, growing 2.8% sequentially and 12.1% year-on-year in constant currency in 2023-24. This growth occurred despite a muted macroeconomic environment, with no pickup in discretionary spending as clients adopted a cautious approach.

"In BFSI, we have taken a few strategic initiatives. We've been investing in the wealth and asset management space as a capability, and we have strong partnerships to drive good momentum in that space. The second big bet was on hybrid cloud adoption in financial services. We saw some very good wins and a lot of execution that helped prop up some of these revenues. And the third is insurance. These three areas are contributing to the growth in financial services

on hybrid cloud adoption in financial services. We saw some very good wins and a lot of execution that helped prop up some of these revenues. And the third is insurance. These three areas are contributing to the growth in financial services. And we are positioned as a challenger in a lot of large accounts, where we started small and are scaling up

quite nicely," he told TOI in a post-earnings interaction on Saturday. HCL added three clients to its \$100 million portfolio, taking the total count to 22. Its annual bookings stood at \$9.7 billion in FY24, which is a 10.2% growth compared to the year-ago period.

Given subdued macroeconomic indicators and pressure on the demand side, HCLTech projects its revenue growth between 3% and 5% in constant currency for FY25. It has set a margin guidance of 18-19% for the current financial year, mirroring previous year's figures. "We have divested the JV with State Street. So, some of that could also impact FY25 performance. Over-

rall, I think, keeping the macro conditions to be like what it was in FY24, that's what is in the guidance," Vijayakumar said. However, he didn't quantify the impact from the JV.

NYSE-listed financial services firm State Street has consolidated its operations in India, acquiring a 49% stake in State Street HCL Services — a JV between the global financial services firm and HCL UK, for \$170 million. State Street has partnered with HCLTech for more than a decade. The software business grew 2.3% year-on-year in constant currency. The subscription and support revenue has grown to 83.8% in FY24 from 78.8% in FY23.

For New Investors, ELSS Funds Apt For Tax-Saving Exposure To Equity

Investors who choose the old tax regime can consider ELSS funds to invest up to ₹1.5 lakh under Section 80C of the Income Tax Act. Wealth managers say flows can be staggered using systematic investment plans (SIPs) from the first month of the financial year rather than parking lump sum towards the closing of the year.

What Is An ELSS Scheme?

ELSS or Equity-Linked Savings Scheme is a mutual fund category that primarily invests in equity. This benefits investors choosing the old tax regime as investments up to ₹1.5 lakh are exempt under Section 80C of the Income Tax Act. Financial planners recommend these schemes to first-time investors for the twin benefits of saving tax and taking exposure to equity as an asset class. Investments in these schemes are locked in for three years from the date of investment. Investors are free to redeem the investments or continue holding them after the lock-in ends.

Invesco Mutual Fund

An investor education and awareness initiative

For Know Your Customer (KYC) guidelines along with the documentary requirements and procedure for change of address, phone number, bank details, etc., please visit the Education and Guidance section on www.invesco.com/india/fund. Investor should deal with only SEBI registered Mutual Funds, details of which can be verified under "Intermediaries/Market Infrastructure Institutions" on <https://www.sebi.gov.in/index.html>. For any grievance / complaint, please call us on 1800-209-0007 or write to us at mifservices@invesco.com. Alternatively, complaints can be registered on the SEBI SCORES Portal at <https://scores.gov.in>

Mutual Fund investments are subject to market risks, read all scheme related documents carefully.

Why Opt For SIPs In An ELSS Fund?

SIPs give you the benefit of rupee cost averaging, and help you even out volatility in the markets. It gives you the flexibility of choosing the amount you wish to invest and instils discipline. Since an ELSS investment is time-bound, SIPs should be started in the first month of the financial year. Starting it later will lead to fewer instalments as investors need to park ₹1.5 lakh by the financial year-end and won't be able to spread it over a longer duration.

How Does An ELSS Fund Work?

ELSS funds are diversified equity funds with the flexibility to invest in a mix of large-cap, mid-cap and small-cap stocks. Their performance is benchmarked to an index. Most schemes are actively managed and adopt a flexi-cap approach. There are also three passive funds with a couple of them benchmarked to the Nifty 50 and one to the Nifty Large Midcap 250 Index. An investment can

be made in one scheme or multiple schemes through SIPs, lump sum or a combination of both. The minimum investment amount in a scheme is ₹500.

ELSS' Benefits Over 80C Options...

One of the biggest advantages of ELSS is the three-year lock-in. Other products like tax-saving fixed deposits and the National Savings Scheme of the post office have a five-year lock-in, while the Public Provident Fund (PPF) needs investors to stay invested for 15 years. Returns from ELSS are market-linked, and holding on to the investments over the long term can generate significantly higher returns compared to fixed-income products. Over the last 10 years, these schemes have delivered an average compounded annual return of 16.2%, according to data from Value Research. PPF currently delivers a return of 7.1%, which is tax-free.

How Are Capital Gains Taxed?

Capital gains from ELSS are taxed in line with equity instruments. As the holding period is at least three years, it qualifies for long-term capital gains tax, which is nil for gains of up to ₹1 lakh and 10% thereafter.

—PRASHANT MAHESH



JENNIFER ANISTON REPORTEDLY WORKING ON TELL-ALL MEMOIR, INSPIRED BY AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF LATE CO-STAR MATTHEW PERRY



GISELE BÜNDCHEN CRIES IN FRONT OF MIAMI POLICE AT TRAFFIC STOP OVER STALKING BY PAPS; MAYOR BLASTS COP FOR BEING DISMISSIVE

Biden, Bibi discuss possible truce deal for release of 40 hostages

Under US Proposal, Israel Will Halt Hostilities For 6 Weeks

US President Biden spoke with PM Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel on Sunday to discuss the prospects of a possible ceasefire deal to obtain the release of some of the remaining hostages held since the Hamas-led terrorist attack of Oct 7, officials said.

Biden's call came just hours after secretary of state Antony Blinken left Washington for his latest trip to West Asia. Blinken will start in Saudi Arabia, where he will see Egyptian and Qatari officials who have served as intermediaries with Hamas in the truce talks. Blinken is expected to visit Israel while in the region.

The call also came three weeks after Biden told Netanyahu that he would rethink his support for Israel's war unless the country did more to facilitate the delivery of food and other supplies to Gaza and limit civilian casualties. Since then, humanitarian aid to Gaza has increased substantially, but still not as much as is needed.

Under the US-sponsored ceasefire proposal, Israel would halt hostilities for six weeks and release hundreds of Palestinians held in its prisons in exchange for the release of 40 hostages held by Hamas, mainly women, older men and those with health conditions. Later stages of the deal would then extend ceasefire and result in more hostages being freed. **NVT**



Israeli police disperse anti-govt demonstrators in Tel Aviv on Saturday

Hamas releases video of two hostages urging Bibi to strike deal for their release

Hamas's armed wing released a video Saturday of two men held hostage in Gaza who are seen alive and urging Israeli authorities to strike a deal for the release of all the remaining captives.

Campaign group the Hostages and Missing Families Forum identified the two as Keith Siegel and Omri Miran who were abducted by militants during the Hamas attack on southern Israel on Oct 7. Siegel also has US citizenship. The latest video comes just three days after Hamas released another video showing hostage Hersh Goldberg-Polin alive.

Siegel and Miran appeared to speak under duress. "I have

been here in Hamas captivity for 202 days. The situation here is unpleasant, difficult and there are many bombs," Miran, 47, is heard saying. "It's time to reach a deal that will get us out of here safe and healthy... Keep protesting, so that there will be a deal now." Siegel, 64, who also spoke in the video, broke down as he talked of their captivity. "We are in danger here, there are bombs, it is stressful and scary," he said, burying his face in his arms as he cried. "I want to tell my family that I love you very much... I really hope that we will have the best possible surprise," he said, appealing to PM Benjamin Netanyahu to reach a deal soon. **AFP**

Earlier on Sunday, Palestinian Prez Mahmoud Abbas said only the US can stop Israel attacking Rafah. "We call on the USA to ask Israel not to carry on the Rafah attack. America is the only country able to prevent Israel from committing this crime," Abbas told a special meeting of the World Economic Forum in Riyadh. A Hamas delegation, meanwhile, will visit Cairo Monday for talks aimed at securing a ceasefire, a Hamas official said on Sunday. Israel's foreign minister said on Saturday that Rafah should be put off until a deal emerges to release the Israeli hostages. **REUTERS**

Iraq quietly makes same-sex relations punishable by up to 15 years' jail

Baghdad: Human rights groups and diplomats criticised a law that was quietly passed by the Iraqi parliament over the weekend that would impose heavy prison sentences on gay and transgender people.

Iraq did not previously have a law that explicitly criminalised homosexuality. The law passed Saturday with little notice as an amendment to the country's existing anti-prostitution law. It imposes a sentence of 10 to 15 years for same-sex relations and a prison term of one to three years for people who undergo or perform gender-transition surgeries and for "intentional practice of effeminacy." It also bans any organisation that promotes "sexual deviancy," imposing a sentence of at least seven years and a fine of no less than 10 million dinars (\$7,600).

US state department spokesperson Matthew Miller said the law "threatens those most at risk in Iraqi society" and "can be used to hamper free-speech and expression." He warned that the legislation could drive away foreign investment. UK foreign secretary David Cameron called the law "dangerous and worrying." The acting Iraqi parliamentary speaker, Mohsen Al-Mandalawi, said that the vote was "a necessary step to protect the value structure of society" and to "protect our children from calls for moral depravity and homosexuality." **AP**

'Running against a 6-yr-old': Biden lets Trump jokes fly at annual roast

Washington: US President Joe Biden didn't waste time. Just minutes into his speech at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner Saturday, Biden launched into the issues dominating the 2024 election, including his age and former Prez Donald Trump's hush-money trial in New York.

"The 2024 election's in full swing and yes, age is an issue," Biden said in a roughly 10-minute speech. "I'm a grown man running against a 6-year-old."

"Donald has had a few tough days lately. You might call it 'stormy' weather," Biden said, an oblique reference to Stormy Daniels, a porn actor who claims to have had sex with Trump in 2006 and received a hush-money payment in the days before the 2016 election, a deal at the centre of his New York trial. The comments were not notable given Biden has forbidden his aides from talking about Trump's legal troubles.

While he rarely mentioned Trump by name early in his presidency, Biden has aggressively taunted him as of late and kept it going Saturday. "Age is the only thing we have in common," Biden, 81, said of Trump, 77. "My vice-president actually endorses me," he said, referring to former vice-president Mike Pence's decision not to endorse Trump.



GAZA STIR OUTSIDE VENUE Outside the venue of the White House Correspondents Association dinner, pro-Palestinian protesters chanted about journalists' deaths in Gaza. They shouted down govt officials as they entered the hotel



STARRY NIGHT: Hollywood was well represented, with actress Scarlett Johansson, who is married to event's host Colin Jost, sitting up front. News anchors dined with actors Jon Hamm and Sean Penn, among others

Biden also used his speech at the dinner to warn about his political opponent's threats on democracy — increasingly a focus of his message to voters. "Focus on what's actually at stake," he said. "The stakes couldn't be higher."

The century-old event, often referred to as Washington's "nerd prom", provided a break to journalists and govt officials from their normal jostling for a night of glitz and gossip in celebration of the free press. Outside the gates of the Washington Hilton, however, outrage over Biden's support for Israel's war in the Gaza Strip was evident. As journalists and politicians arrived at the hotel, pro-Palestinian protesters chanted, "Shame on you!" Other protesters wearing press vests with the names of more than 100 Palestinian journalists who have been killed in Gaza lay down in front of the dinner venue.

Colin Jost, the co-anchor of "Weekend Update" on "Saturday Night Live", spent roughly 23 minutes poking fun at the prez. But Jost's speech was relatively light, even supportive of Biden. He ended it by noting that his grandfather, who recently died, had voted for Biden in the last election. "The reason he voted for you is because you're a decent man," he said.

Trump reacted to the event by calling it "really bad" in a post on his Truth Social platform. "Crooked Joe was an absolute disaster! Doesn't get much worse than this!" **NVT & REUTERS**

Crackdown on pro-Palestinian protests at 4 colleges in US leads to 200+ arrests

More than 200 protesters were arrested Saturday at Northeastern University, Arizona State University, Indiana University and Washington University in St. Louis, according to officials, as colleges across the US struggle to quell growing pro-Palestinian demonstrations and encampments on campus.

At Washington University in St. Louis, more than 80 arrests were made and the campus was locked down Saturday evening, university officials said, adding that campus police were still processing arrests. Jill Stein, Green Party candidate for 2024 presidential election, was among those arrested, a spokesperson said.

Earlier in the day, at Northeastern University in Boston, protesters had set up an encampment on the campus-



Police arrest a protesting student at Northeastern University. More than 700 protesters have been arrested on campuses since April 18. In several cases, most of those who were arrested have been released

his past week that drew more than 100 supporters. Around noon Saturday, police began to arrest protesters. They said they had arrested 102 protesters.

More than 2,500 miles away, at Arizona State University, school police arrested 69 people after they set up an unau-

thorised encampment, school officials said. The school said the protesters were instructed multiple times to disperse.

At Indiana University Bloomington, where university police had arrested 33 people this past week, campus and state police arrested 23 more.

At some demonstrations, there were some reports of injuries, but in many cases, the arrests have been peaceful, and protesters have often willingly given themselves up when officers moved in.

On Sunday, the White House insisted that pro-Palestinian protests must remain peaceful. "We certainly respect the right of peaceful protests," National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said. "But we absolutely condemn the anti-Semitism language that we have heard of late." **NYT & AFP**

2 Russian journo in jail on 'extremism' charges over 'work' for Navalny group

London: Two Russian journalists were arrested by their govt on "extremism" charges and ordered by courts there on Saturday to remain in custody pending investigation and trial on accusations of working for a group founded by late Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny. Konstantin Gabov and Sergey Karelin both denied the charges for which they will be detained for a minimum of two months before any trials begin. Each faces a minimum of two years in prison and a maximum of six years.

Gabov and Karelin are accused of preparing materials for a YouTube channel run by Navalny's Foundation for Fighting Corruption, which has been outlawed by Russian authorities. **REUTERS**

Tory rift sparks 'Op Save Rishi': Report

Rishi Sunak said this week he's putting UK defence spending on a "war footing." He might as well have been talking about his own position.

Allies of the UK PM described the last few days as him entering campaign mode for a general election he must call by the end of Jan. A plan to tighten rules for welfare payments, ramming his flagship policy to deport asylum-seekers to Rwanda through parliament and a pledge to spend 2.5% of GDP on defence by 2030 all secured newspaper front-page coverage.

An aide characterised the tempo shift as "Operation Save Rishi" ahead of a more immediate test, as the Conservative Party gears up for local council and mayoral elections Thursday. Sunak's internal Tory critics have warned that any result suggesting the opposition Labour Party is marching to office would trigger efforts to oust him. The recent flurry of activity was in part about getting Su-

'Ireland mulls returning asylum seekers to UK'

Ireland is looking to amend the law to allow the return of asylum seekers to the UK, broadcaster RTE said Sunday after an influx over the border with Northern Ireland. Dublin's minister of justice Helen McEntee, who visits London on Monday, told a parliamentary committee this week that she estimates 80% of those applying for asylum in the republic came over the land border with Northern Ireland, which is part of the UK. UK PM Rishi Sunak told Sky News it was evidence that London's plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda is acting as a deterrent. In response, a spokesperson for Ireland's PM Simon Harris said he is very clear about the importance of protecting the integrity of the migration system in Ireland, RTE reported. **AFP**

nak through next week without a leadership challenge, members of his team said on condition of anonymity.

The Tories are defending just under 1,000 seats from the last vote in 2021, when the party was boosted by the rollout of the Covid-19 vaccine. The party's national support has slumped since, and Labour's 20-point lead in the polls could translate to a loss of half of those seats. Yet there's even more focus on the outcome of two mayoral races, in the West Midlands and Tees Valley in northern England, where Tories Andy Street and Ben Houches are battling to stay in their roles. Both are

Sunak refuses to rule out election in July after MP defects to oppn

London: UK PM Rishi Sunak Sunday refused to categorically rule out a July general election amid a damaging defection by one of his Conservative Party MPs to the opposition Labour Party, just days before local and mayoral elections in the country on May 2. Dan Poulter, a doctor and Central Suffolk and North Ipswich MP, said he will switch his allegiance to the opposition benches before standing down as a parliamentarian at the next election because he can no longer defend the Tory govt's track record on the National Health Service. Against the backdrop of this latest embarrassment, Sunak was asked if national vote will happen in July. "I'm not going to say anything more than I've already said," said Sunak, who has been pressured to rule out polls during the peak summer month. **PTI**

Delhi-born businessman in fray for London mayor

London: Delhi-born businessman Tarun Ghulati is throwing his hat into the ring to challenge incumbent Sadiq Khan in London mayoral polls on May 2, expressing confidence in his ability to win due to his unique background and understanding of finance.

Ghulati, 63, believes he stands out among the 13 candidates vying for the position, emphasising his ability to connect with all communities. Despite polls showing Khan as the likely winner, Ghulati remains undeterred, dismissing them as "misleading" due to their small sample size. Having spent £10,000 (£10 lakh) and obtaining 10 signatures from each London borough just to stand as an independent candidate, Ghulati is determined to bring change to the mayoral office. His background includes studying

at University of Jaipur and obtaining MBA from Delhi University before working as an international manager for HSBC. A posting in London in 2006 solidified his decision to settle in UK, attracted by London's multiculturalism and opportunities.

Motivated by personal experiences, including a mugging incident in London, to stand in the elections, the father of two is the lone Indian-origin candidate. "I have run large businesses. I have sat on many boards. I will bring in new money," he said. Ghulati pledges to scrap the controversial ULEZ policy introduced by Khan, which charges drivers of the most polluting vehicles £12.5 (£1,300) per day to drive in London. He also advocates for rent controls. Ghulati said Asian voters, including Muslims, backed him. "I am the strongest voice for Gaza."



Tarun Ghulati

'ENOUGH IS ENOUGH': AUS RALLIES TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



Hundreds of people protested in Australian cities on Saturday, demanding more be done to stop violence against women. At events in Sydney and Adelaide, demonstrators carried banners saying "no excuse for abuse" and asked the govt to step in and prevent violence against women. PM Anthony Albanese backed the protests. "A woman has been killed every four days so far this year," he posted on social

media. The issue of violence against women has come to the fore in Australia after a spate of high-profile murder cases and a knife attack on a Sydney mall that left five women dead. Organisers in the advocacy group What Were You Wearing have called three days of protests from Friday to Sunday, saying "29 Women have been killed to men's violence since the start of 2024. Enough is enough." **AFP**

Armed men kidnap judge in Pak's restive northwest

Peshawar: Armed men ambushed and kidnapped a senior judge in Pakistan's restive northwest, a police official said Sunday. Around 15 men on motorbikes intercepted Judge Shakirullah Marwat's vehicle as he was travelling toward Dera Ismail Khan district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, said police official Faheem Khan. The assailants set the car on fire before fleeing with him. The driver was not harmed, Khan said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for Saturday's assault, but suspicion is likely to fall on the Pakistan Taliban, or TTP, who made the province their stronghold. It's unusual for militants in the northwest to target a judge of Marwat's seniority, who usually travels with tight security. A search operation has been launched. **AP**

Ishaq Dar named Pak deputy PM

Pakistan's foreign minister Ishaq Dar has been appointed deputy PM, the ministry of foreign affairs said Sunday. Dar will continue in his role as foreign minister. The appointment comes a month after Shehbaz Sharif

was elected PM after a national election marred by internet shutdown, arrests and violence. Pakistan struggled

for over four months to lock in a stand-by arrangement with the IMF last summer when Dar was finance minister, and it took the intervention of PM Sharif to secure a last-ditch deal. Dar is considered close to ex-PM Nawaz Sharif: His son is married to ex-PM's daughter Asma. **REUTERS & PTI**

As tourists move in, Italians are squeezed out on holiday island of Capri

Capri: Famed for its blue seas, breathtaking views and cove-studded coastline, the Mediterranean island of Capri has been a tourist haven since the early years of the Roman empire. Unlike in the imperial heyday, when emperors made it their exclusive playground, Capri now attracts visitors from around the world, clogging its narrow alleys, packing the piazzas and blocking the beaches during summer months.

As many as 16,000 tourists a day pour onto the rocky isle in peak season, outnumbering the 12,900 residents. Most are day trippers, but increasing numbers stay the night as ever more homes are given over to holiday lets, bringing its own problems. "Capri is becoming a dormitory for tourists,"

said Teodorico Boniello, head of the local consumers' association. "There are more people coming than we can cope with and families can't set down roots because they can't afford to stay."

Capri is a microcosm of many European holiday hotspots. Locals depend on visitors for their livelihoods, but the advent of mass tourism risks turning their picture-perfect beauty spots into blobs of shuffling humanity.

Some Italian towns and islands are starting to push back, albeit gently. Venice last week became the first city in the world to introduce an entrance fee for visitors in peak periods, Florence has banned new holiday lets in the city centre and Cinque Terre park on the Italian Riviera started charging 15 eu-

ros for access to a popular coastal footpath to tackle overcrowding. Capri has doubled its visitors' fee from 2.5 euros to 5 euros from April through to Oct,



On Capri Island, as many as 16,000 tourists a day pour onto the rocky isle in peak season, outnumbering the 12,900 residents

which outsiders pay when they catch a ferry from nearby Naples or Sorrento.

"We are looking to persuade more people to visit during winter," Capri mayor Marino Lembo said. But such a fee looks unlikely to dissuade tourists from travelling to an island which has more than four million tagged photos on Instagram, drawing in an endless flow of visitors. Moreover, locals say it will do nothing to help ease the housing crisis, which forces many essential workers to live on the mainland.

Antonio De Chiara, 22, wakes up daily at 5.20am in his hometown near Naples in order to be sure to catch the 7am ferry, which takes 50 minutes to reach Capri. Around 400 other commuters join him on the ride across the

bay. "It would be lovely to live in Capri, but it is very difficult. Even if I could find a place, the rent would take up all my salary," said De Chiara, who recently got a job as a child therapist on the island. Stefano Busiello, 54, teaches maths in a Capri high school but lives in Naples and has commuted back and forth for 20 years. "I have never even tried to find a house here. I could never afford one and things are getting harder." Only 20% of staff in his school actually live on Capri, he said. Roberto Faravelli, who runs a Bed and Breakfast near the port, says people like himself might be willing to rent their properties to workers if the region offered incentives to close the gap on lucrative holiday lets. **REUTERS**

AROUND THE WORLD



Pope Francis (encircled and in inset) waves from a boat in Venice on Sunday. It is his first trip outside Rome in seven months, which will be closely watched amid concerns over the 87-year-old's fragile health. In Venice, his first stop is a women's prison on the island of Giudecca, which houses the Vatican's entry for this year's Biennale festival of art

Argentine prez's attachment to dead pet dog raises sanity worry

Does Javier Milei communicate with a ghost dog whose death he refuses to accept? Forced to respond to questions about his mental health, the Argentine prez's office has lashed out at "disrespectful" speculation. Twice last week, presidential spokesman Manuel Adorni was asked about Milei's English Mastiff, Conan, said to have died seven years ago. Milei, 53, had Conan cloned, and today is believed to own four copies he refers to as "four-legged children". Or is it five? The prez himself referred in an interview with CNN this month to his five dogs, whose faces and names he had engraved on the presidential baton. Conan, Milton, Murray, Robert and Lucas were also among the first Milei thanked after his

election victory last Aug. Yet, only four mastiffs have ever been seen in photos with Milei. Adorni was asked if Milei has four dogs — but sees five — and if so, whether he can be said to have a firm grip on reality. Milei raised eyebrows on the campaign trail by occasionally dressing up as a superhero alter-ego "Captain Ancap" — short for anarcho-capitalist.

Record price for watch of richest Titanic passenger
A gold watch found on the body of the richest passenger on the Titanic was auctioned in England for £1.17 million (\$1.46m) on Saturday. It was a record sum for an object linked to the 1912 shipping disaster, said the auctioneers. A US buyer won the bidding war. The watch belonged to the US business magnate John Jacob Astor. At 47, he was reputed to be one of the richest men in the world at the time. He died after having helped his wife on board one of the lifeboats.

TODAY'S FACE-OFF

KKR VS DC

TV TIME 7:30 PM

STAR SPORTS / JIOCINEMA

PLAYED

32

Won by KKR 53.1%
Won by DC 46.8%

LAST FIVE MATCHES

KKR L W W L L

DC W W L W W

VENUE: KOLKATA

ODDS

KKR 6/10 DC 12/10

TIMES SPORT | THE TIMES OF INDIA, NEW DELHI

MONDAY, APRIL 29, 2024

IPL 2024

“THERE'S BEEN A LOT OF ORDINARY BOWLING AND THE BATTERS ARE JUST SO GOOD THESE DAYS, THEY'RE TAKING ADVANTAGE. MAYBE THE BATTERS HAVE EVOLVED A LOT QUICKER THAN THE BOWLERS IN THIS COMPETITION.”

—Lance Klusener
LSG Assistant Coach



T20 WC selection: Too many loose ends

Agarkar-Led Selection Panel Has A Tough Job To Do

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New Delhi: With the deadline to announce the teams for the upcoming T20 World Cup fast approaching, the selection committee and the team management have been working overtime to strike the right combination. By no means,

this is going to be a straightforward selection for the Ajit Agarkar-led selection committee. He was in the Capital on Saturday to watch the match between Delhi Capitals and Mumbai Indians. It is speculated that Agarkar had an informal meeting with Rohit Sharma about the team.

According to sources, there are three major contentious issues that need to be resolved before BCCI secretary Jay Shah convenes the meeting to formally announce the 15-member team. The team is slated to leave for the World Cup on May 21

with the players who will be out of the IPL by then.

Third opener and second wicketkeeper

TOI understands that the selectors are torn between Sanju Samson and KL Rahul for the second wicketkeeper-batsman slot with Rishabh Pant having done enough to prove his fitness and form to be the first choice for this position.

Rahul's intent at the top of the order has always been debatable. However, as the ongoing IPL season has progressed, the picture has changed with

two young openers — Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shubman Gill — looking off the boil. Both Rahul and Samson's international records are not great. But Gill, with his struggling form in the IPL, doesn't command automatic selection yet. This is where Rahul could pip Samson in the race even though Samson has been having a dream season while leading Rajasthan Royals. Rahul's experience at the top of the order and his willingness to bat in the middle order gives him a chance.

Sticking with tried and tested

seam attack

With Mohammed Shami injured, the Indian seam attack suddenly looks shaky. The IPL has been particularly cruel on the bowlers with team totals touching unprecedented highs. Sources told TOI that the team management wants to stick with the lot which has been part of the setup for the last two-three years even though. Arshdeep Singh and Mohammed Siraj have gone for around nine runs per over so far in the IPL.

“The team management wants to trust the players it

has groomed. There are concerns about Siraj and Arshdeep going for so many runs but one has to look at the context. In these matches, you have to think about defending the target set by your team—even if you do it by 10 runs. Jasprit Bumrah is different class. The others should not be compared with him. There won't be ‘impact player’ rule in the World Cup. Axar Patel, for example, has been

Ahead of Selection Day, TOI picks India's ideal squad for the T20 World Cup. Scan this QR code to see which players we chose and why.



exemplary with his economy rate,” the source told TOI.

Bowlers who could give them competition are Avesh Khan and Mukesh Kumar who have been growing into the role of bowling the tough overs. The selectors will have to decide if they want to go in with an extra spinner Ravi Bishnoi or the extra pacer because Hardik Pandya's seam bowling can't be ignored. Bishnoi is seen as someone who can bowl at any stage of an innings.

Power game in the middle

The biggest challenge will be to have the power hitters in the middle order. Rohit and Virat Kohli have been steady run-getters but the onus to post humongous scores will fall on power-hitters in the middle and late middle-order. The striking abilities of Hardik and Ravindra Jadeja have not been very inspiring. The team management had groomed Rinku Singh for that role. Shivam Dube has also emerged as an option. But him not bowling enough may pull him down a bit. Sources say the selection committee isn't keen on getting swayed by IPL performances but someone like Tilak Verma can't be ruled out.

IT'S A WALK IN THE PARK FOR SUPER KINGS

Gaikwad, Deshpande The Heroes As Hosts Blow Away SRH By 78 Runs

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Chennai: Normal service resumed at the MA Chidambaram Stadium here on Sunday as Chennai Super Kings returned to winning ways at home.

Five days after going down to Lucknow Super Giants in a high-scoring thriller at their ‘den’, CSK got back on track with a 78-run victory over Sunrisers Hyderabad, courtesy match-winning contributions from skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad and pacer Tushar Deshpande.

While Ruturaj continued his rich vein of form with a terrific 98 (54 balls, 10x4, 3x6) and powered the hosts to a commanding 212-3, Deshpande (4-27) provided CSK a dream start with the ball by removing the dangerous SRH openers for low scores in his first spell.

After being taken to the cleaners while delivering a stump-to-stump line, Deshpande quickly learned his lesson and bowled well outside the off-stump, a move that worked

like magic. The dismissals of Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma had a lot of similarities – the southpaws tried to clear the point boundary but ended up picking out Daryl Mitchell at sweeper cover.

Matheesha Pathirana later dashed SRH's slim hopes of an improbable win, sending back Aiden Markram and Heinrich Klaasen. The capacity crowd were on their feet when Pathirana delivered his trademark toe-crusher to light up Markram's stumps. SRH went nowhere in their chase and were eventually bundled out for 134.

Earlier, Ruturaj led from the front as he lived up to his moniker of ‘Chepuk's Raja’ – a nickname given to him after he took over the reins from MS Dhoni – but fell just two runs short of what would have been a second successive hundred.

Ruturaj, who had smashed an unbeaten ton in the previous match, guided CSK to a huge total in the company of Mitchell (52 off 32 balls, 7x4,

HOW THEY STAND

TEAM	M	W	L	NRR	PTS
RR	9	8	1	0.694	16
KKR	8	5	3	0.972	10
CSK	9	5	4	0.810	10
SRH	9	5	4	0.075	10
LSG	9	5	4	0.059	10
DC	10	5	5	-0.276	10
GT	10	4	6	-1.113	8
PBKS	9	3	6	-0.187	6
MI	9	3	6	-0.261	6
RCB	10	3	7	-0.415	6

Dube (39* off 20 balls, 1x4, 4x6). Combining forces after the early departure of Ajinkya Rahane in the third over, Ruturaj and Mitchell executed CSK's tried-and-tested batting plan to a tee during their 107-run second-wicket alliance.

SCORECARD

CSK: A Rahane c Shabbaz b Kumar 9, R Gaikwad c Reddy b Natarajan 98, D Mitchell c Reddy b Unadkat 52, S Dube not out 39, MS Dhoni not out 5; **Extras:** (b1, lb2, w6) 9; **Total: (3 wickets) 212; FoW:** 1-19, 2-126, 3-200; **Bowling:** Bhuvneshwar 4-0-38-1, Reddy 1-0-8-0, Shahbaz 3-0-33-0, Natarajan 4-0-43-1,



98 Ruturaj Gaikwad has recorded his third score in the nervous nineties – the first two being 99 vs SRH at Pune on May 1, 2022 and 92 vs GT at Ahmedabad on March 31, 2023.

Chennai's Ruturaj Gaikwad plays a shot on Sunday

Unadkat 4-0-38-1, Cummins 4-0-49-0.

SRH: T Head c Mitchell b Deshpande 13, A Sharma c Mitchell b Deshpande 15, A Singh c Ali b Deshpande 0, A Markram b Pathirana 32, N Reddy c Dhoni b Jadeja 15, H Klaasen c Mitchell b Pathirana 20, A Samad c Sameer Rizvi b Thakur 19, S Ahmed c Mitchell b Mustafizur 7, P Cummins c

Mitchell b Deshpande 5, B Kumar not out 4, Unadkat c Ali b Mustafizur 1; **Extras:** (nb1, w2)3; **Total: (18.5 overs) 134; FoW:** 1-21, 2-21, 3-40, 4-72, 5-85, 6-117, 7-119, 8-124, 9-132; **Bowling:** Chahar 3-0-22-0, Deshpande 3-0-27-4, Mustafizur 2-5-0-19-2, Jadeja 4-0-22-1, Shardul 4-0-27-1, Pathirana 2-0-17-2.

RESULT: CSK won by 78 runs

Jacks comes to party with ton

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Ahmedabad: Virat Kohli was in his element on Sunday while Englishman Will Jacks demonstrated his range of ballistic batting as the duo decimated the Gujarat Titans, at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. Kohli cut, pulled, lofted, treating the Ahmedabad crowd to a wide array of strokes, while Jacks heaved and pulled his way to a belligerent ton to headline Royal Challengers Bengaluru's nine-wicket triumph.

The duo plundered 166 runs off 74 balls with Jacks (100 off 41 balls; 5x4, 10x6) and Kohli (70 off 44b; 6x4, 3x6) treating all Titans' bowlers with disdain.

When the 15th over of Royal Challengers innings began, Jacks was batting on 44 and Kohli on 69. However, the English batter took matters in his hand, bludgeoning pacer Mohit Sharma over the leg-side boundary and took 29 runs (three maximums, two fours and a two) to gallop beyond the Indian. Kohli guided Rashid Khan's first ball of the next over for a single before Jacks smashed three more sixes and a four to march to his hundred in style and guide his team to a comprehensive win.

Coming into bat at the fall of captain Faf Du Plessis (24 of 12b, 1x4, 3x6), who was caught at deep mid-wicket by



Will Jacks in action on Sunday

substitute fielder Vijay Shankar off R Sai Kishore's bowling, Jacks seemed circumspect against the spin initially, a period during which Kohli batted beautifully to take the pressure off him.

Kohli began with a lofted on-drive off Sandeep Warrier's bowling before hitting leg-spinner Rashid Khan straight down the ground off the backfoot. He smashed Sai Kishore for two sixes before slog sweeping left-arm wrist spinner Noor Ahmad for a four and six to keep Royal Challengers ahead of the asking rate. With 53 required off 36 balls, Jacks finished the match in two overs.

Earlier, M Shahrulkh Khan, promoted to number four in the batting line-up, injected momentum to Titans' sedate start by taking a liking to Karn Sharma. He smashed Sharma and

7 Number of times, Kohli has managed 500 runs or more in an IPL season (2011, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2023 and 2024), emulating David Warner's feat of seven such instances (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019, 2020 & 2023).

Cameron Green for two maximums before a full delivery by Mohammad Siraj ended his innings. The momentum his innings of 58 (off 30b; 3x4, 5x6) gave was sustained by southpaws Sai Sudharsan (84 off 49b; 8x4, 4x6) and David Miller (26 off 19b, 2x4, 1x6) who propelled the Titans to 200/3, which, eventually, proved to be insufficient.

Siraj (1/34) and left-arm pacer Yash Dayal (0/34) bowled well towards the death overs, not allowing the Titans to run away to a mammoth score.

Kolkata wary of resurgent Delhi

Archiman.Bhaduri @timesgroup.com

Kolkata: The Kolkata Knight Riders dominated the Delhi Capitals recording a massive 106-run victory when the two sides last met in the ongoing IPL earlier this month. But things are unlikely to be the same when they clash again, this time at the Eden Gardens here on Monday.

The Rishabh Pant-led side has been on the rise recording four wins in their last five games to be on 10 points after as many games. In contrast, the Knights look a bit shaky after a losing two and managing to pull off a narrow

one-run victory in their last three games at home. Although still firmly in the playoff race with 10 points from eight matches, KKR know, in case of further slips, they might be in trouble.

Bowling remains KKR's Achilles heel as they have struggled to defend high totals. All their bowlers, except Sunil Narine, are leaking runs. With Mitchell Starc's availability still uncertain, KKR desperately need to get their bowling combination right. As their assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate said, the bowlers need to show heart and develop anti-skill bowling.

In the batting department, it's time their middle-order step on the gas as it

will be expecting too much from Phil Salt and Narine to get them off the block in such fine fashion every day.

After Jos Buttler and Jonny Bairstow, both of whom hit centuries in winning causes against KKR at the Eden Gardens, all eyes will be on DC opener Jake Fraser-McGurk who has lit up this IPL in recent times smashing 247 runs in five innings at a strike rate of 237.50. The visitors will hope the 22-year-old Australian, who was drafted in once Lungi Ngidi was ruled out of the tournament, will give another breezy start and provide the platform for Pant, regaining his own form, and Tristan Stubbs to fire down the order

as DC will look for revenge. However, the side will continue to miss injured David Warner and Ishant Sharma.

Interestingly, DC have a lot of local input about the Eden track which is proving to be one of the high scoring venues of this tournament. The presence of city boy Sourav Ganguly as DC's Director of Cricket in the rival dugout can even split KKR's support base on Monday. On the ground, Bengal cricketers Abhishek Porel and Mukesh Kumar would love to make meaningful contributions in their 'home' match.

DC has been the most successful side in this IPL in terms of spin, with their slower bowlers claiming 21 wickets so far. The team's leading wicket-taker Kuldeep Yadav, who claimed to have some bitter experience with his old franchise side, will love to prove a point or two.

237.50

Strike rate of Jake Fraser-McGurk while logging 247 runs at an average of 49.40 in five innings – the highest among the batters with 150 runs or more in this edition of the IPL of 172.11 is the highest by any team.

161 Number of fours (apart from 103 sixes) hit by Delhi batters in ten matches – the most for a team in this edition of the IPL. KKR batters hit 149 fours (87 sixes) so far.

Stats: Rajesh Kumar

“There's a reason why you do it for 15 years, for me, it's just about doing my job. It's kind of muscle memory for me now. People can talk anything they want to, they can talk about me not able to push on (strike rate) and me not playing spin well. But you yourself know the game better.”

—Virat Kohli | ON HIS STRIKE RATE

“Phenomenal. When he came to bat, he was annoyed that he wasn't able to strike the ball as he wanted to. The only talk was for him to stay calm. We know how explosive he can be when he gets going... I was just happy to stay around and watch him go.”

—Kohli | ON JACKS' KNOCK

SCORECARD

GT: W Saha c Karn b Swapnil Singh 5, S Gill c Green b Maxwell 16, S Sudharsan not out 84, S Khan b Siraj 58, D Miller not out 26; **Extras:** (lb1, nb1, w9) 11; **Total: (3 wickets) 200; FoW:** 1-6, 2-45, 3-131; **Bowling:** Swapnil 3-0-23-1, Siraj 4-0-34-1, Dayal 4-0-34-0, Maxwell 3-0-28-1, Karn 3-0-38-0, Green 3-0-42-0.

RCB: V Kohli not out 70, F du Plessis c Shankar b Sai 24, W Jacks not out 100; **Extras:** (b4, lb4, w3, nb1) 12; **Total: (1 wkt, 16 overs) 206; FoW:** 1-40; **Bowling:** Omarzai 2-0-18-0, Warrier 1-0-15-0, Sai 3-0-30-1, Rashid 4-0-51-0, Noor 4-0-43-0, Mohit 2-0-41-0.

Result: RCB won by 6 wickets

GALLERY

Senthil enters Batch Open squash final

New Delhi: Velavan Senthilkumar brushed aside Hong Kong's Andes Ling to enter the final of the Batch Open squash tournament in Paris. Senthil, who is No. 58 in the world, won his semi-final match 11-2, 11-1, 11-6 in 22 minutes. He will face Frenchman Melvil Scianimanco for the title.

LeBron stars as Lakers stay alive with win: LA Lakers, fuelled by 30 points from superstar LeBron James, stayed alive in the NBA playoffs on Saturday with a 119-108 victory over the Denver Nuggets.

Hima to return to action after NADA's go-ahead: Sprinter Hima Das will return to action at the Indian Grand Prix 1 on Tuesday in Bengaluru after a disciplinary panel of the National Anti-Doping Agency gave the green signal to her following a hearing last month, according to sources. AGENCIES

ACTION TODAY

BADMINTON: Thomas & Uber Cup, 7 am, 2.30 pm (Jio); **BASKETBALL:** NBA, 7 am (Jio); **CRICKET:** IPL, Kolkata vs Delhi, 7.30 pm (Star, Jio); **FOOTBALL:** ISL, Mumbai City vs FC Goa, 7.30 pm (Jio)

Pakistan rope in Kirsten as ODI and T20I head coach, Gillespie for Tests

Lahore: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Sunday appointed World Cup-winning coach Gary Kirsten as their head coach for ODIs and T20Is, while former Australian pacer Jason Gillespie will take over that role in Test cricket. Along with them, former Pakistan all-rounder Azhar Mahmood was appointed as the assistant coach of the team across the four formats.

All appointments have been made for a duration of two years and the coaches will not be subjected to evaluation before their term comes to an end.

“The appointment of (Gary) Kirsten and (Jason) Gillespie who are high-profile coaches shows how much value is given to the Pakistan cricket team and how much potential foreign coaches see in our players,” PCB chief Mohsin Naqvi said during a media conference.

“We want to give the team the best facilities and that is why we have gone for Kirsten and Gillespie,” he added.

Kirsten, who is currently the mentor of IPL side Gujarat Titans, is expected to take over from Pakistan's tour of England from May 22.



BIG-TICKET SIGNINGS: Gary Kirsten and Jason Gillespie

our Test cricket schedule in August,” Naqvi said.

Asked if Kirsten and Gillespie would be available with the Pakistan team all the time, Naqvi said the coaches will mostly be with the team and take their vacations as agreed in their contracts. “We also want their expertise to improve our domestic cricket and help our local coaches.”

Mahmood, who also attended the media conference, was the interim coach in the just-concluded T20I series at home against New Zealand, said it was time the Pakistani players showed more discipline and did things out of the box.

“If we are to keep up with the changing times in cricket our players also have to do some things unconvention-

ally and think out of the box,” he said.

Pak women's team players involved in road accident after breaching camp

Lahore: At least two players suffered serious injuries in a road accident involving some national women's team members earlier this month after they breached curfew and went out of the camp called for the ongoing white-ball home series against the West Indies, the PCB said on Sunday. The PCB has taken disciplinary action against the players, board chairman Mohsin Naqvi said.

He said five to six players of the national women's team had gone out in the evening in Karachi without informing the team management during the April 2-8

camp. “They ended up getting involved in a road accident with at least two players getting intense injuries and they are now under treatment,” he said.

Naqvi said that since these players form half of the team, the PCB had not publicised the incident as well as the internal disciplinary action taken against these players. “What they did was wrong and as a result we have now appointed a full-time senior rank security police officer to be with the team round the clock and enforce proper timings.”

Pakistan beat NZ by 9 runs in 5th T20I, level series 2-2

Lahore: Pakistan defeated New Zealand by 9 runs in the last game of the five-match T20I series following a gripping contest decided in the final over at the Gaddafi Stadium here on Sunday. The series finished 2-2, with Pakistan winning the second and fifth T20Is and New Zealand defeating the hosts in the third and fourth matches. Meanwhile, the first encounter in Rawalpindi was cancelled due to rain.

Babar Azam's 43-ball 69 and a late cameo from Fakhar Zaman helped Pakistan reach 178.

Star pacer Shaheen Afridi was once again Pakistan's MVP with the ball, finishing with figures of 4/30 in his quota of four overs. AGENCIES

Maheshwari bags India's 21st shooting quota for Paris Olympics

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Pune: Dhanpat Singh Chauhan built a private shooting range in a small town of Siana in Jalore district of Rajasthan in 2010, hoping to see his granddaughter train and play for India.

On Sunday, the granddaughter Maheshwari Chauhan, 27, clinched a silver in the skeet event at the ISSF World Cup in Qatar and secured a quota place for India. The grandfather passed away in 2015 and is not alive to see Maheshwari win her first-ever ISSF medal, but the moment will hold a special place in the Chauhans' hearts.

This is India's 21st quota in shooting for the Paris Games, the highest ever, and it is also the first time Indian women shooters have qualified for skeet event at the Olympics. India has clinched maximum two quotas in the event with Raiza Dhillon taking the first.

Maheshwari shot 54 in the 6-woman final to see her scores tied with Francisca Chadid of Chile. In the shootout for gold Chadid shot 4 targets, while Maheshwari hit three and settled for silver. However, she took one of the two quota places available. This was the last chance to win Paris quotas.

Yastika, Renuka star in India's 44-run win



GIVING IMPETUS: Yastika Bhatia plays a shot during her 36-run knock

Sylhet: Riding on Yastika Bhatia's 36 and Renuka Singh Thakur's 3-18, India defeated Bangladesh by 44 runs in the opening game of the five-match T20I series at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium here on Sunday.

Electing to bat first, Yastika, Shafali Verma (31) and captain Harmanpreet Kaur (30) crossed 30s. But after Harmanpreet fell, Bangladesh pulled things back to keep India at 145/7. In reply, Bangladesh lost four wickets quickly and eventually made 101/8 in their 20 overs. Apart from Renuka, fast-bowler Pooja Vastrakar took 2-25, while Shreyanka Patil, Radha Yadav and Deepthi Sharma took a wicket each in a tight bowling show to ensure India now have a 1-0 lead in the five-match series, which is crucial from a T20 World Cup preparation point of view.

Earlier, good knocks by Yastika, Shafali and Harmanpreet ensured India got a decent total on a slow pitch. India's innings began with Shafali and Smriti Mandhana hitting four boundaries between themselves in the first two overs. But Smriti, who got a reprieve in the second over, couldn't capitalise on it and inside-edged a delivery onto her stumps.

Debutante allrounder Saiveevan Sajana made run-a-ball 11 before falling to Rabeya, while Richa Ghosh hit two fours and a six in her 17-ball 23 before holing out to long-on off Marufa's bowling in the final over. **ANS**

Brief scores: India 145/7 in 20 overs (Yastika Bhatia 36, Shafali Verma 31; Rabeya Khan 3-23, Marufa Akter 2-13) beat Bangladesh 101/8 in 20 overs (Nigar Sultana 51; Renuka Singh Thakur 3-18, Pooja Vastrakar 2-25) by 44 runs.

Arsenal Survive Spurs Fightback To Boost Title Charge But The Man City Machine Rolls On

HANGING ON



THE BATTLE FOR EPL

London: Arsenal held on for a pulsating 3-2 win over arch rivals Tottenham in the north London derby to keep their grip on top spot in the Premier League on Sunday.

But later in the day, Manchester City took another step in their bid to win a fourth consecutive title with a 2-0 victory over relegation-threatened Nottingham Forest on Sunday, with Josko Gvardiol and Erling Haaland on target.

Pep Guardiola's men kept the pressure on leaders Arsenal, pulling to within a point of the Gunners. They have a game in hand.

Gvardiol got City on the scoreboard when he headed in Kevin De Bruyne's corner kick in the 32nd minute in a nervous first half that saw Forest miss a couple of terrific chances.

Haaland made a quick impact when he entered the game as a substitute in his first action since missing two matches with a muscle injury.

The Norwegian took a pass from De Bruyne in the 71st minute and launched it into the far corner for a league-leading 21st goal of the season. He had previously been level with Chelsea's Cole Palmer.

"I WAS PRAYING (AT THE END), SO MANY SPURS BALLS INTO OUR BOX. IT WAS A VERY EMOTIONAL GAME."

—Mikel Arteta ARSENAL MANAGER

"The last 20 minutes wasn't nice, but it was worth it. We know it is a big derby and they don't want to lose 3-0 at home. Momentum shifted their way but I am proud of the boys. MAYBE LAST SEASON THAT COULD HAVE ENDED IN A DRAW AND WE SHOWED WE HAVE THE EXPERIENCE."

— ARSENAL'S Bukayo Saka

Bidding to stay one step ahead of Manchester City in the title race, Mikel Arteta's side silenced the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium with a three-goal blast before half-time.

Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg's own goal put Arsenal ahead before Bukayo Saka and Kai Havertz netted to leave Arsenal in complete control.

Cristian Romero and Son Heung-min struck for Tottenham after the interval to set up a nervous finish, but Arsenal clung on by their finger tips.

Team	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
Arsenal	35	25	5	5	57	80
Man City	34	24	7	3	50	79

Arsenal sit four points clear of second placed City, who face struggling Nottingham Forest later on Sunday in the first of two games in hand over the Gunners. City will clinch an unprecedented fourth successive English title if they win their last five matches.

But Arsenal are doing all they can to make Pep Guardiola's team sweat as they try to make amends for blowing an eight-point lead in last season's title race.

After the despair of a damaging home defeat against Aston Villa and a Champions League quarter-final exit to Bayern Munich, the Gunners have bounced back impressively.

Aware they have little margin for error with City chasing them, Arteta had called on his players to show their hunger for success and they responded to his challenge.

Thrashing old foes Chelsea 5-0 on Tuesday was merely the appetiser ahead of the main course Arsenal served up for 3,000 of their jubilant fans packed into one corner of the stadium. AGENCIES

SPECIAL FEELING: Arsenal players celebrate after securing a win at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium

VILLA VAR DECISION HAS DAMAGED EPL: POCHETTINO

Birmingham: A VAR decision chalking off what looked to be a late winner for Chelsea at Aston Villa on Saturday has damaged the Premier League, manager Mauricio Pochettino said.

His side thought they have completed a remarkable comeback when substitute Axel Disasi netted in second-half stoppage time, but the goal was ruled out after a VAR review penalised a push by Benoit Badjiashile in the build-up.

"Me and you and everyone in the stadium watching the game, they didn't see a foul on the pitch and then VAR changed the decision. For me, it damaged a little bit the Premier League and English (football)," he said.

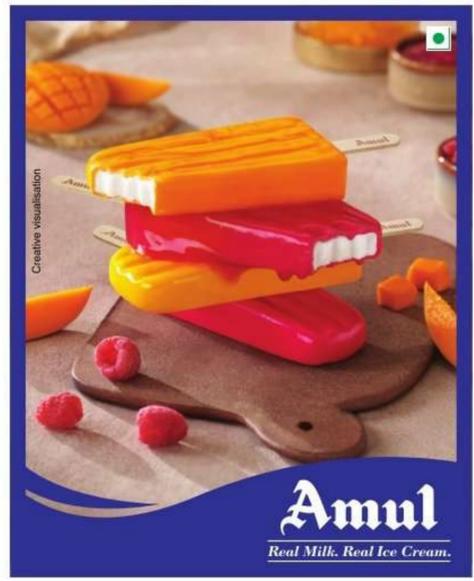
CHELSEA WOMEN FEEL CHEATED TOO AS BARCA WIN WCL SEMIS

London: Chelsea boss Emma Hayes claimed Barcelona benefitted from the "worst decision in Women's Champions League history" as the holders reached the final with a controversial 2-0 win on Saturday.

Trailing 1-0 from the semi-final first leg, Jonatan Giraldez's side took the lead through Ballon d'Or winner Aitana Bonmati at Stamford Bridge. Chelsea's Kadeisha Buchanan was sent off in the second half for a contentious second booking. And Fridolina Rolfo wrapped up Barcelona's 2-1 aggregate victory with a debatable penalty. Barca will face either Paris Saint-Germain or Lyon.

Hayes was furious with the decisions that went against her side, saying: "The second half we were coming on top. Then when you get such a shocking officiating decision, there's nothing you can do about it."

Barcelona will meet Lyon, who beat PSG, in the final.



Racism mars Atletico's win at Bilbao in fight for Liga fourth spot

Bilbao: Another incident of racism in Spanish soccer marred Atletico Madrid's 3-1 win over Athletic Bilbao on Saturday.

Spain forward Nico Williams said he was targeted by "monkey" shouts while he took a corner kick in the first half at Metropolitan Stadium. When he later scored Athletic's goal, he appeared to respond to the insults by running past the stands and tapping his forearm in reference to his skin colour.

"I heard the monkey sounds, but it is always the same two or three people. We have to keep working on this. I hope one day it will stop," the 21-year-old Nico said.

Atletico captain Koke Surreccion condemned the incident, saying he and his teammates "were with Nico."



Atletico Bilbao's Nico Williams points to the colour of his skin after scoring a goal

Atletico, in fourth place, opened a six-point gap ahead of Athletic in fifth with five games remaining. The top four will go to the Champions League.

LEVERKUSEN'S LATE HEROICS HARD TO EXPLAIN: XABI

Leverkusen: Bayer Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso said it was "hard to explain" why his unbeaten Bundesliga champions kept snatching games late after Saturday's last-gasp 2-2 draw against Stuttgart. Robert Andrich scored in the sixth minute of stoppage time. The goal extended Leverkusen's unbeaten run to 46 games. "I haven't seen that happen often in football. It's hard to explain," the 42-year-old said. "Last week I got a little emotional, but this week I just could not believe we did it again."

Union Berlin and Borussia Moenchengladbach played out a goalless draw that left neither team safe.



FANFARE: Inter players parade through Milan on open top buses

INTER PARTY CONTINUES WITH TORINO WIN

Milan: Hakan Calhanoglu scored twice to give newly-crowned Serie A champs Inter Milan a comfortable 2-0 win over 10-man Torino on Sunday, extending their unbeaten league run to 28 games. It was a party atmosphere at the San Siro with

confetti and fireworks before kickoff as the Inter fans continued to celebrate the Scudetto title they secured on Monday with a 2-1 derby win over AC Milan. Inter have 89 points, 19 clear of Milan.

Inter coach Simone Inzaghi answered the crowd's call for him to celebrate with them. It was the first Serie A game to be officiated by an all-female refereeing team.

PSG MUST WAIT FOR ANOTHER DAY

Paris: Paris Saint-Germain squandered the chance to secure another Ligue 1 title on Saturday after playing out a 3-3 draw at home to struggling Le Havre in their last game before facing Borussia Dortmund in the Champions League semi-finals.

PSG would have been officially confirmed as champions for a French record-extending 12th time, and a 10th in 12 seasons, with a win against a side who began the day in the relegation play-off place. However, in the end they needed a 95th-minute goal by Goncalo Ramos just to salvage a draw after finding themselves 3-1 down in the second half — although there is effectively no chance of them being caught at the top. Lille beat Metz 2-1 to jump to third.

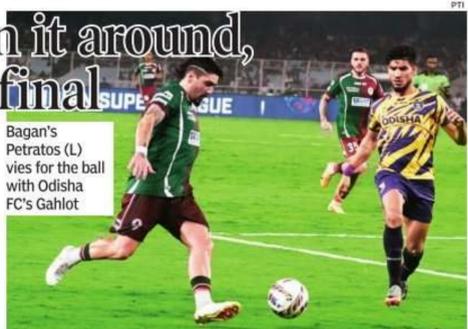
Bagan turn it around, reach ISL final

Nilesh.Bhattacharya @timesgroup.com

Kolkata: Mohun Bagan SG stayed on course for a rare 'double' in Indian Super League, beating Odisha FC 2-0 in the second leg of semi-finals and 3-2 on aggregate to reach the final on Sunday.

Trailing 1-2 in the first leg of semi-finals, Antonio Lopez Habas's team turned it around in front of 62,007 spectators at the Salt Lake Stadium, with goals from Jason Cummings (22nd minute) and Sahal Abdul Samad (90+3) sealing the deal here and confirming their passage to the title round for the second successive season.

Two weeks after clinching



Bhaskar Bhatia (L) vies for the ball with Odisha FC's Gahlot

their maiden Winners' Shield, the defending ISL champions are now waiting to welcome either Mumbai City FC or FC Goa in the final, which will be held at the Salt Lake Stadium on May 4.

Habas's team is also starting at the prospect of emulating Mumbai City's feat in winning both the Shield and the league in the same season.

With much at stake, both teams kept challenging each other throughout 90 minutes. It was an entertaining contest spiced with hits and misses.

The onus was more on Mohun Bagan to take the bull by the horns, but they also ran

the risk of being sliced open on every slip by Roy Krishna and Co.

Habas employed a high defensive high line in a virtual 3-2-4-1 formation to embrace Odisha's challenge with both discipline and boldness.

However, such a system comes with its own risks and rewards. Krishna's pace and potency down the right always left Bagan full-back Subhasish Bose and others searching for answers.

At least on three such occasions in the first 45 minutes, Bagan survived scares born of the Fijian's feet.

Thus relieved, Bagan ended the first half with the reward. Petratos, receiving the ball from Liston Coloco, tested Amrinder Singh with a snap shot. Although the Odisha goalkeeper managed to block it, Cummings reacted quickest to tap in the rebound.

Bhavani blames referees after missing Paris cut

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Chennai: CA Bhavani Devi, who was India's sole fencing hope in the Tokyo Olympics, failed to seal a berth for the Paris Games after being knocked out in the women's sabre semifinal at the Asia-Oceania Olympic qualifying competition in Fujairah, the UAE, on Sunday.

Bhavani, who entered the tournament as the favourite, lost to Chu Wing Kiu of Hong Kong China 12-15 after a few questionable calls went against her. The Chennai girl was the highest-ranked athlete in the 10-member field at the final Olympic qualifying event.



BHAVANI DEVI

Speaking to TOI on Sunday evening after the heart-breaking loss, Bhavani's mother Ramani hit out at the referees for making poor decisions. "I spoke to her after the loss and she was destroyed. We were confident that she would make it. Even if it was not hitting her, the referees gave her opponent the point. And we can't even go and question them. It's a very hard pill to swallow. This was her final chance to qualify," said Ramani.

Ramani went on to add that Bhavani was "playing strongly". "Time and again decisions went against her and when she questioned it, she got a red card. Bhavani can't believe she lost it," said Ramani. Bhavani was so sore with the loss that she didn't even shake hands with her fourth-ranked opponent after the match got over.

India men's team shocks Oly champions Korea

RECURVE BUNCH WINS HISTORIC GOLD; SILVER FOR DEEPIKA

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Kolkata: Just months before the Paris Olympics, Indian men's team of Dhiraj Bommadevara, Tarundeep Rai and Pravin Jadhav ended 14-year title drought in recurve by winning gold at the Archery World Cup Stage-I in Shanghai on Sunday.

The historic win will boost India's chances of securing a Paris Olympics berth through the rankings route which will be announced after the final Olympic qualifying event at World Cup Stage III in Antalya, Turkey, in June.

ARCHERY WORLD CUP

India with 231 points now, are third in the rankings behind China (241) and South Korea (340).

Later, Olympian Deepika Kumari ended up on the podium with a silver and the recurve mixed team duo of Ankita Bhakat and Dhiraj claimed bronze for India to finish with their highest medals tally in a single World Cup returning with eight medals — five gold, two silvers and one bronze.

It was a dominating show by the Indian men's trio against World No. 1 South Koreans to bag the title with-



(Top) Deepika Kumari on way to winning a silver in the women's recurve individual section. The Indian men's recurve team of Tarundeep Rai (L), Dhiraj Bommadevara and Pravin Jadhav (R) pose after winning the gold

out dropping a set as they won 5-1 (57-57, 57-55, 55-53). Deepika is on a comeback trail after becoming mother in December 2022 and subsequently missing the entire 2023 season. She grew in strength to eliminate two Koreans — (Jeon Hunyong 6-4) in the quarterfinal and debutant Nam Suhyeon 6-0 in the semifinal — after qualifying a lowly 30th seed.

However, in the final, the former World No. 1 lost steam to go down to Hangzhou Asian Games champion Lim Sihyeon in straight sets 0-6 (26-27, 27-29, 27-28).

This was Deepika's second successive medal since returning to the international arena after clinching gold at the Asia Cup in Baghdad in February. Deepika had to compete without a coach with her in the arena as the



(Top) Deepika Kumari on way to winning a silver in the women's recurve individual section. The Indian men's recurve team of Tarundeep Rai (L), Dhiraj Bommadevara and Pravin Jadhav (R) pose after winning the gold

Indian team was penalised for breaking rules on the maximum number of officials in the field of play earlier in the week. "It felt nice to play in the final after a long time," Deepika said afterwards. "My breathing pattern was off and I made some small mistakes. I was frustrated after a bad team show. But after talking to my psychologist, I came back with a positive mindset and that helped," she said.

BENGALURU WORLD 10K: MWANIKI, KASAIT TRIUMPH

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Bengaluru: Kenyans again ruled the city roads on Sunday with their blistering pace and fine teamwork as Peter Mwaniki and Lilian Kasait emerged on top in the 16th edition of the TCS World 10K Bengaluru here. Over 30,000 avid runners converged at the city centre early this morning to compete in various race categories despite the prevailing heat wave and a challenging new course.

Though both the Kenyan champions failed to clock an event record time, they battled past their rivals in style. Mwaniki

made it a memorable debut as he won in 28:15s, which was much slower than his third-place winning time in Valencia in January. Kasait timed 30:56s after taking over from favourite Emmaculate Achol, who holds the world's second fastest time, at around the 7km mark. Achol, who faced problems with her diet from the day she landed here, settled for the second spot but was soon in discomfort. She almost fainted during the prize distribution ceremony and was rushed to the hospital.

"The temperature was very high, but I overcame the heat to win the title. It's a good day for me and I'm proud to be in In-

dia and win the Bengaluru 10K. It was a good course, but the race was competitive. When I reached the 5km mark, my body responded, and I decided to go all out. And when my fellow competitors chased me, I got the extra motivation to run hard." Mwaniki, who pocketed \$26,000, told reporters.

"We were expecting the pacemaker to take us through to the 5km mark. But he dropped out at the 2km mark and from there we had to push ourselves. If he had stayed till the halfway mark, we could have tried for the record," the 26-year-old champion added. His compatriot Hillary Chep-

kwno came in a distant second in 28:33. Ethiopian Hagos Eyob prevented a Kenyan sweep by finishing third in 28:39.

Kasait, the winner of the silver medal at the World Cross Country Championship in Serbia last month, said it was a tough battle with Achol.

FINE SHOW BY INDIANS

The Indian men came up with a fine show as Kiran Matre managed a top-10 finish. The 22-year-old clocked his personal best time of 29:32, a new event record, to finish ninth ahead of Tanzania's 17-year-old John Wele. The top six Indians finished

under 30 minutes. "I train in Bengaluru with the help of my coaches Yunus Khan and Ajith Markose," said the 22-year-old Matre. Ranjeet Kumar Patel (29:35) and Dharmendra (29:45) finished second and third respectively.

In the women's section, Sanjivani Jadhav regained her crown in a time of 34:03s. She was followed by Lilli Das — making her road debut — in 34:13. Preenu Yadav finished third in 34:24. First to be flagged off from Cubbon Road in front of the Sam Manekshaw Parade ground at 6.45am was the elite women's race which was followed by the men's race at 7.30am.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Pak Cricket Board appoints Gary Kirsten (pic) as team's head coach for ODIs & T20Is, while Jason Gillespie has been picked for Test cricket, **P15**

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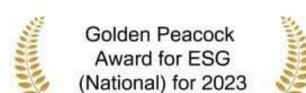
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